

Carnevale Di Venezia Fact File

Introduction to Venice

Venice is a city in northern Italy known both for tourism and for industry, and is the capital of the region Veneto, with a population of about 272,000 (census estimate 1 January 2004).

The name is derived from the ancient tribe of Veneti that inhabited the region in Roman times. The city stretches across 117 small islands in the marshy Venetian Lagoon along the Adriatic Sea in northeast Italy. The saltwater lagoon stretches along the shoreline between the mouths of the Po (south) and the Piave (north) Rivers. The population estimate of 272,000 inhabitants includes the population of the whole Commune of Venezia; around 60,000 in the historic city of Venice (Centro storico); 176,000 in Terraferma (the Mainland), mostly in the large communes of Mestre and Marghera; and 31,000 live on other islands in the lagoon.

With 19 million visitors per year (2006) it is the city most visited in Italy, more than Rome (18 million) and Florence (13 million).

Carnevale di Venezia

The Carnival of Venice (Italian: Carnevale di Venezia) is an annual festival, held in Venice, Italy. The Carnival starts around two weeks before Ash Wednesday and ends on Shrove Tuesday.

Carnival started as a time for celebration and expression throughout the classes, as wearing masks hid any form of identity between social classes. During the 1970s, the Italian government decided to bring back the history and culture of Venice, and sought to use the traditional Carnival as the centrepiece of their efforts. Today, approximately 30,000 visitors come to Venice each day for Carnivals.

Carnevale isn't just a Venetian tradition; similar festivities occur throughout much of the Roman Catholic world, including other cities in Italy. The term "carnevale" comes from the Latin for "farewell to meat" and suggests a good-bye party for the steaks and stews that Catholics traditionally gave up during the weeks of fasting before Easter. The masquerade aspect of Carnival is even older: the Romans celebrated winter with a fertility festival where masks were worn by citizens and slaves alike.

Venetian carnival masks

Masks have always been a central feature of the Venetian carnival; traditionally people were allowed to wear them between the festival of Santo Stefano (St. Stephen's Day, December 26) and the start of the carnival season and midnight of Shrove Tuesday.

Venetian masks can be made in leather or with the original glass technique. The original masks were rather simple in design and decoration and often had a symbolic and practical function]. Nowadays, most of them are made with the application of gesso and gold leaf and are all hand-painted using natural feathers and gems to decorate.

Venice Carnival masks fall into several categories:

Traditional Venetian masks such as the white *volto* half-mask with nose cover and its variant, the "plague doctor's" mask with its phallic beak. (According to tradition, the beak was intended to protect the wearer from being infected by the plague.) This was the more common mask used in Venice for centuries. *Volto* means "face" to design that is was the most common, simplest mask.

Bauta is the whole face, with a stubborn chin line, no mouth, and lots of gilding". One may find masks sold as *Bautas* that cover only the upper part of the face from the forehead to the nose and upper cheeks, thereby concealing identity but enabling the wearer to talk and eat or drink easily. It tends to be the main type of mask worn during the Carnival. It was used also on many other occasions as a device for hiding the wearer's identity and social status. It would permit the wearer to act more freely in cases where he or she wanted to interact with other members of the society outside the bounds of identity and everyday convention. It was thus useful for a variety of purposes, some of them illicit or criminal, others just personal, such as romantic encounters.

In 18th century, the *Bauta* had become a standardized society mask and disguise regulated by the Venetian government. It was obligatory to wear it at certain political decision-making events when all citizens were required to act anonymously. Only citizens had the right to use the *Bauta*. Its role was similar to the anonymizing processes invented to guarantee general, direct, free, equal and secret ballots in modern democracies.

It was not allowed to wear weapons along with the mask, and police had the right to enforce this ruling.

Fantasy masks are figments of the maskmaker's imagination, although they may be inspired by historical designs.

Moretta is an oval mask of black velvet that was usually worn by women visiting convents. It was invented in France and rapidly became popular in Venice as it brought out the beauty of feminine features. The mask was finished off with a veil, and was secured in place by a small bit in the wearer's mouth.

Commedia dell'Arte masks are based on traditional characters like Harlequin and Pierrot.

Resources required to create your Venetian masks

- Mask template (attached)
- Card or strong paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Elastic to attach to mask, if attaching to head
- Stick, if the mask is a hand held one
- Paint
- Decorations, such as feathers, beads, sequins, tissue paper, etc

Further information

<http://www.carnivalofvenice.com/?lang=en>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnival_of_Venice
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venice>
www.piazza-italia.co.uk







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Mask Template

