

Carnival

Carnival (see other spellings and names) is a Western Christian and Greek Orthodox festive season that occurs before the liturgical season of Lent.^[2] The main events typically occur during February or early March, during the period historically known as Shrovetide (or Pre-Lent). Carnival typically involves public celebrations, including events such as parades, public street parties and other entertainments, combining some elements of a circus. Elaborate costumes and masks allow people to set aside their everyday individuality and experience a heightened sense of social unity.^[3] Participants often indulge in excessive consumption of alcohol,^[4] meat, and other foods that will be forgone during upcoming Lent. Traditionally, butter, milk, and other animal products were not consumed "excessively", rather, their stock was fully consumed as to reduce waste. Pancakes, donuts, and other desserts were prepared and eaten for a final time. During Lent, animal products are no longer eaten, and individuals have the ability to give up a certain object or activity of desire.

Other common features of carnival include mock battles such as food fights; expressions of social satire; mockery of authorities; costumes of the grotesque body that display exaggerated features such as large noses, bellies, mouths, phalli, or elements of animal bodies; abusive language and degrading acts; depictions of disease and gleeful death; and a general reversal of everyday rules and norms.^{[3][5]}

The term *Carnival* is traditionally used in areas with a large Catholic presence, as well as in Greece. In historically Evangelical Lutheran countries, the celebration is known as Fastelavn,^{[6][7]} and in areas with a high concentration of Anglicans (Church of England/US Episcopal Church), Methodists, and other Protestants, pre-Lenten celebrations, along with penitential observances, occur on Shrove Tuesday or Mardi Gras.^[8] In Slavic Eastern Orthodox nations, Maslenitsa is celebrated during the last week before Great Lent. In German-speaking Europe and the Netherlands, the Carnival season traditionally opens on 11/11 (often at 11:11 am). This dates back to celebrations before the Advent season or with harvest celebrations of St. Martin's Day.



Carnival in Rome circa 1650



Rio's carnival is the largest in the world according to Guinness World Records.^[1]

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References

Etymology

The Latin-derived name of the holiday is sometimes also spelled *Carnaval*, typically in areas where Dutch, French, Spanish, and Portuguese are spoken, or *Carnevale* in Italian-speaking contexts. Alternative names are used for regional and local celebrations.

The word is said to come from the Late Latin expression *carne levare*, which means "remove meat"; a folk etymology derives it from *carne vale*, "farewell to meat". In either case, this signifies the approaching fast.^[9] The word *carne* may also be translated as flesh, producing "a farewell to the flesh", a phrase embraced by certain carnival celebrants to embolden the festival's carefree spirit.^[9] The etymology of the word *Carnival* thus points to a Christian origin of the celebratory period.^[10]

Other scholars argue that the origin is the festival of the *Navigium Isidis* ("ship of Isis"), where the image of Isis was carried to the seashore to bless the start of sailing season.^[11] The festival consisted of a parade of masks following an adorned wooden boat, called in Latin *carrus navalis*, possibly the source of both the name and the parade floats.

History

Origin

The word *Carnival* is of Christian origin,^[10] and in the Middle Ages, it referred to a period following Epiphany season that reached its climax before midnight on Shrove Tuesday.^[12] Because Lent was a period of fasting, "Carnival therefore represented a last period of feasting and celebration before the spiritual rigors of Lent."^[12] Meat was plentiful during this part of the Christian

calendar and it was consumed during Carnival as people abstained from meat consumption during the following liturgical season, Lent.^[12] In the last few days of Carnival, known as Shrovetide, people confessed (shrived) their sins in preparation for Lent as well. In 1605, a Shrovetide play spoke of Christians who painted their faces to celebrate the season:^[13]



The traditional carnival of Acireale, Sicily

What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica:
Lock up my doors, and when you hear the drum
And the vile squealing of the wry-nck'd fife,
Clamber not you up o the casements then,
Nor thrust your head into the public street
To gaze on Christian fools with varnish'd faces.^[13]

From an anthropological point of view, carnival is a reversal ritual, in which social roles are reversed and norms about desired behavior are suspended.^{[14][15]}

Winter was thought of as the reign of the winter spirits; these needed to be driven out in order for the summer to return. Carnival can thus be regarded as a rite of passage from darkness to light, from winter to summer: a fertility celebration, the first spring festival of the new year.^[16]

Traditionally, a Carnival feast was the last opportunity for common people to eat well, as there was typically a food shortage at the end of the winter as stores ran out. Until spring produce was available, people were limited to the minimum necessary meals during this period. On what nowadays is called *vastenavond* (the days before fasting), all the remaining winter stores of lard, butter, and meat which were left would be eaten, for these would otherwise soon start to rot and decay. The selected livestock had already been slaughtered in November and the meat would be no longer preservable. All the food that had survived the winter had to be eaten to assure that everyone was fed enough to survive until the coming spring would provide new food sources.^[17]

Several Germanic tribes celebrated the returning of the daylight. The winter would be driven out, to make sure that fertility could return in spring.^[14] A central figure of this ritual was possibly the fertility goddess Nerthus. Also, there are some indications that the effigy of Nerthus^[18] or Freyr was placed on a ship with wheels and accompanied by a procession of people in animal disguise and men in women's clothes.^{[17][19][20]} Aboard the ship a marriage would be consummated as a fertility ritual.^{[21][22]}

Tacitus wrote in his *Germania*: *Germania* 9.6: *Ceterum nec cohibere parietibus deos neque in ullam humani oris speciem adsimulare ex magnitudine caelestium arbitrator* – "The Germans, however, do not consider it consistent with the grandeur of celestial beings to confine the gods within walls, or to liken them to the form of any human countenance." *Germania* 40: *mox vehiculum et vestis et, si credere velis, numen ipsum secreto lacu abluitur* – "Afterwards the car, the vestments, and, if you like to believe it, the divinity herself, are purified in a secret lake."^[23]

Traditionally, the feast also was a time to indulge sexual desires, which were supposed to be suppressed during the following period fasting.^{[17][24]} Before Lent began, all rich food and drink were consumed in what became a giant celebration that involved the whole community, and is thought to be the origin of Carnival.^[25]

In many Christian sermons and texts, the example of a vessel is used to explain Christian doctrine: "the nave of the church of baptism", "the ship of Mary", etc. The writings show that processions with ship-like carts were held and lavish feasts were celebrated on the eve of Lent or the greeting of spring in the early Middle Ages.^{[17][21]}

The Lenten period of the liturgical calendar, the six weeks directly before Easter, was historically marked by fasting, study, and other pious or penitential practices. During Lent, no parties or celebrations were held, and people refrained from eating rich foods, such as meat, dairy, fat, and sugar. The first three classes were often totally unavailable during this period because of late winter shortages.^[26]

While Christian festivals such as Corpus Christi were Church-sanctioned celebrations, Carnival was also a manifestation of European folk culture. In the Christian tradition, the fasting is to commemorate the 40 days that Jesus fasted in the desert, according to the New Testament, and also to reflect on Christian values. It was a time for catechumens (those converting to Christianity) to prepare for baptism at Easter.

Carnival in the Middle Ages took not just a few days, but almost the entire period between Christmas and the beginning of Lent. In those two months, Christian populations used their several holidays as an outlet for their daily frustrations.^[27]

Many synods and councils attempted to set things "right". Caesarius of Arles (470–542) protested around 500 CE in his sermons against the pagan practices. Centuries later, his statements were adapted as the building blocks of the *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum* ("small index of superstitious and pagan practices"), which was drafted by the Synod of Leptines in 742. It condemned the *Spurcalibus en februario*.^{[17][21]}

Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) decided that fasting would start on Ash Wednesday. The whole Carnival event was set before the fasting, to set a clear division between celebrations and penitence.^[28] He also dispatched missionaries to sanctify any excesses in popular Carnival customs.^[29] It was also the custom during Carnival that the ruling class would be playfully mocked using masks and disguises.^{[17][21]}

In the year 743, the synod in Leptines (Leptines is located near Binche in Belgium) spoke out furiously against the excesses in the month of February.^[21] Also from the same period dates the phrase: "Whoever in February by a variety of less honorable acts tries to drive out winter is not a Christian, but a pagan." Confession books from around 800 contain more information about how people would dress as an animal or old woman during the festivities in January and February, even though this was a sin with no small penance.^{[17][21][30]} Also in Spain, San Isidoro de Sevilla complained in his writings in the seventh century of people coming out into the streets disguised in many cases as the opposite gender.^[31]

Development

In the Middle Ages, "Carnival and Lent were both necessary, inevitable episodes in the eternal cycle of the Church year."^[32]

While forming an integral part of the Christian calendar, particularly in Catholic regions, many Carnival traditions resemble those antedating Christianity.^[33]

While medieval pageants and festivals such as Corpus Christi were church-sanctioned, Carnival was also a manifestation of medieval folk culture. Many local Carnival customs are claimed to derive from local pre-Christian rituals, such as elaborate rites involving masked figures in the Swabian-Alemannic Fastnacht. However, evidence is insufficient to establish a direct origin from Saturnalia or other ancient festivals. No complete accounts of Saturnalia survive, and the shared features of feasting, role reversals, temporary social equality, masks, and permitted rule-breaking do not necessarily constitute a coherent festival or link these festivals. These similarities may represent a reservoir of cultural resources that can embody multiple meanings and functions. For example, Easter begins with the resurrection of Jesus, followed by a liminal period, and ends with rebirth. Carnival reverses this as King Carnival comes to life, and a liminal period follows before his death. Both feasts are calculated by the lunar calendar. Both Jesus and King Carnival may be seen as expiatory figures who make a gift to the people with their deaths. In the case of Jesus, the gift is eternal life in heaven, and in the case of King Carnival, the acknowledgement that death is a necessary part of the cycle of life.^[34] Besides Christian anti-Judaism, the commonalities between church and Carnival rituals and imagery suggest a common root. Christ's passion is itself grotesque: since early Christianity, Christ is figured as the victim of summary judgment, and is tortured and executed by Romans before a Jewish mob ("His blood is on us and on our children!" Matthew 27:24–25). Holy Week processions in Spain include crowds who vociferously insult the figure of Jesus. Irreverence, parody, degradation, and laughter at a tragicomic effigy of God can be seen as intensifications of the sacred order.^[35] In 1466, the Catholic Church under Pope Paul II revived customs of the Saturnalia carnival: Jews were forced to race naked through the streets of the city of Rome. "Before they were to run, the Jews were richly fed, so as to make the race more difficult for them and at the same time more amusing for spectators. They ran ... amid Rome's taunting shrieks and peals of laughter, while the Holy Father stood upon a richly ornamented balcony and laughed heartily", an eyewitness reports.^{[36]:74}

Some of the best-known traditions, including carnal parades and masquerade balls, were first recorded in medieval Italy. The Carnival of Venice was, for a long time, the most famous carnival (although Napoleon abolished it in 1797 and only in 1979 was the tradition restored). From Italy, Carnival traditions spread to Spain, Portugal, and France, and from France to New France in North America. From Spain and Portugal, it spread with colonization to the Caribbean and Latin America. In the early 19th century in the German Rhineland and Southern Netherlands, the weakened medieval tradition also revived. Continuously in the 18th and 19th centuries CE, as part of the annual Saturnalia abuse of the carnival in Rome, rabbis of the ghetto were forced to march through the

city streets wearing foolish guise, jeered upon and pelted by a variety of missiles from the crowd. A petition of the Jewish community of Rome sent in 1836 to Pope Gregory XVI to stop the annual anti-semitic Saturnalia abuse got a negation: "It is not opportune to make any innovation."^[36]:33,74–75

In the Rhineland in 1823, the first modern Carnival parade took place in Cologne.^[37] The upper Rhineland is mostly Reformed, as is most of Northern Germany and Northern Europe. Carnival (*Fasching* or *Fastnacht* in Germany) mixed pagan traditions with Christian traditions. Pre-Lenten celebrations featured parades, costumes and masks to endure Lent's withdrawal from worldly pleasures.

