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HOTELES

PANORÁMICA

TORVISCAS ALTO * * *

CARNIVAL

RECORDS AND AWARDS

Throughout its history, the carnival of Santa Cruz Tenerife has won numerous awards and even world records, some of them are:

On 18th January 1980 it was declared a Festival of International Tourist Interest by the Secretary of State for Tourism, making it, together with the Carnival of Cadiz, the only Spanish carnival to receive this recognition. Being the “chicharrero” carnival the only Canary Island festival with this distinction, which makes it the most important festival celebrated in the Canary Archipelago.

In 1987, the Cuban singer Celia Cruz and the Billos Caracas Boys Orchestra attended the Carnaval Chicharrero, which was registered in the Guinness Book of Records as the largest congregation of people in an open-air square to attend a concert. This record still stands today.

In 1993, the local designer Carlos Nieves, presented the largest costume presented to date. "Pacha enters my dream", worn by Mónica García Brito and raised as 1st Lady of Honour

In 2000, the Santa Cruz de Tenerife Carnival, dedicated that year to Los Pirates, made the city the World Carnival Capital.

In 2010 the local designer Willy Jorge with the fantasy "The Goddess of Desire in a night of Tangara" set a new milestone in the history of the carnival by accompanying the parade of his candidate with two drag queens. This was a revolutionary and different event in the carnival queens' galas.

Today the Carnival of Santa Cruz de Tenerife aspires to become a World Heritage Site. Today it is considered the second most popular and internationally known carnival, after those held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Among the recognitions that this carnival has, it is worth mentioning the fact that despite having suffered great persecution during the Franco dictatorship, it was never managed to extinguish this carnival as the main festivity of the people of Tenerife. Despite national pressures, the city of Santa Cruz de Tenerife has continued to celebrate it uninterruptedly up to the present day.

In 2019, the Carnival of Santa Cruz de Tenerife broke the record set in 1987 with Celia Cruz, as more than 400,000 people danced to the rhythm of Juan Luis Guerra during the daytime Carnival on Piñata Saturday, although due to the lack of a notary due to the unexpected response of the public, it could not be registered in the Guinness Book of Records.

CARNIVAL´S HISTORY

Many experts have tried unsuccessfully to discover the exact origin of the term Carnival. Some claim it comes from “carnelevarium”, the Latin word for the religious prohibition of meat consumption during Lent, while others relate it to the carrus navalis (boat on wheels) that the priest of the god Bacchus drove during roman bacchanals.

However, researchers agree in defining this celebration as a pagan festival prior to Christianity, whose rites and customs were later assimilated by the peoples who adopted this religion. Regardless of its etymology, experts affirm that it was a festival that went against pre-established social norms and demands, becoming an expression of freedom, joy and debauchery.

Carnival survived the religious and monarchical attempts to eradicate the celebration during the Middle Ages, and has survived until the present day. It was in the 16th century that it was brought to Tenerife by the Spaniards and Portuguese, who stopped over on their way to the New Continent and their American colonies.

According to travellers and chroniclers of the time, Carnival in the 18th century was celebrated both by the wealthy classes at their dances and parties, and by the people at more boisterous celebrations. They celebrated despite the religious and civil prohibition of dancing and masked jokes in the streets. During the 19th century, new types of festive events appeared (parades, artistic exhibitions and competitions), in addition to the traditional dancing. The custom of the “tapaderas”, upper-class women who mingled in the streets with the common people thanks to the mystery of the masks, also spread. Historians consider this custom to be the forerunner of the “mascaritas de la sábana and el abanador”, which became common at the beginning of the following century.

In the first decades of the 20th century there was an increase in the arrival of tourists attracted by the Carnival. The prosperity of the 1920s favoured this celebration to the point that in 1925, the first programme of Carnival festivities was created by the Santa Cruz de Tenerife Town Council.

This period also saw the appearance of groups that went beyond the traditional mask: “rondallas”, “comparsas”, “estudiantinas” and “murgas”. In addition, costume design progressed and the simplicity of the mask evolved into costumes of greater quality and elaboration, which led to the first competitions.

The Spanish Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship make a brake to the celebration of these festivities, which were already deeply rooted in Tenerife society. Despite the repression, clandestine parties began to be organised in the privacy of homes.

In 1961, the celebration of Carnival was again officially accepted under the euphemistic name of Winter Festivities, declared as a National´s Tourist Interest party in 1967. After the arrival of democracy, the Carnival regained its name and gradually became the popular festival par excellence of Santa Cruz de Tenerife until it was declared a Festival of International Tourist Interest in 1980.

