Carnival

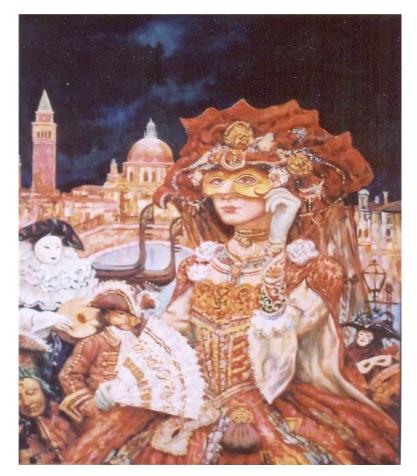
Carnival is a festive season which occurs immediately before Lent; the main events are usually during February. Carnival typically involves a public celebration or parade combining some elements of a circus, mask and public street party. People often dress up or masquerade during the celebrations, which mark an overturning of daily life.





Carnival of Venice





Today, approximately 30,000 visitors come to Venice each day for Carnivals. One of the most important events is the contest for the best mask, placed at the last weekend of the Carnival.

History

Carnival started as a time for celebration and expression throughout the classes, as wearing masks hid any form of identity between social classes.





Venetian carnival masks



Masks have always been a central feature of the Venetian carnival; traditionally people were allowed to wear them between the festival of Santo Stefano (St. Stephen's Day, December 26) and the start of the carnival season and midnight of Shrove Tuesday. They have always been around Venice.





Volto or Larva

The "Volto" was the more common mask used in Venice for centuries. Volto means "face", and it was the simplest mask to produce.





Medico Della Peste (The Plague Doctor)

The Medico Della Peste with its long beak is one of the most bizarre and recognisable of the Venetian masks. The striking design has a macabre history originating from 17th century French physician Charles de Lorme who adopted the mask together with other sanitary precautions while treating plague victims.

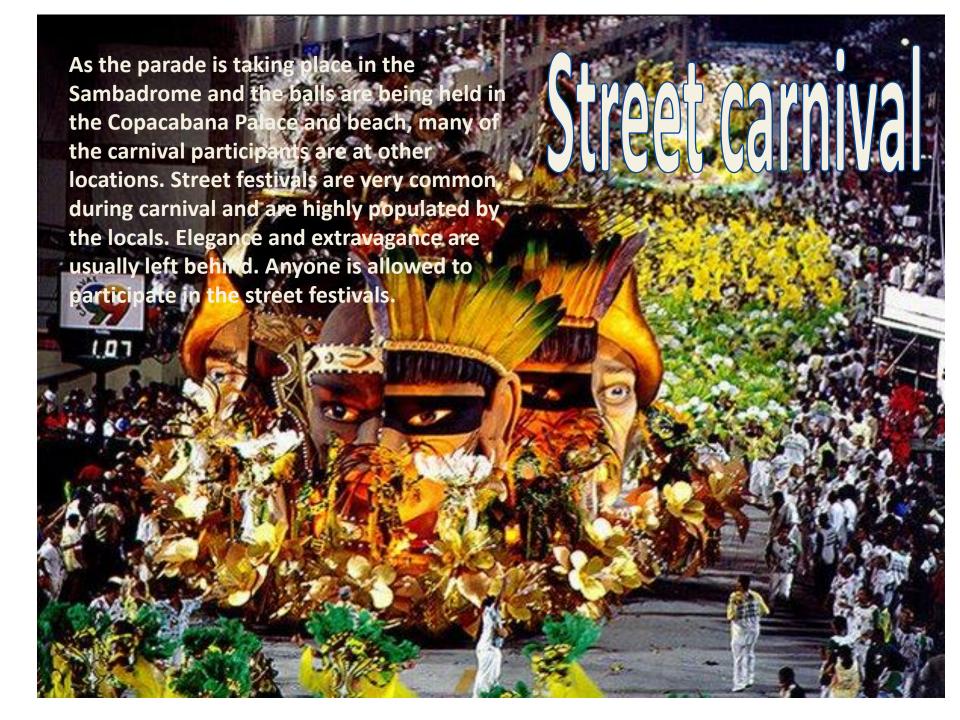








Block parades have become an expressive feature of Rio's Carnival. Today, they number more than 100 and the groups increase each year. Before the show, they gather in a square, then parade in sections of the city, often near the beach. Block parades start in January, and may last until the Sunday after Carnival.





Dancers at the 2005 carnival

Music and dance



Incorporated into every aspect of the Rio carnival are dancing and music. The most famous dance is the samba, a brazilian dance with african influences. The samba was created by the African slaves mixing with the choros, street bands, of Brazil. Other dances include the lundu, the polka, and the maxixe.



Instruments of carnival

Before the samba gained the percussive style, it was played with flutes and string instruments because percussion was looked upon as corrupt. It was in 1930 that the shift came to allow for percussion instruments. There is an ensemble of drum and percussion players that are led by a man that plays an apito, a whistle used to control the music.

