

KARNEVALSBRÄUCHE

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

Umzüge und Züge (parades and processions)

CARNIVAL CRAZINESS AT ROSE MONDAY PARADES IN GERMANY

"official" parade on Rose Monday, which is considered the ultimate climax of the drei tolle Tage (three crazy days). This parade usually is four to five miles long. In slow procession, it winds through the city, with huge floats, horses, bands, funny groups of jesters wearing grotesque or comical masks, and "regiments" of the Fools Guilds in their traditional picturesque uniforms. Dense crowds line the streets, and people laugh, drink (mostly it's rather cold), sing, flirt, gape, scream, try to catch the candy that rains down from the floats... Rich and poor, high and low, learned and simple — they all are just one big, crazy family. The city is turned upside down, and normal business is practically at a standstill.



ALL parades have a tilt at authority. In cities such as Düsseldorf, Cologne, Frankfurt and Munich, political satire is aimed at state and federal politicians. In country towns and villages the humor, always blunt, gets across local civil complaints about, for instance, the absence of a municipal "comfort station" near the marketplace.

Fancy dress is the gear of the day, for marchers and spectators alike, and doesn't come off until the small hours of Tuesday morning.



The highpoint of Carnival in both town and country is reached in the loud and colourful processions. Precious carved and painted masks are worn in Swabia. In the Rhineland people, dressed up in costumes, romp and surge through the streets during the final days of Carnival. The processions on the last Monday before Lent attract many hundreds of thousands of people — even from neighbouring countries — to the main Carnival centres. Everyone is free to play the fool!

Celebrators clog the streets, filling the gutters with confetti and themselves with Lowenbrau. Costumed revellers strut up and down the pedestrian avenues of downtown, pausing to listen and watch the rock bands, little German bands, jazz bands, and one-every 100 feet or so along the avenue. man bands performing in small groups.

Crowds are massive. Tens of thousands pack together like lemmings on their seaward rush and seem as bent on self-destruction. Despite the jostling and the drunken condition of the crowd, it's rare to seem tempers flare.

On Shrove Monday (February 6), callers from North Germany, where it was business as usual, had little success in reaching colleagues or business partners farther south by telephone. Offices in large parts of the country were empty and the streets full as revelers turned out to watch parades featuring costumed craziness and political caricature. Along the 6-kilometer parade route in Cologne alone, some 40 tons of candy were showered on the spectators.