Since then, and now detached from its religious origins, the Carnival has become - due to its colourfulness, the quality of its competitions, parades and concerts, and the authenticity of its street celebrations - the second most popular and best-known Carnival on an international level, only behind that of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

CARNIVAL IN THE PRESENT DAY

On the island of Tenerife there are currently several localities that celebrate their particular carnival festivities, both in the north and south of the island, but the most historically representative and world famous is that of the island's capital, the Carnival of Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

The date of the festivities is not exact, it varies depending on the celebration of the Easter on the Christian calendar, the Carnival of Santa Cruz de Tenerife is celebrated between the end of January and February.

The list of activities that take place in the Santa Cruz carnival is very varied, with competitions of comparsas, lyrical-musical groups, rondallas, election of the carnival queen (adult, children's and senior citizens) and the famous murgas competition. However, almost a month before these competitions take place, the official presentation takes place in the street of La Noria. One of the most famous streets in the capital.

Before the first weekend of carnival, the big gala for the election of the queen takes place, an event that is broadcast nationwide on television. In this competition, the candidates parade on stage in very bulky costumes made of all kinds of materials, weighing between 150 and 200 kilos, which means that the candidates use wheels to transport them.

Once the Santa Cruz carnival queen has been celebrated and elected, the carnival parade takes place, in which all the carnival groups go through the main streets of the city, this announcing the arrival of the carnival in the island's capital.

Once the carnival parade has been held, Carnival Saturday arrives, which is dedicated entirely to dancing in the street. On this day, different stages are set up around the city where groups, generally Latin music groups, delight the population with the best Latin music of the moment. There is also the presence of private floats with their own music.

On Sunday, the well-known daytime carnival is held, which has been a consolidated activity since 2008. With the celebration of this day, the possibility was raised that the family should also be the protagonist of this festival, declared to be of international tourist interest, by organising a daytime event.

Carnival Monday is the big day of the festival with performances on the main stages in the capital. Specifically, in 1987, with the performance of the Cuban singer Celia Cruz and the Billo´s Caracas Boys orchestra, 250.000 people attended the concert, which made it into the Guinness Book of Records.

Tuesday is the day known as the day of the great apotheosis of the carnival with a parade along the city's main seafront avenue, which officially marks the end of the carnival.

On Ash Wednesday, the burial of the sardine is celebrated. The streets of Santa Cruz are dressed in mourning to accompany a giant sardine made of papier-mâché by the inmates of the Tenerife II prison, during the journey you can hear the desperate cries of the "widows" for the death of the sardine. Ash Wednesday also symbolises the first day of Lent, which lasts until Holy Saturday, during which time fasting and abstinence from meat is practised.

Both Saturday and Sunday of the “piñata” is the weekend that marks the end of the carnival festival until the following year. In 2008, Saturday and Sunday of the “piñata”, as well as Sunday of the carnival, were introduced as a daytime carnival, where from noon to four in the afternoon simultaneous musical performances are held in various areas of the city. On “Piñata” Sunday, the traditional antique car competition and the performance of the famous NIFU NIFA philharmonic will take place.

COMPETITIONS

During the Santa Cruz carnival, a series of competitions take place in which each and every one of the groups and musical ensembles show off their best.

- Adults “murgas”; this is the main competition of the carnival in which the murgas from Tenerife sing and criticise politics, always accompanied by the famous murguero whistle.

- Children's Murgas; children's version of the “Murga” competition where the participants are under 18 years of age.
- Musical ensembles; competition in which the ensembles perform Caribbean-inspired rhythms.
- Third age groups; members who all belong to the so-called "third age", where the performance is more related to Canarian folklore.
- Rondallas and lyrical-musical groups. This competition is known as the "cultured part" of the Tenerife carnival and the songs performed are from Spanish lyric poetry, opera and zarzuela.
- Adult choreographies; non-professionals choreograph choreographies and perform them on stage.
- Children's choreographies; the children's version of the adult choreography competition.
- Adult “Comparsas”; a musical group where not only the costume but also the harmony in the dance and the rhythm of the song on stage are displayed.
- Children's “Comparsas”; this is the children's version of the adult competition.
- Rhythm and harmony; the comparsa proves its worth by parading through the streets to the rhythm of batucadas along the main maritime avenue of Santa Cruz.
- Laughter song; this is the most recent competition and the prize is awarded to the wittiest and funniest song created for the occasion.

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