

Carnival

World celebrations and festivities

There are many festivals and celebrations around the world throughout the year. However, carnival is one of the most famous and colourful festivities. Many carnivals take place in the build-up to the religious season of Lent, which is the six weeks before Easter Sunday. Therefore, many carnivals take place during February. Often during Lent, people give up something that they will find difficult to do. This could be a type of food or a bad habit.

What is carnival?

Carnival can be different depending on the country. Lots of countries focus on their own traditions and are often a celebration of the culture of their country. In most countries at carnival, you will see masks, colourful costumes, music and parades. Some Carnivals have special trinkets or symbols. In New Orleans, they have sweet and very colourful cakes called King Cakes as a symbol of their carnival (Mardi Gras).



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The largest carnival

The most famous and largest carnival in the world takes place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Carnival in Brazil is not just a fun celebration; it is a chance to experience the different types of culture in the country. Brazil is often referred to as a 'melting-pot' of culture. This is because there are a variety of different cultural influences brought about by the diverse population. There are many European, African and American influences. Carnival is about the Brazilian way of life and their way of thinking. There are many parties celebrating the songs, music and dances typical of Brazilian culture. The most popular form of music and dancing at the Rio carnival is samba - a style unique to Brazil. Samba music is often played on drums and there is lots of traditional dancing. The 'Sambódromo' is an avenue made to host carnival in Rio. Every year, there are over 500,000 foreign visitors to this area.



Carnival is often linked to religious traditions; however, it is also a time of fun, with lots of colour, costumes and laughter. It is a time enjoyed by millions across the world.

Carnivals in Europe

There are several carnivals in Europe.

Cadiz is where the largest Spanish carnival happens. It celebrates local traditions along with current and political events. Like Rio, there are parades and floats with lots of music.

Nice in France, is heavily influenced by Catholic traditions, and people indulge in lots of rich food in the build up to Lent. One of the most popular street celebrations is the Battle of the Flowers where there are lots of floats and costumes brimming with plants and flowers.

Cologne is one of the main carnival cities in Germany. The carnival season actually begins in November here and culminates the week before (and including) Shrove Tuesday. There are lots of parades and people dress up - even at work and school. It is one of Germany's most important cultural events.

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Questions about Carnival

- 1) a) When do most carnivals take place?
b) Why do you think this time of year is chosen?
- 2) The word 'brimming' is in bold letters. What does this word mean in this sentence?
- 3) Where do they celebrate Mardi Gras and what is an important symbol of this carnival?
- 4) What is different about carnival season in Germany and most other countries?
- 5) Where does the large parade in Rio actually take place?
- 6) Why do you think carnivals are so popular across the world and attract so many visitors?
- 7) Name and describe two different European carnivals using your own words?
- 8) Imagine you have attended a carnival. Describe in two paragraphs what you have seen, heard and experienced. Use as much detail as possible.