

# **The Carnival of Patra**

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# The Carnival of Patra

The Carnival of Patra is the biggest carnival event in Greece. It's been going on for about 180 years. The celebration starts at 17 of January and it lasts till "Ash Monday"-which is a Greek holiday. The carnival of Patra is a series of several events such as **dances, parades, the hunt of the hidden treasure**, the children's carnival, etc. The peak of the carnival is the last weekend with the night walking **parade on Saturday** and the big spectacular **parade of floats on Sunday** and the ritual of **burning the king of the carnival** at the port of Patra. The spirit of the carnival is characterized by improvisation, inspiration and volunteerism.






# History

Most opinions agree that the start of the Patra's carnival was the first carnival dance in honor of the god Dionysus. In the heart of winter, religious people call the god to be reborn and bring spring again. In 1880, on Saint Antonios day "mpoules" (teams of people in disguise wandered around the neighborhoods and with a humorous mood they pull out jokes to their friends or unknown people) make their first appearance. This tradition is almost forgotten nowadays. In 1974 begins the modern phase of the carnival. People leave their cars and parade on foot on the streets of Patra (until then only floats paraded). The show comes to its pick with a gigantic parade and the streets of Patra are flooded with hundreds of thousands of visitors



# Organization



The soul of the carnival are the thousands of carnivalists both natives and visitors who love the carnival of Patra, people at any age who participate spontaneously to the formal and informal carnival events like carnival parties and celebrations at houses, neighborhoods, clubs, cafeterias, restaurants, etc.

Nevertheless, the last decades, the largest part of the carnival is organized by the Municipality of Patra and its Municipal Enterprise of Cultural Development of Patra.







# Opening Ceremony

On 17 of January, the carnival crier appears in the streets of Patra with a specially made musical float. The crier announces the start of the carnival and calls the natives to gather that night of the same day for the opening ceremony, to the central square of Patra, Saint George's Square. A spectacular celebration takes place with a lot of surprises cause its content is kept secret till the last moment and the beginning of the carnival is officially announced by the Mayor.







# Mpourmpoulia

Mpourmpoulia is a tradition of Patra. It consists of evening dances where women come wearing a black, long and loose domino and a mask so that they are not recognized and they are free to choose any mate to dance. Back in the years, when the relationships between the genders were very strict, this was an annual getaway and a chance for real and imaginary erotic adventures. They are still going on to keep up with the tradition.









# Parade

The major event of the carnival of Patra is the Big Parade. The leaders of the parade are the municipality's carnival floats and then the teams of the hidden treasure follow unending. Even though the flow of the parade is good, it lasts for several hours due to the number of the participants (35-40.000 the last years). It crosses the city and it is watched by thousands of viewers on the streets, on balconies and on television.















# Closing Ceremony

The float of the carnival is burnt with along happening concerts and dances to say goodbye to the carnival that is over.