Other areas developed their own traditions. In the United Kingdom, West Indian immigrants brought with them the traditions of Caribbean Carnival; however, the Carnivals now celebrated at Notting Hill, Leeds, Yorkshire, and other places became divorced from their religious origin and became secular events that take place in the summer months.

Mircea Eliade, historian of religions, gives us a clear explanation about Carnival and its meaning. He writes: "Any new year is a revival of time at its beginning, a repetition of the cosmogony. Ritual fights between two groups of extras, the presence of the dead, Saturnalia and orgies, are all elements which indicate that at the end of the year and in the expectation of the new year the mythical moments of the passage of chaos to the cosmogony are repeated".^[38] Eliade also writes: "Then the dead will come back, because all barriers between the dead and the living are broken (is the primordial chaos not revived?), and will come back since – at this paradoxical moment – time will be interrupted, so that the dead may be again contemporaries of the living." Eliade stresses that people have "a deep need to regenerate themselves periodically by abolishing the elapsed time and making topical the cosmogony".

As regards masks (monsters, animals, demons), they have an apotropaic meaning.

Theories

Interpretations of Carnival present it as a social institution that degrades or "uncrowns" the higher functions of thought, speech, and the soul by translating them into the grotesque body, which serves to renew society and the world,^[3] as a release for impulses that threaten the social order that ultimately reinforces social norms,^[39] as a social transformation,^[40] or as a tool for different groups to focus attention on conflicts and incongruities by embodying them in "senseless" acts.^[41]

Geographic distribution

Africa

Cape Verde Islands

Carnival was introduced by Portuguese settlers. The celebration is celebrated on each of the archipelago's nine inhabited islands. In Mindelo, São Vicente, groups challenge each other for a yearly prize. It has imported various Brazilian Carnival traditions. The celebration in São Nicolau is more traditional, where established groups parade through the Ribeira Brava, gathering in the town square, although it has adopted drums, floats and costumes from Brazil. In São Nicolau, three groups, Copa Cabana, Estrela Azul, and Brilho Da Zona, construct a painted float using fire, newspaper for the mold, and iron and steel for structure. Carnival São Nicolau is celebrated over three days: dawn Saturday, Sunday afternoon, and Tuesday.^[42] The celebrations are captured in the award-winning feature documentary Tchindas, nominated at the 12th Africa Movie Academy Awards.



Riderless Racers at Rome by Théodore Géricault. From the mid-15th century until 1882, spring carnival in Rome closed with a horse race. Fifteen to 20 riderless horses, originally imported from the Barbary Coast of North Africa, ran the length of the Via del Corso, a long, straight city street, in about 2½ minutes.



Carnival in Donetsk, Ukraine, 2010

Namibia

Carnibal was introduced by German settlers. The celebration is based on the "Rheinische" Carnival tradition.

Seychelles

The Seychelles carnival began in 2011. It is held in the capital city of Victoria and takes place over three days. On Day 1, the grand opening is held in the city center near the clock tower. The second day is parade day. On Day 3, the closing ceremony is held, and a lottery winner is announced.^{[43][44]}

Zimbabwe

The Harare Carnival is held late in May. Events include fashion and music shows. The climax is a street party featuring costumes and music.^[45]

Americas

Antigua

The Antiguan Carnival is held from the end of July to the first Tuesday in August. The most important day is that of the *j'ouvert* (or *juvé*), in which brass and steel drum bands perform. Barbuda's Carnival, held in June, is known as "Caribana". The Antiguan and Barbudan Carnivals replaced the Old Time Christmas Festival in 1957, with hopes of inspiring tourism.

Argentina

In Argentina, the most representative Carnival performed is the so-called Murga, although other famous Carnivals, more like Brazil's, are held in Argentine Mesopotamia and the North-East. Guauguaychú in the east of Entre Ríos Province is the most important Carnival city and has one of the largest parades. It adopts a musical background similar to Brazilian or Uruguayan Carnival. Corrientes is another city with a Carnival tradition. Chamamé is a popular musical style. In all major cities and many towns throughout the country, Carnival is celebrated.

As Carnival coincides with summer in the Southern Hemisphere, in many parts of Argentina children play with water. The 19th century tradition of filling empty egg shells with water has evolved into water games that include the throwing of water balloons.

Aruba

Carnival in Aruba means weeks of events that bring colourfully decorated floats, contagiously throbbing music, luxuriously costumed groups of celebrants of all ages, King and Queen elections, electrifying jump-ups and torchlight parades, the Jouvert morning; the Children's Parades, and finally the Grand Parade. Aruba's biggest celebration is a month-long affair consisting of festive "jump-ups" (street parades), spectacular parades, and creative contests. Music and flamboyant costumes play a central role, from the Queen elections to the Grand Parade. Street parades continue in various districts throughout the month, with brass band, steel drum and roadmarch tunes. On the evening before Lent, Carnival ends with the symbolic burning of King Momo.

Bahamas

Junkanoo is the principal street parade in the Bahamas, it has been practiced in the Bahamas before and after the 1834 emancipation of slavery in the British Empire.

In an effort to capitalize on Carnival's popularity, the Bahamas announced the first Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival to commence in May 2015.^[46]

Barbados

Carnival is known as "Crop Over" and is Barbados's biggest festival. Its early beginnings were on the sugar cane plantations during the colonial period. Crop Over began in 1688, and featured singing, dancing, and accompaniment by shak-shak, banjo, triangle, fiddle, guitar, bottles filled with water, and bones. Other traditions included climbing a greased pole, feasting, and drinking

competitions. Originally signaling the end of the yearly cane harvest, it evolved into a national festival. In the late 20th century, Crop Over began to closely mirror the Trinidad Carnival. Beginning in June, Crop Over runs until the first Monday in August when it culminates in the finale, the Grand Kadooment.

Carnival time for many islanders is one big party. Craft markets, food tents/stalls, street parties, and cavalcades fill every week.

A major feature is the calypso competition. Calypso music, originating in Trinidad, uses syncopated rhythm and topical lyrics. It offers a medium in which to satirise local politics, amidst the general bacchanal. Calypso tents, also originating in Trinidad, feature cadres of musicians who perform biting social commentaries, political exposés or rousing exhortations to "wuk dah waistline" and "roll dat bumper". The groups compete for the Calypso Monarch Award, while the air is redolent with the smells of Bajan cooking during the Bridgetown Market Street Fair. The Cohobblopot Festival blends dance, drama, and music with the crowning of the King and Queen of costume bands. Every evening the "Pic-o-de-Crop" Show is performed after the King of Calypso is finally crowned. The climax of the festival is Kadooment Day, celebrated with a national holiday, when costume bands fill the streets with pulsating Barbadian rhythms and fireworks.

Belize

San Pedro is one of Belize's few cities to observe Carnaval before Lent. Elsewhere, Carnaval (sometimes referred to as Carnival) often occurs in September. The Fiesta de Carnaval is often the most popular celebration, usually held over three days prior to Ash Wednesday, but the festivities often extend to the full week.^[47] This festival "always includes music, dancing, costumes and parades".^[48]

Comparsas are held throughout the week, consisting of large groups "of dancers dancing and traveling on the streets, followed by a Carrosa (carriage) where the musicians play. The Comparsa is a development of African processions where groups of devotees follow a given saint or deity during a particular religious celebration."^[49] One of the most popular comparsas of Fiesta de Carnaval is the male group comparsa, usually composed of notable men from the community who dress up in outlandish costumes or cross-dress and dance to compete for money and prizes.^[50] Other popular activities include body painting and flour fighting.^{[51][52]} "On the last day of Carnival painters flood the street to paint each other. This simply means that a mixture of water paint and water or raw eggs is used to paint people on the streets, the goal being to paint as many people as you can."^[50]

Street fights often occur during the festivities – some locals treat this festival as an opportunity to exact revenge on their enemies. Vandalism is common and "businesses constantly have to prepare in covering or repainting their advertisements during Carnival season because of the mischief performed."^[53] The tradition continues despite critics who advocate the termination of these festivities.^[52]

Bolivia

La Diablada Carnival takes place in Oruro in central Bolivia. It is celebrated in honor of the miners' patron saint, *Virgen de Socavon* (the Virgin of the Tunnels). Over 50 parade groups dance, sing, and play music over a five kilometre-long course. Participants dress up as demons, devils, angels, Incas, and Spanish conquistadors. Dances include caporales and tinkus. The parade runs from morning until late at night, 18 hours a day, for three days before Ash Wednesday. It was declared the 2001 "Masterpieces of Oral Heritage and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO.^[54] Throughout the country, celebrations are held involving traditional rhythms and water parties. In Santa Cruz de la Sierra, on the east side of the country, tropical weather allows a Brazilian-type Carnival, with Comparsas dancing traditional songs in matching uniforms.



The Diablada, dance primeval, the typical and main dance of Carnaval de Oruro, a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity since 2001 in Bolivia (Image: *Fraternidad Artística y Cultural "La Diablada"*)

Brazil

The Carnival in Brazil is a major part of Brazilian culture. It is sometimes referred to by Brazilians as the "Greatest Show on Earth". The first true Carnival expression of this Brazilian festivity, officially recognized by Brazilian historians, took place in Rio de Janeiro, with the *préstitos*, very similar to a musical processions, in 1641, when John IV of Portugal was crowned King and parties were celebrated in public streets.

