

Fastnachtzeit oder Fastenzeit: Carnival Season

Fasching und Karneval: Beschreibung (description)

THE BIGGEST ANNUAL BASH— KARNEVAL OR FASCHING

Karneval, otherwise known down south as *Fasching*, is a major event in Catholic parts of the country, particularly in the Rhineland and throughout southern Germany. The festival season officially gets going at 11 minutes past 11 A.M. on the 11th day of the 11th month of the year (when nothing much happens), gathers momentum during the January doldrums and builds up to a frenzied crescendo of costume balls, parties and parades on the days immediately preceding Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent. The unsuspecting visitor who finds himself in Cologne, Mainz or Munich—the unrivaled carnival centers—during Shrovetide is in for a big surprise. The entire city (so it seems) is out in the streets in various degrees of fancy dress, dancing, swaying arm in arm, making a tremendous din, and generally playing the Fool—which is what Karneval is all about.

Carnival in Germany Today

As in the past, Carnival today is a time for fun, merriment and carousing, for a boisterous escape from humdrum everyday life. If you visit Germany during the Carnival period – in 2010 this will be from February 11 – 16 you can experience a wonderful mixture of colourful traditional customs and exuberant partying. In all the areas where Carnival is celebrated the streets are full of merry revellers dressed up in creative costumes. You can watch the enactment of ancient customs, enjoy parades, listen to the rousing music at concerts and galas and join in the fun yourself at the many public parties.

Between winter and spring, starting officially on the 2nd of the 2nd month, Karneval, Fasching or Fastnacht (the names differ according to regions) begins. It is at its peak during the last three days before Ash-Wednesday with festivities such as parades, balls and dancing in the streets. The cities on the Rhine, Köln (Cologne), Mainz and Trier especially, close schools during these three frenzied days. Fools reign supreme and the keys to the cities are in the hands of Karnevalsprinz and Prinzessin. Little serious business is conducted there at this time.



Karneval

Visit a mostly Catholic German town during high carnival season (Karneval) and you're likely to find the whole place thrown topsy-turvy. As in New Orleans at Mardi Gras or Rio de Janeiro during its carnival season, you'll see people wearing crazy costumes, singing and dancing in the streets, hugging, kissing and throwing confetti. At school, kids will pretty much be doing as they please. Their parents may go to work, but they are not expected to get much done. In Germany, especially in the areas along the Rhine river, in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Thuringia and Bavaria, Karneval is a main event.

Karneval or Fasching has always been a riotous season of merrymaking just before Lent. Modern Germans may care less than before for the rigorous taboos of Lent: formerly, no meat was allowed during the period, so huge feasts were laid on just before it began. But Karneval is still a good excuse for wild parties, crazy processions, and a gigantic consumption of alcohol.

The main object of the Karneval Season is, that if you don a costume and take the costume's personality you forget yourself, have a great time and follow the Narren (fools) from bar to bar and to have a very good time. Some people are willing to hawk something valuable, just to afford die drei tollen Tage, (the three crazy days.)

Carnival - Crazy, Zany Winter Days

If you visit a town in Germany's Rhineland or in the southwestern region during the supposedly dark days of winter you're likely to find the whole place thrown topsy-turvy. That's because the period before Ash Wednesday is known as Carnival or the fifth season.

Carnival - known in German as Karneval, Fastnacht, Fasching, Fassenacht, or Fasnet, depending on the region - has its roots in the spring celebrations of pre-Christian times, when people wore masks to scare away winter spirits and welcomed the rebirth of nature with singing and dancing. Today it is observed mainly in Catholic regions as a season of feasting and fun before the fasting period of Lent.