**WHAT IS CARNIVAL?**

**Carnival** is a public [celebration](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/w/index.php?title=Wiktionary:celebration&action=edit&redlink=1) which takes place in many cities and towns in many countries around the world, in February or March each year. Carnival can sometimes last for several weeks. In some places there is only one day of celebration. There are often street [parades](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Parade), [bands](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Band), [costumes](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Costume) and many people wear [masks](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Mask). Carnival is linked to religious [traditions](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Tradition) in the [Catholic](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Roman_Catholic) and [Eastern Orthodox](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox) Churches, and it is also linked to local [customs](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Custom).

**Lent**

Many Christian churches have a 40 day "season" of [fasting](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/w/index.php?title=Fasting&action=edit&redlink=1) called [Lent](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Lent), in which Christians prepare for [Easter](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Easter) which is one of the two most important feasts in the Christian year (the other being [Christmas](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Christmas)). Easter is in late March or April. Lent always begins on a Wednesday, which is called [Ash Wednesday](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Ash_Wednesday) in February or March. On that day, many people go to church and have some ash smeared on their forehead as a sign of sorrow for their [sins](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Sin). Then for 40 days, they try to work hard on improving themselves and thinking about the teachings of [Jesus](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Jesus). It is usual for people to "give up" something for Lent. They might stop smoking or stop watching TV so they can spend more time reading the Bible or talking with the family. Many people give up all their favourite foods and have no cake, wine, beer, chocolate, ice cream or other luxury foods.

The name "carnival" comes from Latin and means "putting aside the flesh". This means that during Lent people were not to think about their "flesh" (their bodies) but do things that were good for their [souls](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Soul). The word "flesh"" also means "meat" so many people would eat no meat during Lent.

Nowadays many cities and towns around the world celebrate Carnival for a week or more. The final day of the celebration is Mardi Gras, when there is often a parade. In some cities the Mardi Gras parade is held on the weekend before Lent begins, rather than on the Tuesday, so as not to disturb the business and traffic of the town.

Carnival is celebrated differently around the world, but there are some things that are similar:

* There is often dressing-up in fancy costumes, which often include masks.
* There is usually a street parade of people and musicians. There may also be *floats* which are decorated vehicles.
* There are often loud noises, bright colours and scary faces. These are to frighten evil spirits away while people are fasting. A traditional reason that the performers wear masks is so that the evil spirits do not know who they are.

[](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/File:Maosratten2006.jpg) *A carnival float from the Netherlands*

## **Different uses of the word "carnival"**

Although the word "carnival" still has its old meaning, it is often used to mean public entertainments of different kinds. Some towns have carnivals that have nothing to do with Lent and are at different times of year. Nowadays there are all sorts of different carnivals. Some of these carnivals, like the [Notting Hill](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Notting_Hill) Carnival in London and the [Melbourne Cup](https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Melbourne_Cup) Racing Carnival in Australia are very famous.

The word "carnival" is now used for festivals, parades and competitions of all sorts. There are school sports carnivals, folk carnivals, multi-cultural carnivals, horse-racing carnivals, wine and food carnivals and boating carnivals.

<https://wiki.kidzsearch.com/wiki/Carnival>

<https://youtu.be/A2j0rKaWo6g>