Rio de Janeiro, State of Rio de Janeiro

The street carnival of Rio de Janeiro is designated by Guinness World Records as the largest carnival in the world, with approximately two million people each day.^[55]

Samba schools are large, social entities with thousands of members and a theme for their song and parade each year. In Rio Carnival, samba schools parade in the Sambadrome (*sambódromo* in Portuguese). Some of the most famous include GRES Estação Primeira de Mangueira, GRES Portela, GRES Acadêmicos do Salgueiro, GRES Imperatriz Leopoldinense, GRES Beija-Flor de Nilópolis, GRES Mocidade Independente de Padre Miguel, and recently, Unidos da Tijuca and GRES União da Ilha do Governador. Local tourists pay \$500–950, depending on the costume, to buy a samba costume and dance in the parade. *Blocos* are small informal groups with a definite theme in their samba, usually satirizing the political situation. About 30 schools in Rio gather hundreds of thousands of participants. More than 440 *blocos* operate in Rio. *Bandas* are samba musical bands, also called "street carnival bands", usually formed within a single neighborhood or musical background. The Carnival industry chain amassed in 2012 almost US\$1 billion in revenues.^[56]

Recife, Pernambuco

Recife is marked by the parade of the largest carnival block in the world, the Galo da Madrugada. This parade happens on the first Saturday of Carnival (Saturday of Zé Pereira), passes through the center of the city of Recife and has, as symbol, a giant rooster that is positioned in the Duarte Coelho Bridge. In this block, there is a great variety of musical rhythms, but the most present is Frevo (characteristic rhythm of both Recife and Olinda that was declared Intangible Heritage of Humanity by Unesco).

Salvador, Bahia

Salvador has large Carnival celebrations, including the Axé, a typical Bahia music. A truck with giant speakers and a platform, where musicians play songs of local genres such as Axé, samba-reggae, and Arrocha, drives through town with a crowd following while dancing and singing. It was originally staged by two Salvador musicians, Dodo & Osmar, in the 1950s. After the Salvador Carnival, Porto Seguro continues the celebration.

Three circuits make up the festival. Campo Grande is the longest and most traditional. Barra-Ondina is the most famous, on the seaside of Barra Beach and Ondina Beach and Pelourinho.^[57]

International singers like David Guetta, will.i.am, Psy, and Bob Sinclar have performed in Salvador.^[58] Ivete Sangalo, Claudia Leitte, Daniela Mercury, Margareth Menezes, Chiclete com Banana, and Banda Eva are some traditional attractions. The party officially takes six days, but can continue for more than that.^[59]

Canada

Toronto Caribbean Carnival,^[60] held in Toronto on the first weekend of August to take advantage of more comfortable weather, has its origins in Caribbean Carnival traditions. Attendance at the parade typically exceeds one million.

The Quebec Winter Carnival is the biggest winter-themed Carnival in the world. It depends on snowfall and very cold weather, to keep snowy ski trails in good condition and ice sculptures frozen. The carnival is held during the last days of January and first days of February.

In the Ottawa-Gatineau region, Winterlude takes place during February.

Caribbean



Recife Carnival, in the capital city of the State of Pernambuco, Recife



Carnival circuit of the city of Salvador

Most Caribbean islands celebrate Carnival. The largest and most well-known is in Trinidad and Tobago. Antigua, Aruba, Barbados, Bonaire, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saba, Sint Eustatius (Statia), Sint Maarten, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts, Saint Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines hold lengthy carnival seasons and large celebrations.

Carnival is an important cultural event in the Dutch Caribbean. Festivities include "jump-up" parades with beautifully colored costumes, floats, and live bands, as well as beauty contests and other competitions. Celebrations include a middle-of-the-night j'ouvert (*juvé*) parade that ends at sunrise with the burning of a straw King Momo, cleansing sins and bad luck. On Statia, he is called Prince Stupid.

Carnival has been celebrated in Cuba since the 18th century. Participants don costumes from the island's cultural and ethnic variety. After Fidel Castro's Communist Revolution, Carnival's religious overtones were suppressed. The events remained, albeit frowned upon by the state. Carnival celebrations have been in decline throughout Cuba since then.

Colombia

Carnival was introduced by the Spaniards and incorporated elements from European cultures. It has managed to reinterpret traditions that belonged to Colombia's African and Amerindian cultures. Documentary evidence shows that Carnival existed in Colombia in the 18th century and had already been a cause for concern for colonial authorities, who censored the celebrations, especially in the main political centres such as Cartagena, Bogotá, and Popayán.

The Carnival continued its evolution in small/unimportant towns out of view of the rulers. The result was the uninterrupted celebration of Carnival festivals in Barranquilla (see Barranquilla's Carnival), now recognized as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. The Barranquilla Carnival includes several parades on Friday and Saturday nights beginning on 11 January and ending with a six-day non-stop festival, beginning the Wednesday prior to Ash Wednesday and ending Tuesday midnight. Other celebrations occur in villages along the lower Magdalena River in northern Colombia, and in Pasto and Nariño (see Blacks and Whites' Carnival) in the south of the country. In the early 20th century, attempts to introduce Carnival in Bogotá were rejected by the government. The Bogotá Carnival was renewed in the 21st century.

Dominica

Carnival in Dominica is held in the capital city of Roseau, and takes elements of Carnival that can be seen in the neighbouring French islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, as well as Trinidad. Notable events leading up to Carnival include the Opening of Carnival celebrations, the Calypso Monarch music competition, the Queen of Carnival Beauty Pageant, and bouyon music bands. Celebrations last for the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday.

Dominican Republic

Dominican Carnival is celebrated in most cities and towns in the main streets during February. Among its main characteristics are its flashy costumes and loud music. The one held in La Vega, which is one of the biggest in the country, and the national parade in Santo Domingo were where the first Carnival of the Americas was held.



Carnival in Rincon (Bonaire)



The Blacks and Whites' Carnival in Pasto



A Dominican Carnival costume band

Carnival masks are elaborate and colorful. The costumes used on the parades are satires of the Devil and are called "Diablos Cojuelos". They dance, and run to the rhythm of merengue music mixed with techno, hip-hop, and reggaeton. Additional allegorical characters represent Dominican traditions such as "Roba la Gallina" and "Califé".

One of the most international parades is in San Pedro de Macorís. It exhibits the "Guloyas" parade of costumed groups dancing in the streets. Revelers flee from the "Diablos Cojuelos" who try to hit them with "Vejigas".

The timing of the festivals has grown apart from its original religious synchronization with the period of Lent. With National Independence Day on 27 February and the birthday of Juan Pablo Duarte, its founding father, on 26 January, the Carnival celebrations fill February regardless of the Lenten calendar.

Ecuador

In Ecuador, the celebrations began before the arrival of Catholicism. The Huarangas Indians (from the Chimbo nation) used to celebrate the second moon of the year with a festival at which they threw flour, flowers, and perfumed water. This indigenous tradition merged with the Catholic celebration of Carnival.

A common feature of Ecuadorian Carnival is the *diablitos* (little devils) who play with water. As with snowball fights, the practice of throwing or dumping water on unsuspecting victims is revered by children and teenagers although feared by some adults. Throwing water balloons, sometimes even eggs and flour both to friends and strangers is fun, but can also upset the uninformed.

Although the government as well as school authorities forbid such games, they are widely practiced. Historians tell of a bishop in 1867 who threatened excommunication for the sin of playing Carnival games.

Festivals differ across the country. Locals wear disguises with colorful masks and dance. Usually, the celebrations begin with the election of *Taita Carnival* (Father Carnival) who heads the festivities and leads the parades in each city.

The most famed Carnival festivities are in Guaranda (Bolívar province) and Ambato (Tungurahua province). In Ambato, the festivities are called *Fiesta de las Flores y las Frutas* (Festival of the Flowers and Fruits). Other cities have revived Carnival traditions with colorful parades, such as in Azogues (Cañar Province). In Azogues and the Southern Andes in general, *Taita Carnival* is always an indigenous Cañari. Recently, a celebration has gained prominence in the northern part of the Andes in the Chota Valley in Imbabura which is a zone of a strong Afro-Ecuadorian population and so the Carnival is celebrated with bomba del chota music.

Latacunga celebrates Carnival in three manners:^[61] Carnival with water where people play with water, religious Carnival where people make religious festivity, and Carnival parade in the city in which people march on the Latacunga streets wearing masks while they dance with music bands.

French Guiana

The Carnival of French Guiana has roots in Creole culture. Everyone participates – mainland French, Brazilians (Guiana has a frontier with Brazil), and Chinese as well as Creoles.

Its duration is variable, determined by movable religious festivals: Carnival begins at Epiphany and ends on Ash Wednesday, and so typically lasts through most of January and February. During this period, from Friday evening until Monday morning the entire country throbs to the rhythm of masked balls and street parades.

Friday afternoons are for eating *galette des rois* (the cake of kings) and drinking champagne. The cake may be flavoured with frangipani, guava, or coconut.



Carnival parade in Latacunga city.



Party in Latacunga city.

On Sunday afternoons, major parades fill the streets of Cayenne, Kourou, and Saint-Laurent du Maroni. Competing groups prepare for months. Dressed to follow the year's agreed theme, they march with Carnival floats, drums, and brass bands.

Brazilian groups are appreciated for their elaborate feathered and sequined costumes. However, they are not eligible for competition since the costumes do not change over time.

Mythical characters appear regularly in the parades:

- *Karolin* — a small person dressed in a magpie tail and top hat, riding on a shrew.
- *Les Nèg'marrons* — groups of men dressed in red loincloths, bearing ripe tomatoes in their mouths while their bodies are smeared with grease or molasses. They deliberately try to come in contact with spectators, soiling their clothes.
- *Les makoumés* — cross-dressing men (out of the Carnival context, *makoumé* is a pejorative term for a homosexual).
- *Soussouris* (the bat) — a character dressed in a winged leotard from head to foot, usually black in colour. Traditionally malevolent, this character is liable to chase spectators and "sting" them.

A uniquely Creole tradition are the *touloulous*. These women wear decorative gowns, gloves, masks, and headdresses that cover them completely, making them unrecognisable, even to the colour of their skin. On Friday and Saturday nights of Carnival, touloulou balls are held in so-called "universities", large dance halls that open only at Carnival time. Touloulous get in free, and are even given condoms in the interest of the sexual health of the community. Men attend the balls, but they pay admittance and are not disguised. The touloulous pick their dance partners, who may not refuse. The setup is designed to make it easy for a woman to create a temporary liaison with a man in total anonymity. Undisguised women are not welcomed. By tradition, if such a woman gets up to dance, the orchestra stops playing. Alcohol is served at bars – the disguised women whisper to the men "touloulou thirsty", at which a round of drinks is expected, to be drunk through a straw protect their anonymity.



