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## Gay Parade To Make History In Africa



Thousands of visitors from around the country are heading to Knysna in South Africa to paint the town pink during one of Africa's biggest gay pride events, which starts tomorrow.

This year, one of the highlights on the usually colourful Pink Loerie Mardi Gras and Arts Festival programme, which runs until Sunday, are the 16 gay and lesbian couples who will make history when they say "I do" as part of Africa's first mass same-sex wedding.

To celebrate the festival's 16th anniversary this year, organisers have decided to host the mass wedding, which will be officiated by Knysna mayor Georlene Wolmarans.

Organisers have chosen 16 couples to tie the knot in what has been dubbed "the wedding of a lifetime" at the five-star Villa Castollini on Friday.

The couples will be showered with prizes including a full wedding package with dresses and suits, rings, photography, a weekend honeymoon and other spoils.

The next day, the couples will lead the annual Pink Loerie parade through the streets of Knysna.

The festival attracts up to 30 000 people every year and raises thousands of rands for charity.

Another highlight on the programme will be when the South African representative for the 2017 Mr Gay World, which was hosted in Knysna last year, is chosen at the Mr Mardi Gras South Africa event, which will also take place on Friday.

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Mr Mardi Gras co-directors Vernondo Boshoff and Louis Douglas said the term “beauty pageant” would no longer be associated with Mr Mardi Gras South Africa.

“The winner will not only be judged on his looks and physique, but more importantly on his ability to become a relevant ambassador for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons and a crusader of their rights around the world,” Douglas said.

Tourism body Knysna & Partners chief executive Greg Vogt said: “A beautiful aspect of this event is that it has always been an event that citizens from all walks of life celebrate.”

The drag shows, parties, art exhibitions and all-night festivities will culminate in a street parade on Saturday.

“In short, prepare for a glittery good time,” organiser John O’Neil said.

source: **Herald Live**

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