

It's Carnival Time!

Watch the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3h17wvY0ISo> about famous carnivals around the world.

People celebrate carnival around the world the week before Lent¹, a period of fasting² for 40 days when Christians prepare for Easter. Celebrations of carnival around the world often include a parade with costumes and music but each country has their own unique traditions. Let's look at some ways people celebrate carnival around the world.

Mardi Gras (USA & Canada)

Mardi Gras is French and means "*Fat Tuesday*". This was the last day just before Lent when people could eat fatty food before fasting. During the [Middle Ages](#) in Europe, it was normal for people to have a big feast on the Tuesday before the fast started. In many towns this turned into a big public party, with entertainment in the town square. The tradition arrived in North America in the late 17th century. Nowadays, it involves dancing, drinking, parades, masks and costumes, in cities like New Orleans in the U.S. or Toronto and Montreal in Canada .



Italy has many carnival festivals. The **Carnival of Venice** is the largest in Italy. It is famous for its elaborate masks and costumes made of gold and silk. There is a competition for the most beautiful mask. Celebrations last for 2 or 3 weeks. It started when people wearing masks could do whatever they wanted and no-one would understand who they really were.

¹ Lent = Σαρακοστή

² fasting = νηστεία



In Binche, a small village in **Belgium**, Gilles are the main characters in this carnival. They are men who made their costumes in secret months ago. Gilles are only men from Binche, and they are able to become Gilles when they are just three years old. Almost everyone in Binche gets up before 4am to make the characters of the day come alive. Children become Pierrots, Harlequins or little Gilles, and the older boys wear peasants clothes.



<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/belgium/articles/why-do-we-celebrate-the-carnival-of-binche-in-belgium/>

The Carnival of *Nice*, **France** has hundreds of thousands of colorful flowers on floats in the parade that passes through the streets and people in costumes throw flowers to the crowds.





In **Russia** before Lent, many Orthodox Christians enjoy the food (milk, cheese and other dairy products) that are forbidden at Lent. People enjoy blini (pancakes), play in the snow, dress up, dance, and say goodbye to winter. The mascot is a lady made of straw in bright clothes "Lady Maslenitsa". At the end of the festival, the figure is thrown on the bonfire, which is a symbol for the end of winter.

Read the texts and write **MG** for Mardi Gras, **V** for Venice, **B** for Belgium, **F** for France or **R** for Russia.

In which carnival

1. they use gold and silk costumes and masks?
2. there is a fire at the end of the celebrations?
3. the people get up very early in the morning?
4. masqueraders throw flowers to people?
5. there is a lot of dancing and drinking?
6. people play with the snow?
7. the main characters of the celebrations can be very young?