Four touloulous

In more modern times, Guyanais men have attempted to turn the tables by staging *soirées tololo*, in which it is the men who, in disguise, seek partners from undisguised women bystanders.

The final four days of Carnival follow a rigid schedule, and no work is done:

- Sunday — The Grand Parade, in which the groups compete.
- Monday — Marriage burlesque, with men dressed as brides and women as grooms.
- Tuesday — Red Devil Day in which everyone wears red or black.
- (Ash) Wednesday — Dress is black and white only, for the grand ceremony of burning the effigy of Vaval, King Carnival.

Guatemala

The most famous Carnival celebration in Guatemala is in Mazatenango. During February, Mazatenango is famous for its eight-day Carnival Feast. Days of food, music, parades, and games fill the streets of the department of Suchitepéquez. As one Guatemalan website states, "To mention the Carnival of Mazatenango is to bring to mind moments of a happy and cordial party. In the eight days of this celebration's duration, the local residents have kept alive the traditions of the Department."

Haiti

Carnival in Haiti started in 1804 in the capital Port-au-Prince after the declaration of independence. The Port-au-Prince Carnival is one of the largest in North America. It is known as Kanaval in the Creole language. It starts in January, known as "Pre-Kanaval", while the main carnival activities begin in February. In July 2012, Haiti had another carnival called Kanaval de Fleur. Beautiful costumes, floats, Rara parades,^[62] masks, foods, and popular rasin music (such as Boukman Eksperyans, Foula Vodoule, Tokay, Boukan Ginen, and Eritaj) and kompa bands (such as T-Vice, Djakout No. 1, Sweet Micky, Kreyòl La, D.P. Express, Mizik Mizik, Ram, T-Micky, Carimi, Djakout Mizik, and Scorpio Fever) play for dancers in the streets of the plaza of Champ-de-Mars. An annual song competition takes place.

Other places in Haiti celebrate carnival, including Jacmel and Aux Cayes. In 2013, Kanaval was celebrated in Okap (Cap-Haïtien).

Carnival finishes on Ash Wednesday, followed by rara, another parading musical tradition known mainly in Haiti and in the Dominican Republic. This festival emphasises religion. Songs are composed each year, and bands play bamboo tubes (*vaksin*) and homemade horns (*konèt*). Rara is also performed in Prospect and Central Park in summertime New York.^[63]

Honduras

In La Ceiba in Honduras, Carnival is held on the third or fourth Saturday of every May to commemorate San Isidro.^{[64][65]} It is the largest Carnival celebration in Central America.^{[66][67]}

Mexico

In Mexico, *Carnaval* is celebrated in about 225 cities and towns. The largest are in Mazatlán and the city of Veracruz, with others in Baja California and Yucatán. The larger city Carnivals employ costumes, elected queens, and parades with floats, but Carnival celebrations in smaller and rural areas vary widely depending on the level of European influence during Mexico's colonial period. The largest of these is in Huejotzingo, Puebla, where most townspeople take part in mock combat with rifles shooting blanks, roughly based on the Battle of Puebla. Other important states with local traditions include Morelos, Oaxaca, Tlaxcala, and Chiapas.^[68] Carnival of Campeche goes back 400 years, to 1582.^[69]

Nicaragua

On the Caribbean coast of Bluefields, Nicaragua, Carnival is better known as "Palo de Mayo" (or Mayo Ya!) and is celebrated every day of May.^[70]

In Managua, it is celebrated for two days. There it is named *Alegria por la vida* ("Joy for Life") and features a different theme each year. Another festival in Managua celebrates patron saint Domingo de Guzman and lasts ten days.^[71]

Panama

Traditionally beginning on Friday and ending on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, "los Carnavales", as Panamanians refer to the days of Carnival, are celebrated across the country. Carnival Week is especially popular because of the opulent Las Tablas Carnival as well as the Carnival celebrations in Panama City and almost all of the Azuero Peninsula. The Panamanian Carnival is also popular because of the concerts in the most visited areas.^[72]

Peru

Cajamarca

The town of Cajamarca is considered the capital of Carnival in Peru. Local residents of all ages dance around the *unsha*, or *yunsa*, a tree adorned with ribbons, balloons, toys, fruits, bottles of liquor, and other prizes.

At a certain point, the *Mayordomo* (governor of the feast) walks into the circle. The governor chooses a partner to go to the *unsha*, which they attempt to cut down by striking it three times with a machete. The machete is passed from couple to couple as each strikes the tree three times. When the unsha finally falls, the crowd rushes to grab the prizes.

The person who successfully brings down the unsha becomes the following year's governor.

Crime

While generally peaceful, there have been issues with people using Carnival as a pretext for crime, particularly robbery or vandalism, especially in certain areas of Lima.^[73]

Puerto Rico



Morenada dance, in the Carnival of Juliaca — Peru

Puerto Rico's most popular festivals are the Carnaval de Loiza and Carnaval de Ponce. The Carnaval de Ponce (officially "Carnaval Ponceño") is celebrated annually in Ponce. The celebration lasts one week and ends on the day before Ash Wednesday. It is one of the oldest carnivals of the Western Hemisphere, dating to 1858.^[74] Some authorities trace the Ponce Carnival to the eighteenth century.^{[75][76]}

Trinidad and Tobago

In Trinidad & Tobago, Carnival lasts months and culminates in large celebrations on the three days before Ash Wednesday with Dimanche Gras, J'ouvert, and Mas (masquerade). Tobago's celebration culminates on Monday and Tuesday on a much smaller scale. Carnival combines costumes, dance, music, competitions, rum, and partying (fete-ing). Music styles include soca, calypso, rapso, and more recently chutney and chutney soca.

The annual Carnival steel pan competition known as the National Panorama competition holds the finals on the Saturday before the main event. Pan players compete in categories such as "Conventional Steel Band" or "Single Pan Band" by performing renditions of the year's calypsos.

"Dimanche Gras" takes place on the Sunday night before Ash Wednesday. Here the Calypso Monarch is chosen (after competition) and prize money and a vehicle awarded. The King and Queen of the bands are crowned, where each band parades costumes for two days and submits a king and queen, from which an overall winner is chosen. These usually involve huge, complex, beautiful well-crafted costumes, that includes 'wire-bending'.

J'ouvert, or "Dirty Mas", takes place before dawn on the Monday (known as Carnival Monday) before Ash Wednesday. It means "opening of the day". Revelers dress in costumes embodying puns on current affairs, especially political and social events. "Clean Mud" (clay mud), oil paint and body paint are familiar during J'ouvert. A common character is "Jab-jabs" (devils, blue, black, or red) complete with pitchfork, pointed horns and tails. A King and Queen of J'ouvert are chosen, based on their witty political/social messages.



The Carnival King costume for a particular band

Carnival Monday involves the parade of the mas bands. Revelers wear only parts of their costumes, more for fun than display or competition. Monday Night Mas is popular in most towns and especially the capital, where smaller bands compete. There is also the "Bomb Competition", a smaller-scaled judging of steel bands.^[77]

Carnival Tuesday hosts the main events. Full costume is worn, complete with make-up and body paint/adornment. Usually "Mas Boots" that complement the costumes are worn. Each band has their costume presentation based on a particular theme, and contains various sections (some consisting of thousands of revelers) that reflect these themes. The street parade and band costume competition take place. The mas bands eventually converge on the Queen's Park Savannah to pass on "The Stage" for judging. The singer of the most played song is crowned Road March King or Queen, earning prize money and usually a vehicle.



Masqueraders chipping on Carnival Tuesday in Port of Spain during Trinidad and Tobago Carnival

This parading and revelry goes on until Tuesday midnight. Ash Wednesday itself, while not an official holiday, sends flocks to local beaches. The most popular are Maracas Beach and Manzanilla Beach, where huge beach parties take place on Ash Wednesday.

United States

The most widely known, elaborate, and popular US events are in New Orleans where Carnival season is referred to as Mardi Gras. Krewes organize parades, balls, and other activities. Most Louisiana cities such as Lake Charles, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Lafayette, Mamou, Houma, and Thibodaux, most of which were under French control at one time or another, also hold Carnival celebrations. On the prairie country northwest of Lafayette, Louisiana the Cajuns celebrate the traditional Courir de Mardi Gras, which has its roots in celebrations from rural Medieval France.^[78]

Carnival celebrations, usually referred to as Mardi Gras ("Fat Tuesday" in French), were first celebrated in the Gulf Coast area, but now occur in many states. Customs originated in the onetime French colonial capitals of Mobile (now in Alabama), New Orleans (Louisiana), and Biloxi (Mississippi), all of which have celebrated for many years with street parades and masked balls. Other major American cities with celebrations include Washington, D.C.; St. Louis; San Francisco; San Diego; Galveston, Texas; and Miami, Pensacola, Tampa, and Orlando in Florida.



Revelers on Frenchmen Street,
New Orleans, 2006

Carnival is celebrated in New York City in Brooklyn. As in the UK, the timing of Carnival split from the Christian calendar and is celebrated on Labor Day Monday, in September. It is called the Labor Day Carnival, West Indian Day Parade, or West Indian Day Carnival, and was founded by immigrants from Trinidad. That country has one of the largest Caribbean Carnivals. In the mid twentieth century, West Indians moved the event from the beginning of Lent to the Labor Day weekend. Carnival is one of the largest parades and street festivals in New York, with over one million attending. The parade, which consists of steel bands, floats, elaborate Carnival costumes, and sound trucks, proceeds along Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway in the Crown Heights neighborhood.

Starting in 2013, the Slovenian-American community located in the St. Clair-Superior neighborhood of Cleveland began hosting a local version of Kurentovanje, the Carnival event held in the city of Ptuj, Slovenia.^[79] The event is conducted on the Saturday prior to Ash Wednesday.

Mardi Gras celebrations are spreading to other regions, such as the Mississippi Valley region of St. Louis, Missouri; Orlando, Florida in Universal Studios and in the Gaslamp Quarter of San Diego.

Uruguay

The Carnival in Uruguay lasts more than 40 days, generally beginning towards the end of January and running through mid March. Celebrations in Montevideo are the largest. The festival is performed in the European parade style with elements from Bantu and Angolan Benguela cultures imported with slaves in colonial times. The main attractions of Uruguayan Carnival include two colorful parades called *Desfile de Carnaval* (Carnival Parade) and *Desfile de Llamadas* (Calls Parade, a candombe-summoning parade).^[80]



Afro-Uruguayans gathering for a
Candombe celebration, ca. 1870

During the celebration, theaters called *tablados* are built in many places throughout the cities, especially in Montevideo.^[81] Traditionally formed by men and now starting to be open to women, the different Carnival groups (Murgas, Lubolos, or Parodistas) perform a kind of popular opera at the *tablados*, singing and dancing songs that generally relate to the social and political situation. The 'Calls' groups, basically formed by drummers playing the tamboril, perform candombe rhythmic figures. The carnival in Uruguay have escolas de samba too, and the biggest samba parades are in Artigas and in Montevideo. Revelers wear their festival clothing. Each group has its own theme. Women wearing elegant, bright dresses are called vedettes and provide a sensual touch to parades.

