

Fastnachtzeit oder Fastenzeit: Carnival Season

Why are there different names for „Carnival“?

Carnival is a regional festival and is celebrated in different ways according to different local traditions. It's known as:

Karneval in the "Rheinland" (Rhineland) area;

Fastnacht around the city of Mainz ('fasting night', or eve of Lent, the period of fasting);

Fasnet in Swabia (south-west region of Germany) and in the southwest of the state of Bavaria;

Fosnat in the Franken region (northern Bavaria), and as

Fasching around the city of "München" (Munich) and in Austria.

The Geography of Fasching, Fastnacht and Karneval

Although the division is roughly north/south, where the three words are used is actually a bit more complex.

Fasching – Austria (central, eastern), Bavaria (Munich, Würzburg); Berlin, Brandenburg, Saxony (Sachsen)

Fastnacht (*Fasent, Fasnet, Fasnacht, Fassenacht*) – Arlberg (western Austria), Baden (Black Forest, Freiburg, Konstanz), Franconia (*Franken*, northern Bavaria), Hesse (Wiesbaden), Saarland, Mainz, Swabia, Switzerland (Basel, Bern, Lucerne, Zurich), Luxembourg (*Fuesend*, "fasting evening")

Karneval – Rhineland: Aachen, Bonn, Cologne (Köln), Düsseldorf

Catholic Carnival

Carnival is a Catholic tradition and is found almost exclusively in Catholic countries (such as Austria) or Catholic regions (such as Bavaria and the Rhineland). However, there are carnival celebrations in some Protestant areas, notably in Berlin and in Zurich (where *Fasnacht* takes place after Lent has begun). As we shall see below, there are as many ways to celebrate what Germans call "the fifth season" as there are locations where it is celebrated!

Karneval in the north and in the Rhineland is noted for its political and social parody. Elaborate floats poke fun at local, national and international politicians as well as the past year's news events. Although they may also feature parody, the emphasis in many *Fasching* and *Fastnacht* regions is on traditional masks, and dressing up as devils, fools and wild beasts. Military-like uniforms are also less common than in *Karneval* regions.