

The Venice Carnival

The Carnival in Venice was first recorded in 1268. The subversive nature of the festival is reflected in the many laws created over the centuries in Italy attempting to restrict celebrations and often banning the wearing of masks but masks have always been a central feature of the Venetian carnival; traditionally people are allowed to wear them and mask makers (mascareri) enjoy a special position in society, with their own laws and their own guild. Carnival starts on February 2nd and ends on Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday. Carnival in Venice is particularly suggestive thanks to the beautiful and romantic city. You can see mask in the most famous squares, along the wonderful canals, over the bridges, on gondolas and... everywhere.



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The Viareggio Carnival

Viareggio Carnival is another very famous Carnival in Italy. Since 2002 it has been named Italian and European event. Every year during the four weeks time, daily and nightly celebrations take place. Due to its continuous success, Carnival is now looking forward to future involvement in great performances, including floats, parades, district celebrations, masks and shows of every kind.

The Viareggio Carnival, Carnival of Italy and Europe, celebrates every year the splendour of a whole month of night and day celebrations, with floats, paradas, district celebrations, masked dances and shows of every kind along the impressive scenery of seaside avenues. It will end with a gorgeous night parade and the traditional fireworks.



The Putignano Carnival (our local Carnival-40 Km far from Bari)

The Putignano Carnival has now become one of the most popular Carnivals in Italy, it is a celebration in the name of peace, love and solidarity. The starts of these spectacular shows will once again be the huge machè floats which parade from the 12th February to the 5th March, with their wide programme of entertainment and fun for children and adults.

The huge floats parading on 12,19,26,28 February and 5 March – will be the 1st category floats – the biggest ones weighing about forty tons.

The procession will also include folkloristic bands and performers with the most original masks, guarantee of excitement, fun and tradition.

Noteworthy is the programme of related events including a large number of cultural events such as fun musical comedies in vernacular, a series of menus available in restaurants of the area, festivals in the various town neighbourhoods, as well as numerous masked balls held in the best discos and ballrooms of the area.

Candle offering

On December 26th marks the start of Carnival. During the ritual procession of St. Steven, patron saint of Putignano, the President of the Carnival Foundation offers, as a sign of devotion, a large candle to the President of the Patron Saint Committee. Who, like in ancient times, carries the candle during the procession.

The origins of the ritual have been lost in time, but without a doubt it indicates devotion and a gesture of obedience, necessary in thanking the clergy and asking forgiveness, in advance, for all the sins that will certainly be perpetrated during the long carnival period.



Propaggine (transfer St.Stefan Holy Relics to Putignano)

On December 26th Putignano welcomes Carnival with the “Propaggine”. This is definitely one of the most traditional aspects of this manifestation.

According to local legend, the origin of the “Propaggine” goes back as far as 26 December 1394, during the transfer St.Stefan Protomartye’s Holy Relics from Monopoli to Putignano. Since that day the Holy Relics have been preserved in the church of St. Maria of the Greca.

It is narrated that during the transferring of the Holy Relics some farmers who were going to plant a new vineyard joined the procession with dancing, singing and reciting rhymes. Over the centuries, this festival on December 26th, has lost its religious content and has acquired a critical and satirical character directed towards the most prominent figures of the city.



Thursday

Through the period from the “Propaggini” until the last Parade, the Carnival includes various manifestation, which take place every Thursday.

The number of Thursday festivities are governed by the date of Easter, and, as a rule, don’t exceed seven.

For the citizens of Putignano, these Thursdays, are an occasion to have fun. Many tricks are played on people and parties are held in underground rooms, called “iòsere”. These festivities can be compared to the American Halloween.



Last rites

Beginning late on the afternoon of Monday, second-last day of Carnival, many small celebrations take place in the various ballrooms and underground rooms called “iòsere”. A fake priest, together with altar boys that carry incense, candles and an open ceremonial umbrella, walks the streets of Putignano carrying a dustpan brush and water, contained in a bedpan, and gives “last rites” to the dying Carnival. There being no real or imaginary representative of Carnival, anyone getting in their way, could find themselves being given a wetting and phony blessing.



Carnival Funeral Procession

The end of Carnival is marked by its death and its funeral. The Carnival Funeral Procession starts immediately after the evening parade of the illuminated floats and the procession goes on all through the night and the next morning.



The funeral procession crosses the streets of the city followed by the wife of Carnival, who cries and praises the virtues of her dead husband. Behind the wife there are scorning hired mourners crying in agonizing tones.



The Maccheroni Bell: a street celebration

An hour before midnight, the day of Mardi Grass. In Piazza Plebliscito, the Mother Church's plaza, a papier machè bell is placed and thanks to an amplification system 365 bell tolls announce, to the citizens of Putignano, that the time of celebrations and extravagances has ended and a time of fasting and repentance has started. The 365 bell tolls represent each day of the year. While the bell is chiming, maccheroni with tomato sauce and salami is eaten and dancing goes on for the last hour before midnight. At midnight a pinch of ash is thrown over the heads of the people, symbolizing the start of Lent, but...



... Carnival continues, on the first Sunday of Lent

La pentolaccia: a street game

In the middle of the evening the dancing is stopped and the competition begins. People gather together to take part in the game.

An urn is suspended by a rope on a hook and is raised and lowered, and occasionally made to hit the floor by the one or two of the people that hold the rope.

One at a time people are eye banded and given a stick with which to break the clay "Pentolaccia". It is full of sweets, iced biscuits, chocolates, candy, dried fruit, small toys and confetti which people can enjoy when the urn is finally broken to pieces.