European archetypes (Pierrot, Harlequin, and Columbina) merge with African ancestral elements (the Old Mother or *Mama Vieja*, the Medicine Man or *Gramillero* and the Magician or *Escobero*) in the festival.

Venezuela

Carnival in Venezuela covers two days, 40 days before Easter. It is a time when youth in many rural towns have water fights (including the use of water balloons and water guns). Any pedestrian risks a soaking. Coastal towns and provinces celebrate Carnival more fervently than elsewhere in the country. Venezuelans regard Carnival about the same way they regard Christmas and Semana Santa (Holy Week; the week before Easter Sunday) when they take the opportunity to visit their families.^[82]

Asia

India



Goan Christians participating at the Goan Carnival, late 20th century

In India, Carnival is celebrated only in the state of Goa and a Roman Catholic tradition, where it is known as **Intruz** which means "swindler" while *Entrudo* is the appropriate word in Portuguese for "Carnival". The largest celebration takes place in the city of Panjim, which was part of Velha Conquista in Goa, but now is celebrated throughout the state. The tradition was introduced by the Portuguese who ruled Goa for over four centuries. On Tuesday preceding Ash



Revellers at the modern Goan Carnival

Wednesday, the European tradition of Fat Tuesday is celebrated with the eating of crepes, also called "AleBelle". The crepes are filled with freshly grated coconut and heated condensed coconut sap that sequentially converts it into a brown sweet molasses; additional heat concentration solidifies it to jaggery. The celebrations of Carnival peak for three days and nights and precede Ash Wednesday, when the legendary King Momo takes over the state. All-night parades occur throughout the state with bands, dances, and floats. Grand balls are held in the evenings.^[83]

Although Portugal introduced Christianity and the customs related to Catholic practice in India and Brazil, the celebrations in Goa like Portugal have begun to adopt some aspects of Brazilian-style Carnival celebrations, in particular those of Rio de Janeiro with sumptuous parades, samba and other musical elements.

Indonesia

In Indonesia, the word "carnival" or *karnaval* is not related to pre-Lent festivities, but more to festivals in general, especially those with processions and extravagant costumes. One of the largest carnivals in Indonesia is the Solo Batik Carnival, held in Solo, Central Java. The Jember Fashion Carnaval is held in Jember, East Java.^[84]

The Roman Catholic community of Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, held an Easter procession in form of an Easter Carnival called *Pawai Paskah Kupang*.^[85]

Israel

Turkey

For almost five centuries, local Greek communities throughout Istanbul celebrated Carnival with weeks of bawdy parades, lavish balls, and street parties. This continued for weeks before Lent. Baklahorani took place on Shrove Monday, the last day of the carnival season. The event was led by the Greek Orthodox community, but the celebrations were public and inter-communal. The final celebration was sited in the Kurtuluş district.^[86] In 2010, the festival was revived.^[87]

Europe

Belgium

Many parts of Belgium celebrate Carnival, typically with costume parades, partying and fireworks. These areas include Aalst, Binche, Eupen, Halle, Heist, Kelmis, Maaseik, Malmedy, and Stavelot.

The Carnival of Binche dates at least to the 14th century. Parades are held over the three days before Lent; the most important participants are the Gilles, who wear traditional costumes on Shrove Tuesday and throw blood oranges to the crowd.^[88] In 2003, the Carnival of Binche was recognised as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.^[89] The Carnival of Aalst, celebrated during the three days preceding Ash Wednesday, received the same recognition in 2010.^[90]



Long-Né and Longuès-Brèsses (Malmedy)



Venetian Mask 2016

The Carnival of Malmedy is locally called *Cwarmê*. Even if Malmedy is located in the east Belgium, near the German-speaking area, the *Cwarmê* is a pure Walloon and Latin carnival. The celebration takes place during the four days before Shrove Tuesday. The *Cwarmê* Sunday is the most important and interesting to see. All the old traditional costumes parade in the street. The *Cwarmê* is a "street carnival" and is not only a parade. People who are disguised pass through the crowd and perform a part of the traditional costume they wear. The famous traditional costumes at the *Cwarmê* of Malmedy are the *Haguète*, the *Longuès-Brèsses*, and the *Long-*



Giant Joker of Maaseik in 2013

Né^[91].

Some Belgian cities hold Carnivals during Lent. One of the best-known is Stavelot, where the *Carnival de la Laetare* takes place on Laetare Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Lent. The participants include the *Blancs-Moussis*, who dress in white, carry long red noses and parade through town attacking bystanders with confetti and dried pig bladders. The town of Halle also celebrates on Laetare Sunday. Belgium's oldest parade is the Carnival Parade of Maaseik, also held on Laetare Sunday, which originated in 1865.^[92]

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Croat-majority city of Ljubuški holds a traditional Carnival (Bosnian: Karneval). Ljubuški is a member of the Federation of European Carnival Cities (FECC).

Croatia

The most famous Croatian Carnival (Croatian: *karneval*, also called *maškare* or *fašnik*) is the Rijeka Carnival, during which the mayor of Rijeka hands over the keys to the city to the Carnival master (*meštar od karnevala*). The festival includes several events, culminating on the final Sunday in a masked procession. (A similar procession for children takes place on the previous weekend.)

Many towns in Croatia's Kvarner region (and in other parts of the country) observe the Carnival period, incorporating local traditions and celebrating local culture. Some of the towns and places are Grobnik, Permani, Kastav and many others places near Rijeka. Just before the end of Carnival, every Kvarner town burns a man-like doll called a "Pust", who is blamed for all the strife of the previous year. The Zvončari, or bell-ringers push away winter and all the bad things in the past year and calling spring, they wear bells and large head regalia representing their areas of origin (for example, those from Halubje wear regalia in the shape of animal heads). The traditional Carnival food is fritule, a pastry. This festival can also be called Poklade.



Main square in Rijeka during Carnival



"Coprnice" (Witches) from Međimurje County, Northern Croatia

Masks are worn to many of the festivities, including concerts and parties. Children and teachers are commonly allowed to wear masks to school for a day, and also wear masks at school dances or while trick-or-treating. Carnivals also take place in summer. One of the most famous is the Senj Summer Carnival – first celebrated in 1968. The towns of Cres, Pag, Novi Vinodolski, and Fužine also organise Summer Carnivals.

Cyprus

Carnival has been celebrated in Cyprus for centuries. The tradition was likely established under Venetian rule around the 16th century. It may have been influenced by Greek traditions, such as festivities for deities such as Dionysus. The celebration originally involved dressing in costumes and holding masked balls or visiting friends. In the twentieth century, it became an organized event held during the 10 days preceding Lent (according to the Greek Orthodox calendar). The festival is celebrated almost exclusively in the city of Limassol.

Three main parades take place during Carnival. The first is held on the first day, during which the "Carnival King" (either a person in costume or an effigy) rides through the city on his carriage. The second is held on the first Sunday of the festival, and the participants are mainly children. The third and largest takes place on the last day of Carnival and involves hundreds of people

walking in costume along the town's longest avenue. The latter two parades are open to anyone who wishes to participate.

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the Masopust Festival takes place from Epiphany (*Den tří králů*) through Ash Wednesday (*Popeleční středa*). The word *masopust* translates literally from old Czech to mean "meat fast", and the festival often includes a pork feast. The tradition is most common in Moravia but also occurs in Bohemia. While practices vary, masks and costumes are present everywhere.^[93]



Masopust masks in Czech Republic, 2013

Denmark and Norway

Carnival in Denmark is called *Fastelavn*, and is held on the Sunday or Monday before Ash Wednesday. The holiday is sometimes described as a Nordic Halloween, with children dressing in costume and gathering treats for the *Fastelavn* feast. One popular custom is the *fastelavnsris*, a switch that children use to flog their parents to wake them up on Fastelavns Sunday.

In Norway, students having seen celebrations in Paris introduced Carnival processions, masked balls, and Carnival balls to Christiana in the 1840s and 1850s. From 1863, the artist federation *Kunstnerforeningen* held annual Carnival balls in the old Freemasons lodge, which inspired Johan Svendsen's compositions *Norsk Kunstnerkarneval* and *Karneval in Paris*. The following year, Svendsen's *Festpolonaise* was written for the opening procession. Edvard Grieg attended and wrote "Aus dem Karneval" (*Folkelivsbilleder* Op. 19). Since 1988, the student organization Tårnseilerne has produced annual masquerade balls in Oslo, with masks, costumes, and processions after attending an opera performance. The Carnival season also includes *Fastelavens søndag* (with cream buns) and *fastelavensris* with decorated branches.

England

In England, the season immediately before Lent was called Shrovetide. A time for confessing sins ("shriving"), it had fewer festivities than the Continental Carnivals. Today, Shrove Tuesday is celebrated as Pancake Day, but little else of the Lent-related Shrovetide survived the 16th-century English Reformation. The Shrovetide Carnival in the United Kingdom is celebrated in Cowes and East Cowes on the Isle of Wight. Since 2012 Hastings, East Sussex has celebrated with its own Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday. Five days of music and street events culminating with a Grand Ball on Fat Tuesday itself. Loosely based on the New Orleans style of carnival, Hastings has taken its own course.^[94]

France

Some major Carnivals of mainland France are the Nice Carnival, the Dunkirk Carnival and the Limoux Carnival. The Nice Carnival was held as far back as 1294, and annually attracts over a million visitors during the two weeks preceding Lent.

Since 1604, a characteristic masked Carnival is celebrated in Limoux.

The Dunkirk Carnival is among the greatest and most exuberant carnivals celebrated in Europe. Its traditions date back to the 17th century and are based on the *vischerbende* as fishermen went from one café to another accompanied by their relatives and friends just before departing to Icelandic fishing grounds.

In the French West Indies, it occurs between the Sunday of Epiphany and Ash Wednesday;^[95] this dates back to the arrival of French colonists in the islands.

