How to DRESS for the Ponce Carnival

Introduction

What is a Carnival?

There are many types of carnivals celebrated all over the world. A carnival can be a small street fair or circus, or a large celebration like Mardi Gras. In Ponce (PAWNsay), Puerto Rico, Carnival is a special celebration in the month of February, before the Christian season of Lent. During the carnival, people dress in brightly-colored costumes and masks, dance, and play music.



The Ponce Carnival

People in the town of Ponce have been celebrating carnival for over 250 years! Each year the carnival lasts the whole month of February with parades, music, and special events. At the end of the carnival, everyone celebrates the "burial of the sardine." A sardine is a small fish. A woman leads a "pretend"

funeral procession through the town, while the crowd sings songs and beats drums. As the sardine is put in its grave, each person throws in a handful of dirt. Then the crowd sings a final song

sings a final song...

iYa se muerto el carnaval! Ya lo llevan a enterrar; échenle poquita tierra que se vuelve a levantar.

Carnival is dead now
They are burying him;
Throw just a little dirt in
So he can rise again.

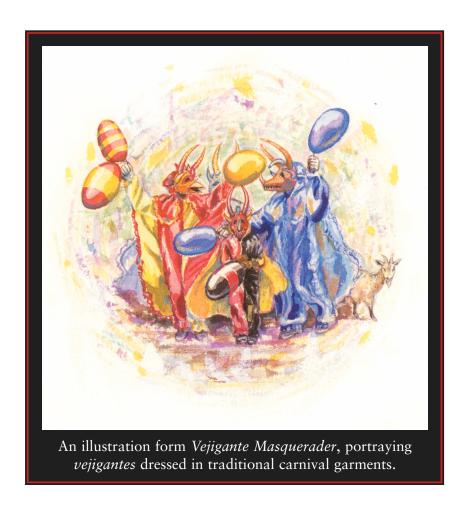


What is a vejigante?

A person dressed up for the Ponce Carnival in Puerto Rico is called a *vejigante* (bay-he-GAHN-tay). The job of a *vejigante* is to scare people, much like dressing up as a scary monster for Halloween. The *vejigante* swats children with a *vejiga* (bay-HE-gah), a cow's bladder that has been dried and blown-up like a balloon.

Every *vejigante* needs a carnival mask. The masks used at the Ponce Carnival are made of papier-maché. Each mask is made into a scary or devilish shape, and decorated with bright colors, horns, and playful designs.

Costumes are one-piece coveralls made out of bright cloth. Many of the costumes are made with the colors of the Spanish flag and the town of Ponce. Yellow and red are the colors of the Spanish flag, and black and red are the colors of the town of Ponce.



Continue on to the next page to color your own vejigante!

