

Masquerade

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Every year in February, for roughly two weeks before Ash Wednesday, Venice turns into a big party, as thousands of Venetians and tourists from all over the world dress up in crazy costumes and masks and enjoy parades, shows, and concerts. This is the Carnival of Venice, a famous street festival with a long tradition—the first one was held 900 years ago.

Centuries ago, during the carnival, the rules of everyday life were turned upside down. The masks and costumes made everyone equal—it was not clear who was rich, who was a priest, or who was a poor artisan. Carnival-goers mocked the rules and had as much fun as they wanted—on one condition: a mask had to hide their faces. Today, the carnival is just a joyful street party, but the mask is still its most important symbol.

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