Germany, Switzerland, and Austria

Germany

The earliest written record of Carnival in Germany was in 1296 in Speyer.^[96] The first worldwide Carnival parade took place in Cologne in 1823. The most active Carnival week begins on the Thursday before Ash Wednesday, with parades during the weekend, and finishes the night before Ash Wednesday, with the main festivities occurring around *Rosenmontag* (Rose Monday). This time is also called the "Fifth Season". Shrove Tuesday, called *Fastnacht* or *Veilchendienstag*, is celebrated in some cities.

Parties feature self-made and more fanciful costumes and occasional masks. The parties become more exuberant as the weeks progress and peak after New Year, in January and February. The final Tuesday features all-night parties, dancing, hugging, and smooching. Some parties are for all, some for women only and some for children. *Fasnachtsküchle* (similar to *Kreppel* or donuts) are the traditional Fasching food and are baked or fried.

In Germany, the *Rheinische Fasching* and the *Schwäbische Fastnacht* are distinct; first is less formal and more political, second is much more traditional.

"Rheinische" Carnival (Fasnacht, Fasnet, Fastabend, Fastelovend, Fasteleer, Fasching)

The "Rheinische" Carnival is held in the west of Germany, mainly in the states of North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate, but also in Hesse (including Upper Hesse), Bavaria, and other states. Some cities are more famous for celebrations such as parades and costume balls. The Cologne Carnival, as well as those in Mainz, Eschweiler and Düsseldorf, are the largest and most famous. Other cities have their own, often less well-known celebrations, parades, and parties, such as Bonn, Worms am Rhein, Speyer, Kaiserslautern, Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Duisburg, Dortmund, Essen, Mannheim, Münster, Krefeld, Ludwigshafen, Mönchengladbach, Stuttgart, Augsburg, Munich, and Nuremberg. The biggest German carnival club is located in a little town Dieburg in South Hesse. On Carnival Thursday (called "Old Women Day" or "The Women's Day" in commemoration of an 1824 revolt by washer-women), women storm city halls, cut men's ties, and are allowed to kiss any passing man. Special acrobatic show dances in mock uniforms are a traditional contribution to most festive balls. They may or may not have been a source of inspiration to American cheerleading. The Fasching parades and floats make fun of individual politicians and other public figures. Many speeches do the same. Cologne Carnival traditions explained in English. (https://www.gespraechswert.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Karneval_Guide_English_201701.pdf) Traditions often also include the "Faschingssitzung" – a sit-only party with dancing and singing presentations, and often many speeches given that humorously criticize politics.

"Swabian–Alemannic" Carnival (*Schwäbische Fastnacht*)

The "Swabian-Alemannic" Carnival, known as *Schwäbische Fastnacht*, takes place in Baden, Swabia, the Allgäu, Alsace, and Vorarlberg (western Austria). During the pagan era, it represented the time of year when the reign of the grim winter spirits is over, and these spirits are hunted and expelled. It then adapted to Catholicism. The first official record of Karneval, Fasching or Fastnacht in Germany dates to 1296. Often the costumes and masks on parades strictly follow traditional designs and represent specific historical characters, public figures – or specific daemons.

Swiss Fasnacht

In Switzerland, *Fasnacht* takes place in the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, e.g. in Lucerne (*Lozärner Fasnacht*), but also in Protestant Basel. However, the *Basler Fasnacht* begins on the Monday *after* Ash Wednesday. Both began in the Late Middle Ages. Smaller Fasnacht festivities take place across German Switzerland, e.g. in Bern and Olten, or in the eastern part (Zurich, St. Gallen, Appenzell).

Greece

In Greece, Carnival is also known as the *Apokriés* (Greek: Αποκριές, "saying goodbye to meat"), or the season of the "Opening of the Triodion", so named after the liturgical book used by the church from then until Holy Week. One of the season's high points is *Tsiknopempti*, when celebrants enjoy roast beef dinners; the ritual is repeated the following Sunday. The following week, the last before Lent, is called *Tyrinē* (Greek: Τυρινή, "cheese [week]") because meat is forbidden, although dairy products are not. Lent begins on "Clean Monday", the day after "Cheese Sunday". Throughout the Carnival season, people disguise themselves as *maskarádes* ("masqueraders") and engage in pranks and revelry.



Reitenderle, der Grundholde, Hudelmale, Schnarragagges; popular Fasnet characters from Kisslegg im Allgäu, Swabia



From the *Monstercorso* on *Güdisdienstag*'s evening in Lucerne (2009)

Patras holds the largest annual Carnival in Greece; the famous Patras Carnival is a three-day spectacle replete with concerts, *balles masqués*, parading troupes, a treasure hunt, and many events for children. The grand parade of masked troupes and floats is held at noon on *Tyrine* Sunday, and culminates in the ceremonial burning of the effigy of King Carnival at the Patras harbour.



The float of the King Carnival parading in Patras, Greece

Other regions host festivities of smaller extent, focused on the reenactment of traditional carnevalic customs, such as Tyrnavos (Thessaly), Kozani (Western Macedonia), Rethymno (Crete), and in Xanthi (Eastern Macedonia and Thrace). Tyrnavos holds an annual Phallus festival, a traditional "phallkloric" event^[97] in which giant, gaudily painted effigies of phalluses made of papier-mâché are paraded, and which women are asked to touch or kiss. Their reward for so doing is a shot of the famous local tsipouro alcohol spirit.

Every year, from 1 to 8 January, mostly in regions of Western Macedonia, Carnival festivals erupt. The best known is the Kastorian Carnival or "Ragoutsaria" (Gr. "*Ραγκουτσαρία*")^[98] [tags: Kastoria, Kastorian Carnival, Ragoutsaria, Ραγκουτσαρία, Καστοριά]. It takes place from 6 to 8 January with mass participation serenaded by brass bands, pipises, and Macedonian and grand casa drums. It is an ancient celebration of nature's rebirth (festivals for Dionysus (Dionysia) and Kronos (Saturnalia)), which ends the third day in a dance in the medieval square Ntoltso where the bands play at the same time.

Hungary

In Mohács, Hungary, the Busójárás is a celebration held at the end of the Carnival season. It involves locals dressing in woolly costumes, with scary masks and noise-makers. They perform a burial ritual to symbolise the end of winter and spike doughnuts on weapons to symbolise the defeat of the Ottomans.



The Busójárás in Hungary

Italy

The most famous Carnivals of Italy are held in Venice, Viareggio, and Ivrea.

The Carnival in Venice was first recorded in 1268. Its subversive nature is reflected in Italy's many laws over the centuries attempting to restrict celebrations and the wearing of masks. Carnival celebrations in Venice were halted after the city fell under Austrian control in 1798, but were revived in the late 20th century.



This Venetian tradition is most famous for its distinctive masks.

The month-long Carnival of Viareggio is characterized mainly by its parade of floats and masks caricaturing popular figures. In 2001, the town built a new "Carnival citadel" dedicated to Carnival preparations and entertainment.

The Carnival of Ivrea is famous for its "Battle of the Oranges" fought with fruit between the people on foot and the troops of the tyrant on carts, to remember the wars of the Middle Ages.

In the most part of the Archdiocese of Milan, the Carnival lasts four more days, ending on the Saturday after Ash Wednesday, because of the Ambrosian Rite.



The *Battle of the Oranges* at the carnival of Ivrea

In Sardinia, the Carnival (in Sardinian language *Carrasecare* or *Carrasegare*^[99]) varies greatly from the one in the mainland of Italy: due to its close relation to the Dionysian Rites, the majority of the Sardinian celebrations features not only feasts and parades but also crude fertility rites such as bloodsheds to fertilize the land,^[100] the death and the resurrection of the Carnival characters^[101] and representations of violence and torture.^[100] The typical characters of the Sardinian Carnival are zoomorphic and/or androgynous, such as the *Mamuthones and Issohadores*^[102] from Mamoiada, the *Boes and Merdules*^[103] from Ottana and many more.^[104] The Carnival is celebrated with street performances^[105] that are typically accompanied by Sardinian dirges called *attittidus*,^[106]

meaning literally "cry of a baby when the mother doesn't want nursed him/her anymore" (from the word *titta* meaning breasts^[107]). Other particular and important Carnival instances in Sardinia are the Sartiglia in Oristano and the Tempio Pausania Carnival.^[108]

Lithuania

Užgavėnės is a Lithuanian festival that takes place on Shrove Tuesday. Its name in English means "the time before Lent". The celebration corresponds to Carnival holiday traditions.

Užgavėnės begins on the night before Ash Wednesday, when an effigy of winter (usually named Morė) is burnt. A major element symbolizes the defeat of winter in the Northern Hemisphere. It is a staged battle between Lašininis ("porky") personifying winter and Kanapinis ("hempen man") personifying spring. Devils, witches, goats, the grim reaper, and other joyful and frightening characters appear in costumes during the celebrations.

Eating pancakes is an important part of the celebration.

Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, the pre-Lenten holiday season is known as *Fuesend*. Throughout the Grand-Duchy, parades and parties are held.

Pétange is the home of the Grand-Duchy's largest pre-Lenten Karneval celebration. Annually hosting a cavalcade with roughly 1,200 participants and thousand of celebrants, the official name is Karneval Gemeng Péiteng or "Kagepe" (the initials in Luxembourgish are pronounced "Ka", "Ge" and "Pe").

The town of Remich holds a three-day-long celebration, notable for two special events in addition to its parades. The first is the *Stréimännchen*, which is the burning of a male effigy from the Remich Bridge that crosses the Moselle River separating the Grand Duchy from Germany. The *Stréimännchen* symbolizes the burning away of winter. The other special event at the Remich Fuesend celebrations is the *Buergbrennen* or bonfire that closes the celebration.

Like Remich, the town of Esch-sur-Alzette holds a three-day celebration. Other major Fuesend parades in Luxembourg are held in the towns of Diekirch and Schifflange.^[109]

Malta

Carnival in Malta (Maltese: *il-Karnival ta' Malta*) was introduced to the islands by Grand Master Piero de Ponte in 1535. It is held during the week leading up to Ash Wednesday, and typically includes masked balls, fancy dresses, and grotesque mask competitions, lavish late-night parties, a colourful, ticker-tape parade of allegorical floats presided over by King Carnival (Maltese: *ir-Re tal-Karnival*), marching bands, and costumed revellers.

The largest celebration takes place in and around the capital city of Valletta and Floriana; several more "spontaneous" Carnivals take place in more remote areas. The Nadur Carnival is notable for its darker themes. In 2005, the Nadur Carnival hosted the largest-ever gathering of international Carnival organizers for the FECC's global summit.

Traditional dances include the *parata*, a lighthearted re-enactment of the 1565 victory of the Knights Hospitaller over the Turks, and an 18th-century court dance known as *il-Maltija*. Carnival food includes *perlini* (multi-coloured, sugar-coated almonds) and the *prinjolata*, which is a towering assembly of sponge cake, biscuits, almonds, and citrus fruits, topped with cream and pine nuts.



