

Carnival has been celebrated throughout the country for centuries.

Streets are filled with parade floats, lively music, dances, colourful costumes and people wearing masks.

Carnival is celebrated throughout the country in three different styles: the Portuguese, the Brazilian and the rural country style, each one having its own characteristics and admirers.

The most boisterous are the ones of Ovar, Mealhada, Loulé (Algarve), Torres Vedras (Lisbon) and Funchal (Madeira).

The Northern ones from Podence, Lazarim and Lindoso are less sumptuous but very popular among the enthusiasts.

Carnival of Torres Vedras

The Torres Vedras Carnival is an important event rooted in the cultural and social identity of the city, the first reference dates back to 1574. From 1980 onward, the carnival of Torres Vedras became professionalized and it has been growing year after year, rejecting external influences and becoming the “most Portuguese carnival of Portugal”.

It is famous for its allegoric floats with political satire and irony making fun of political figures and huge parades with men dressed up as women and women as men and all sorts of costumes. “Cabeçudos”, “Gigantones”, (giant dolls) and “Zé-Pereiras” (men playing drums) also animate the streets.



Carnival of Ovar

The Carnival of Ovar and Mealhada have adopted some of the aspects of Brazilian-style Carnival celebrations, in particular those of Rio de Janeiro with sumptuous parades, Samba and other Brazilian musical elements.

Samba schools and clubs, with competing groups of musicians and dancers, parade down the main avenue introducing their allegoric floats and fancy outfits in a reinterpretation of the famous ones in Brazil.



Carnival of Lazarim

In the village of Lazarim, Carnival is celebrated by men and women who wear hand carved masks called “caretos”, allowing people to scorn others without revealing their true identity. People gather around the main square to assist a demonstration of social criticism and exposure of others wrong doings throughout the year.



These masks are made of alder wood by local craftsmen.





Carnival of Podence

In the village of Podence, single young men dress up as “Caretos”, by wearing rudimentary leather, wood or brass painted masks with a sharp nose and covered with a bright coloured quilt or costume with red, yellow and green wool fringes adorned with lots of bells. They aim to run after, catch and kiss all the single women in the village, even if it means having to climb balconies. They need to make good use of the day, because between Carnival and Easter it is time to rest.



Carnival of Lindoso

In the village of Lindoso, people decorate an oxen cart with colourful flowers and ribbons, which will then tour the village from the castle to the main square carrying a man-like doll, called “Pai velho” which will burn in a bonfire because he is responsible for all the bad events of the previous year.



This pagan tradition also celebrates the arrival of spring. Men ritually try to scare winter away with loud singing, concertina playing and dancing.



These villages’ animations are increasingly popular and well-known throughout the country.

School Carnival

Carnival is also celebrated at school. Each class prepare their own colourful costumes and hand-made masks to participate in the school parade.

Usually there is a big student’s parade in the streets of each municipality.



Happy Carnival



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Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme