

Venice Carnival, History

The Venice Carnival is the most internationally known festival celebrated in Venice, Italy, as well as being one of the oldest. This congregation of masked people, called Venice Carnival, began in the 15th century, but the tradition can be traced back to the beginning of the 14th Century.



During those years one of the first laws made by the Serenissima was that *masks cannot be used around the city at night*. □ Later, **Venice Carnival** attracted foreigners - including princes - from all over Europe, who came to enjoy the wild festivities while spending fortunes. During the Carnival period Venice offered numerous possibilities for spending money. The choices were various, with activities such as gambling dens, brothels, theatres, cafés, wine shops (licensed and illicit) and restaurants, as well as booths where one could see exotic animals, ropewalkers and jugglers.

The streets of Venice Carnival were full of people in masks, and no differentiation could be made between nobility and the common people. Generally, the costume worn was a cloak with a long-nosed mask. Also popular were masked couples, where a man and a woman would dress as allegorical characters.

In the squares street-artists and singers entertain with songs and music from their guitars, the guests of the Venice Carnival.

The Venice Carnival dissacratory nature reached its bottom when,

during its last days, some masked people started to disturb the building of the preaching pulpits that were under construction for the religious traditions of Lent.

Beginning on S. Stefano Day (26th December) costumes were permitted through the entire period of the Venice Carnival (excluding the Festa delle Marie) which ends at the beginning of Lent. While the Doges reigned, costumes were also allowed from Ascension Day to 10th June, as well as for public banquets and other celebrations. However, they were not allowed to be worn from 5th October to 16th December.

Hiding personal identities was accepted by the "moral in kidding" of the aristocracy as well as by the interclassism Venice was founding its integrity of people on.

There is not much left today of the historical tradition of the Venice Carnival.

In the late 1970's a popular spirit of Venice Carnival bloomed wild, young masked gangs started to throw weethstraw and eggs to not masqued people and spontaneous bands were playing everywhere around Venice; soon the aggressivity dimmed and city authorities began what is now a celebration of the Carnival, mainly for tourists. Unlike many Venetian celebrations that remain almost unknown to the public, Venice Carnival seems to be thriving as much as it ever did.

There are many entertainments and interesting performances, aside of the real parties in Venetian taste that are often hidden for the large public, which is morelike to enjoy the Venice Carnival on the road.

Pay-for-the-party and souvenir shops are yet the easiest track for the tourists, but many curious meeting and experiences are as well available around, in Venice Carnival time.

The Venice Carnival is an adventure worth to be experienced; better if you can do it with a native friend!