Carnival procession in Valletta on Malta



Carnival in Valletta, Malta

Netherlands

Carnival in the Netherlands is called *Carnaval*, *Vastenavond* ("Eve of Lent") or, in Limburgish, *Vastelaovend(j)*, and is mostly celebrated in traditionally Catholic regions, particularly in the southern provinces of North Brabant, Limburg and Zeeland, but also in Gelderland, especially in Twente. While Dutch Carnaval is officially celebrated on the Sunday through Tuesday preceding Ash Wednesday, since the 1970s the feast has gradually started earlier and generally

includes now the preceding weekend. Although traditions vary from town to town, Dutch carnaval usually includes a parade, a "Prince Carnival" plus cortège ("Council of 11", sometimes with a Jester or Adjutant), sometimes also the handing over by the mayor of the symbolic keys of the town to Prince Carnival, the burning or burial of a symbolic figure, a peasant wedding (*boerenbruiloft*), and eating herring (*haring happen*) on Ash Wednesday.

Two main variants can be distinguished: the *Rhineland carnaval*, found in the province of Limburg, and the *Bourgondische carnaval*, found mainly in North Brabant. Maastricht, Limburg's capital, holds a street carnaval that features elaborate costumes.^[110]



The Fight Between Carnival and Lent,
Pieter Bruegel, 1559

The first known documentation dates from the late 8th century (*Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum*), but Carnaval was already mentioned during the First Council of Nicaea in 325 and by Caesarius of Arles (470-542) around 500 CE. In the Netherlands itself, the first documentation is found in 1383 in 's-Hertogenbosch. The oldest-known images of Dutch Carnaval festivities date from 1485, also in 's-Hertogenbosch.

Normal daily life comes to a stop for about a week in the southern part of the Netherlands during the carnival, with roads temporary blocked and many local businesses closed for the week as a result of employees who are en masse taking the days off during and the day after the carnival.^{[111][112]}

North Macedonia

The most popular Carnivals in North Macedonia are in Vevčani and Strumica.

The Vevčani Carnival (Macedonian: Вевчански Карневал, translated *Vevchanski Karneval*) has been held for over 1,400 years, and takes place on 13 and 14 January (New Year's Eve and New Year's Day by the old calendar). The village becomes a live theatre where costumed actors improvise on the streets in roles such as the traditional "August the Stupid".^[113]

The Strumica Carnival (Macedonian: Струмички Карневал, translated *Strumichki Karneval*) has been held since at least 1670, when the Turkish author Evlija Chelebija wrote while staying there, "I came into a town located in the foothills of a high hillock and what I saw that night was masked people running house-to-house, with laughter, scream and song." The Carnival took an organized form in 1991; in 1994, Strumica became a member of FECC and in 1998 hosted the XVIII International Congress of Carnival Cities. The Strumica Carnival opens on a Saturday night at a masked ball where the Prince and Princess are chosen; the main Carnival night is on Tuesday, when masked participants (including groups from abroad) compete in various subjects. As of 2000, the Festival of Caricatures and Aphorisms has been held as part of Strumica's Carnival celebrations.

Poland

The Polish Carnival season includes Fat Thursday (Polish: *Źłusty Czwartek*), when *pączki* (doughnuts) are eaten, and *Śledzik* (Shrove Tuesday) or Herring Day. The Tuesday before the start of Lent is also often called *Ostatki* (literally "leftovers"), meaning the last day to party before the Lenten season.

The traditional way to celebrate Carnival is the *kulig*, a horse-drawn sleigh ride through the snow-covered countryside. In modern times, Carnival is increasingly seen as an excuse for intensive partying and has become more commercialized, with stores offering Carnival-season sales.

Portugal

Carnival is Carnaval in Portugal, celebrated throughout the country, most famously in Ovar, Sesimbra, Madeira, Loulé, Nazaré, and Torres Vedras. Carnaval in Podence and Lazarim incorporates pagan traditions such as the careto, while the Torres Vedras celebration is probably the most typical.

Although Portugal introduced Christianity and the customs related to Catholic practice to Brazil, the country has begun to adopt some aspects of Brazilian-style Carnaval celebrations, in particular those of Rio de Janeiro with sumptuous parades, samba and other musical elements.

Lazarim

In Lazarim, a civil parish in the municipality of Lamego, celebrations follow the pagan tradition of Roman Saturnalias. It celebrates by burning colorful effigies and dressing in home-made costumes. Locally-made wooden masks are worn. The masks are effigies of men and women with horns, but both roles are performed by men. They are distinguished by their clothes, with caricature attributes of both men and women.

The Lazarim Carnival cycle encompasses two periods, the first starting on the fifth Sunday before Quinquagesima Sunday. Masked figures and people wearing large sculpted heads walk through the town. The locals feast on meats, above all pork. The second cycle, held on Sundays preceding Ash Wednesday, incorporates the tradition of the Compadres and Comadres, with men and women displaying light-hearted authority over the other.

Over the five weeks, men prepare large masked heads and women raise funds to pay for two mannequins that will be sacrificed in a public bonfire. This is a key event and is unique to Portugal. During the bonfire, a girl reads the Compadre's will and a boy reads the Comadre's will. The executors of the will are named, a donkey is symbolically distributed to both female and male "heirs", and then there is the final reckoning in which the Entrudo, or Carnival doll, is burned.

Azores

On the islands of the Azores, local clubs and Carnival groups create colorful and creative costumes that jab at politics or culture.

On São Miguel Island, Carnival features street vendors selling fried dough, called a malassada. The festival on the biggest island starts off with a black tie grand ball, followed by Latin music at Coliseu Micaelense. A children's parade fills the streets of Ponta Delgada with children from each school district in costume. A massive parade continues past midnight, ending in fireworks.

The event includes theatre performances and dances. In the "Danças de Entrudo", hundreds of people follow the dancers around the island. Throughout the show the dancers act out scenes from daily life. The "Dances de Carnival" are allegorical and comedic tales acted out in the streets. The largest is in Angra do Heroísmo, with more than 30 groups performing. More Portuguese-language theatrical performances occur there than anywhere else.

Festivities end on Ash Wednesday, when locals sit down for the "Batatada" or potato feast, in which the main dish is salted cod with potatoes, eggs, mint, bread and wine. Residents then return to the streets for the burning of the "Carnival clown", ending the season.

Madeira

On the island of Madeira, the island's capital, Funchal, wakes up on the Friday before Ash Wednesday to the sound of brass bands and Carnival parades throughout downtown. Festivities continue with concerts and shows in the Praça do Município for five consecutive days. The main Carnival street parade takes place on Saturday evening, with thousands of samba dancers filling the streets. The traditional street event takes place on Tuesday, featuring daring caricatures.^[114]

Arguably, Brazil's Carnival could be traced to the period of the Portuguese Age of Discoveries when their caravels passed regularly through Madeira, a territory that emphatically celebrated Carnival.^{[115][116]}

Other regions

In Estarreja, in the Central region of Portugal, the town's first references to Carnival were in the 14th century, with "Flower Battles", richly decorated floats that paraded through the streets. At the beginning of the twentieth century, these festivities ended with the deaths of its main promoters, only to reappear again in the 1960s to become one of many important Carnival festivals in Portugal.



Sesimbra Carnival, Portugal



Carnaval at Lazarim



A dancer in the Carnival of Madeira, on the island's capital Funchal

In the Northern region of Podence, children appear from Sunday to Tuesday with tin masks and colorful multilayered costumes made from red, green and yellow wool. In the Central Portugal towns of Nelas and Canas de Senhorim, Carnival is an important tourist event. Nelas and Canas de Senhorim host four festive parades that offer colorful and creative costumes: Bairro da Igreja and Cimo do Povo in Nelas and do Paço and do Rossio in Canas de Senhorim.



Ovar Carnival, Portugal

Carnival in the town of Ovar, near Porto, began in 1952 and is the region's largest festivity, representing a large investment and the most important touristic event to the city. It is known for its creative designs, displayed in the Carnival Parade, which features troupes with themed costumes and music, ranging from the traditional to pop culture. Along with the Carnival Parade, there are five nights of partying, finishing with the famous 'Magical night' where people come from all over the country, mostly with their handmade costumes, only to have fun with the locals.

In Lisbon, Carnival offers parades, dances and festivities featuring stars from Portugal and Brazil. The Loures Carnival celebrates the country's folk traditions, including the *enterro do bacalhau* or burial of the cod, which marks the end of Carnival and the

festivities.

North of Lisbon is the famous Torres Vedras Carnival, described as the "most Portuguese in Portugal". The celebration highlight is a parade of creatively decorated streetcars that satirize society and politics.

Other Central Portugal towns, such as Fátima and Leiria, offer colorful, family-friendly celebrations. In these towns, everyone dresses up as if it were Halloween. Children and adults wear masks.

In the Algarve region, several resort towns offer Carnival parades. Besides the themed floats and cars, the festivities include "samba" groups, bands, dances, and music.^[117]

Russia



Boris Kustodiev's painting of Maslenitsa

Maslenitsa (Масленица, also called "Pancake Week" or "Cheese Week") is a Russian folk holiday that incorporates some pagan traditions. It is celebrated during the last week before Lent. The essential element is bliny, Russian pancakes, popularly taken to symbolize the sun. Round and golden, they are made from the rich foods allowed that week by the Orthodox traditions: butter, eggs, and milk. (In the tradition of Orthodox Lent, the consumption of meat ceases one week before that of milk and eggs.)

Maslenitsa also includes masquerades, snowball fights, sledding, swinging on swings, and sleigh rides. The mascot is a brightly dressed straw effigy of Lady Maslenitsa, formerly known as Kostroma. The celebration culminates on Sunday evening, when Lady Maslenitsa is stripped of her finery and put to the flames of a bonfire.^[118]

Slovakia

In Slovakia, the Fašiangy (*fašiang*, *fašangy*) takes place from Three Kings Day (*Třaja králi*) until the midnight before Ash Wednesday (*Škaredá streda* or *Popolcová streda*). At the midnight marking the end of *fašiangy*, a symbolic burial ceremony for the contrabass is performed, because music ceases for Lent.

Slovenia

The Slovenian countryside displays a variety of disguised groups and individual characters, among which the most popular and characteristic is the Kurent (plural: *Kurenti*), a monstrous and demon-like, but fluffy figure. The most significant festival is held in Ptuj (see: Kurentovanje). Its special feature are the Kurents themselves, magical creatures from another world, who visit major events throughout the country, trying to banish the winter and announce spring's arrival, fertility, and new life with noise and dancing. The origin of the Kurent is a mystery, and not much is known of the times, beliefs, or purposes connected with its first appearance. The origin of the name itself is obscure.

