

KARNEVALSBRÄUCHE

Wie feiert man Karneval? heutige Bräuche (How is Carnival celebrated? / customs of today)

Umzüge und Züge (parades and processions)

Monday, the famous *Rosenmontagszug* (Rose Monday Parade), e.g. in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Mainz, and many other cities. During these events, hundreds of thousands of people celebrate in the streets, even if temperatures are low, most of them dressed up in costumes.

The biggest parades are on Rose

Where to Celebrate Carnival:

Almost every German city celebrates carnival and organizes a street parade in its city center. The best and most traditional carnival festivities take place in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Münster, Aachen, and Mainz.

More than forty tons of candy are thrown to spectators, along with bottles of cologne, flowers, and other small gifts.

Various Major Parade Days

Although in general, the Rhineland *Karneval* has its big final parade on Rose Monday, most *Fasching* and *Fastnacht* celebrations have their big parade on Carnival Sunday. This happens in Frankfurt am Main, Aschaffenburg, Mannheim, Munich, Ludwigshafen, Würzburg and Karlstadt. As mentioned earlier, the Swiss cities of Basel, Bern and Zurich have their *Alte Fastnacht* observance later than everyone else.

The big day for *Karneval* is the Rose Monday parade, whereas the big *Fasching* parades are usually the day before, on Carnival Sunday. (The big final parade for Mardi Gras in New Orleans is on Shrove Tuesday.) But one of Germany's biggest carnival parades takes place in the northern German city of Braunschweig, also on Carnival Sunday. Called "Schoduvel" ("scaring away the devil"), the Braunschweig carnival dates back to 1293.

Today there are elaborate parades (*Umzüge*) in all the large and small communities where *Fasching* is celebrated. Floats and marchers displaying large caricature heads often lampoon regional and national politicians. Another part of the celebration involves Carnival royalty (princes, princesses) and a sort of "counter-government" during the season.

Nobody worries about this today, however – except in scholarly treatises: *Karneval* or *Fasching* or *Fastnacht* is merriment and gaiety with the stamp of official approval. Its strongholds are to be found in Munich (*Fasching*), Mainz, Cologne and Düsseldorf (*Karneval*). But festivities are also held outside of these large cities – not only in private circles, but also with processions. And these small processions through the streets away from the main centers are often merrier and more spontaneous. In consideration for the attraction exerted by the big processions, however, they do not take place on the traditional Shrove Monday, but a day or sometimes even a week previously. But not after *Fastnacht* – that's when it's all over.

Business firms with offices along the parade's line of march usually invite their best customers to an all day beer bust on Monday, *Rosenmontag*. Clients who sometimes may be seen hanging out of windows hurl confetti and tickertape on the spectators below. Last year, one client toppled out onto a passing garbage truck and was deposited out at the dump unknowingly by the driver. He merely dusted himself off, flagged down a passing Mercedes, and was back at the fiesta almost before his hosts knew he was gone.

All this is the overture to the final and most glorious highlight; "Rose Monday" with its splendid parades. Colorful floats depicting the human weaknesses of the mighty, and bands playing the many witty songs composed during the season, draw huge cheers from a multitude of onlookers as they make their way through the narrow streets of the old cities. Tons of candy are thrown into the crowds from the floats, and the children are very adept at catching these tasty morsels, believe me. The float of Prince Carnival is always the most resplendent and generous with showers of gifts or nosegays, consequently drawing the loudest roars of approval.