The Cerknica Carnival is heralded by a figure called "Poganjič" carrying a whip. In the procession, organised by the "Pust society", a monstrous witch named Uršula is driven from the mountain Slivnica, to be burned at the stake on Ash Wednesday. Unique to this region is a group of dormice, driven by the Devil and a huge fire-breathing dragon. Cerkno and its surrounding area are known for the *Laufarji*, Carnival figures with artistically carved wooden masks.

The *Maškare* from Dobrepolje used to represent a triple character: the beautiful, the ugly (among which the most important represented by an old man, an old woman, a hunchback, and a *Kurent*), and the noble (imitating the urban elite).

The major part of the population, especially the young and children, dress up in ordinary non-ethnic costumes, going to school, work, and organized events, where prizes are given for the best and most original costumes. Costumed children sometimes go from house to house asking for treats.

Spain



The Burial of the Sardine,
Francisco Goya, c. 1812

Arguably the most famous Carnivals in Spain are Santa Cruz, Las Palmas, Sitges, Vilanova i la Geltrú, Tarragona, Águilas, Solsona, Cádiz, Badajoz, Bielsa (an ancestral Carnival celebration), Plan, San Juan de Plan, Laza, Verín, Viana, and Xinzo de Limia.

One of the oldest pre-Indo-European carnival in Europe takes place in Ituren and Zubieta in Navarre in late January/early February. The carnival symbolises the eternal struggle between the forces of good and evil, light and darkness, winter and spring.

Andalusia

In Cádiz, the costumes worn are often related to recent news, such as the bird flu epidemic in 2006, during which many people were disguised as chickens. The feeling of this Carnival is the sharp criticism, the funny play on words and the imagination in the costumes, more than the glamorous dressings. It is traditional to paint the face

with lipstick as a humble substitute of a mask.



A choir singing in the Carnival
of Cádiz

The most famous groups are the chirigotas, choirs, and comparsas. The chirigotas are well known witty, satiric popular groups who sing about politics, new times, and household topics, wearing the same costume, which they prepare for the whole year. The Choirs (*coros*) are wider groups that go on open carts through the streets singing with an orchestra of guitars and lutes. Their signature piece is the "Carnival Tango", alternating comical and serious repertory. The comparsas are the serious counterpart of the chirigota in Cádiz, and the poetic lyrics and the criticism are their main ingredients. They have a more elaborated polyphony that is easily recognizable by the typical countertenor voice.

Canary Islands

The Santa Cruz Carnival is, with the Carnival of Cadiz, the most important festival for Spanish tourism and Spain's largest Carnival.^{[119][120][121][122]} In 1980, it was declared a Festival Tourist International Interest. Every February, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, the capital of the largest of the Canary Islands, hosts the event, attracting around a million people.^[123]

In 1980, it was declared a Festival Tourist International Interest.^[123] In 1987, Cuban singer Celia Cruz with orchestra Billo's Caracas Boys performed at the "Carnival Chicharrero", attended by 250,000 people. This was registered in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the largest gathering of people in an outdoor plaza to attend a concert, a record she holds today.



Carnival Queen of Santa Cruz de
Tenerife, 2009

The Carnival of Las Palmas (Gran Canaria) has a drag queen's gala where a jury chooses a winner.^[124]

Catalonia

In Catalonia, people dress in masks and costume (often in themed groups) and organize a week-long series of parties, pranks, outlandish activities such as bed races, street dramas satirizing public figures, and raucous processions to welcome the arrival of *Sa Majestat el Rei Carnestoltes* ("His Majesty King Carnival"), known by various titles, including *el Rei dels poca-soltes* ("King of the Crackpots"), *Princep etern de Cornudella* ("Eternal Prince of Cuckoldry"), *Duc de ximples i corruptuts* ("Duke of Fools and the Corrupt"), *Marquès de la bona mamella* ("Marquis of the lovely breast"), *Comte de tots els barruts* ("Count of the Insolent"), *Baró de les Calaverades* ("Baron of Nocturnal Debaucheries"), and *Senyor de l'alt Plàtan florit, dels barraquers i gamberrades i artista d'honor dalt del llit* ("Lord of the Tall Banana in Bloom, of the Voyeurs and Punks and the Artist of Honor upon the Bed").^[125]

The King presides over a period of misrule in which conventional social rules may be broken and reckless behavior is encouraged. Festivities are held in the open air, beginning with a *cercavila*, a ritual procession throughout the town to call everyone to attend. *Rues* of masked revelers dance alongside. On Thursday, *Dijous Gras* (Fat Thursday) is celebrated, also called 'omelette day' (el *dia de la truita*), on which coques (de *llardons*, *butifarra d'ou*, *butifarra*), and omelettes are eaten. The festivities end on Ash Wednesday with elaborate funeral rituals marking the death of King Carnival, who is typically burned on a pyre in what is called the "burial of the sardine" (*enterrament de la sardina*), or, in Vilanova, as *l'enterro*.^[126]

The Carnival of Vilanova i la Geltrú has a documented history from 1790^[127] and is one of the richest in the variety of its acts and rituals. It adopts an ancient style in which satire, the grotesque body^[3] (particularly cross-dressing and displays of exaggerated bellies, noses, and phalli) and above all, active participation are valued over glamorous, media-friendly spectacles that Vilanovins mock as "thighs and feathers".^[128] It is best known for *Les Comparses* (held on Sunday), a tumultuous dance in which 12,000 or more dancers organized into rival groups throw 75 tons of hard candies at one other. The women protect their faces with *Mantons de Manila* (Manila shawls), but eye-patches and slings for broken arms are common the following week. Vilanovins organize an elaborate ritual for the arrival of King Carnival called *l'Arrivo* that changes every year. It includes a raucous procession of floats and dancers lampooning current events or public figures and a biting satiric sermon (*el sermo*) delivered by the King himself. On *Dijous Gras*, Vilanovin children are excused from school to participate in the *Merengada*, a day-long scene of eating and fighting with sticky, sweet meringue.

Adults have a meringue battle at midnight at the historic *Plaça de les Cols* in the mysterious *sortida del Moixo Foguer* (the outing of Little-Bird-Bonfire), accompanied by the *Xerraire* (jabberer) who insults the crowd.^[129] In the King's procession, he and his concubines scandalize the town with their sexual behavior. A correfoc (fire run) or Devil's dance (*ball de diables*), features dancing youth amid the sparks and explosions of the ritual crew of devils. Other items includes bed races in the streets, the debauched *Nit dels Mascarots*, karaoke sausage roasts, *xatonades*, the children's party, *Vidalet*, the last night of revelry, *Vidalot*, the *talking-dance* of the Mismatched Couples (*Ball de Malcasats*) and the children's King *Caramel* whose massive belly, long nose and sausage-like hair hint at his insatiable appetites.

For the King's funeral, people dress in elaborate mourning costume, many of them cross-dressing men who carry bouquets of phallic vegetables. In the funeral house, the body of the King is surrounded by an honor guard and weeping concubines, crying over the loss of sexual pleasure brought about by his death. The King's body is carried to the *Plaça de la Vila* where a satiric eulogy is delivered while the townspeople eat salty grilled sardines with bread and wine, suggesting the symbolic cannibalism of the communion ritual. Finally, amid rockets and explosions, the King's body is burned in a massive pyre.^{[126][127]}



Vidalot is the last night of revelry before Ash Wednesday in Vilanova. Water color painting by Brad Erickson.



Children become covered in meringue during Dijous Gras.

Carnaval de Solsona takes place in [Solsona](#), [Lleida](#). It is one of the longest; free events in the streets and nightly concerts run for more than a week. The Carnival is known for a legend that explains how a donkey was hung at the tower bell – because the animal wanted to eat grass that grew on the top of the tower. To celebrate this legend, locals hang a stuffed donkey at the tower that "pisses" above the excited crowd using a water pump. This event is the most important and takes place on Saturday night. For this reason, the inhabitants are called *matarrucs* ("donkey killers").^[130]

"Comparses" groups organize free activities. These groups of friends create and personalize a uniformed suit to wear during the festivities.

In [Sitges](#), special feasts include *xatonades* (*xató* is a traditional local salad of the Penedès coast) served with omelettes. Two important moments are the *Rua de la Disbauxa* (Debauchery Parade) on Sunday night and the *Rua de l'Extermini* (Extermination Parade) on Tuesday night. Around 40 floats draw more than 2,500 participants.

[Tarragona](#) has one of the region's most complete ritual sequences. The events start with the building of a huge barrel and ends with its burning with the effigies of the King and Queen. On Saturday, the main parade takes place with masked groups, zoomorphic figures, music, and percussion bands, and groups with fireworks (the devils, the dragon, the ox, the female dragon). Carnival groups stand out for their clothes full of elegance, showing brilliant examples of fabric crafts, at the Saturday and Sunday parades. About 5,000 people are members of the parade groups.

Valencian Community

One of the most important Spanish Carnival Festivals is celebrated in [Vinaròs](#), a small town situated in the northern part of the [province of Castellón](#), [Valencian Community](#).

The Carnival Festival in Vinaròs has been declared of Regional Touristic Interest and in 2017, this outstanding and ancient show celebrates 35 years of History. The Carnival Festival in Vinaròs became a forbidden celebration during the [Spanish Civil War](#) but after the dictatorship, the party regained importance with the democracy's arrival.

Every year in February, forty days before the Spanish [Cuaresma](#), thirty-three "comparsas" go singing, dancing and walking down the streets in a great costumes' parade in Vinaròs. In addition, other many festive, cultural and musical activities of all ages take place, such as an epic battle of confetti and flour, funny karaoke contests or the so-called "[Entierro de la Sardina](#)" (Burial of the Sardine).

Nevertheless, the most important event is the gala performance of the Carnival's Queen. In this breathtaking show, it is elected the Queen of the Carnival, the major representative of the Carnival in Vinaròs all year round.^[131]

See also

- [Adloyada](#)
- [Careto](#)
- [Carnival of Basel](#)
- [Carny](#)
- [Cirque du Soleil](#)
- [Cologne Carnival](#)
- [Culture of Popular Laughter](#)
- [Fair](#)



The Ball de Malcasats (Dance of the Mismatched Couples) is a satiric talking–dance traditional to Carnaval in Vilanova.




"Ploranyeres" weep for the death of His Majesty and the loss of pleasure.



Donkeys of Solsona, hung in the tower bell.

- [Feast of Fools](#)
- [Federation of European Carnival Cities](#)
- [Mardi Gras](#)
- [Mardi Gras in Mobile, Alabama](#)
- [New Orleans Mardi Gras](#)
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