

# URUGUAY

## CARNIVAL

THE WORLD'S LONGEST CARNIVAL

Colorful and joyful shows are displayed on street parades and neighborhood stages for 40 days.



📍 Rambla 25 de Agosto de 1825 y Yacaré  
Montevideo, Uruguay

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In the warm nights of February, mainly in the capital Montevideo, carnival participants present their vision of the country and the world through criticism, satire, parody and humor. The performances, music, dance, costumes, represent on stage the passages of each year. **Carnival** allows visitors to participate in a great party and also get in touch with the spirit and character of Uruguayans. The groups are divided into categories: **Parodistas (Parodists)**, **Revistas (Music hall)**, **Humoristas (Humorists)**, **Lubolos (Candombe) and Murga**, the latter being their most characteristic expressions, especially in the south of the country while in the north **Samba Schools** prevail.

In Montevideo it begins with an **Inaugural Parade along Avenida 18 de Julio** where all the participant groups join in; **allegorical cars and the courtship of the Queens accompany the artists.**

Another dazzling street event is the **Desfile de Llamadas (Drums Call Parade)** which takes place in the neighborhoods of Barrio Sur and Palermo in the capital. They evoke the call made by black slaves to gather outside the city walls in the 19th century. Tens of thousands of spectators vibrate to the strength and color of the show.



# “ CANDOMBE: drum's party ”

The **Sociedades de Negros y Lubolos (Communities of Negros and Lubolos) or Comparsas de Candombe** are the heirs of a tradition rooted in the so-called Salas de la Nación (Afro-descendant groups) of the colonial era. The Africans brought as slaves managed to pass on heritage and values of their rich culture and in that process they gave birth to the **“drum”**.



Dums are the essence of the comparsa. The rhythm of the Candombe comes from the so-called “cuerda”, a group of drummers formed by three types of drums: piano, repique and chico. The drum is touched by hitting the skin with an open hand and with a stick that can also hit the wooden part. It is hung on one shoulder by a strap to be able to march while it is being touched.

The rest of the comparsa unfolds with its typical costumes in front of the “cuerda”, whose number can surpass the seventy performers.



Candombe

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE  
OF HUMANITY (UNESCO)



**More than 2000 drums  
sound in unison along the  
“Desfile de Llamadas”  
(Drums Call parade).**

**This experience cannot be enjoyed nowhere in the world.**

The **“Desfile de Llamadas”** takes its name from “the call of the drums” that Afro-descendants made to meet “outside the city walls” and since the end of the 19th century in some collective dwellings called “conventillos” in neighborhoods or areas of Montevideo.

The march of each group is headed by a banner which symbolizes the emblem of the Tribe or Ethnic group; figures of half-moons and stars are other significant elements to which large flags are added. These are followed by the dance troupe and the ancestral characters. This is how the **“Gramillero”** represents the sorcerer of the tribe. He wears a frock coat, top hat, cane, glasses and white beard and carries a suitcase with herbs. He is accompanied by the **“Mama Vieja” (Old Mamma)** in colorful clothes, with a hand fan and umbrella, who dances slowly flirting with the Gramillero. The **“Escobero” (Broom Man)** originally led the drums during the parade with a cane; today he dances with a small broom, moving at the rhythm of the drums. Striking **“Vedettes” (Female Stars)** add sensuality to these dances, evoking rituals and dancing in front of the “cuerda”.



## THE MURGA: ONE OF THE CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS WITH GREATER POPULARITY

The Murgas have undergone numerous transformations since the late 19th century. Although they are usually associated with a Spanish origin, Cadiz (primarily since 1908), the spectrum of musical rhythms used has been very broad and the percussion rhythms of Candombe of African origin are identified in the characteristic “marcha camión” (truck’s march). Costume design and makeup in murgas draw some of their influence from similar European artistic expressions. The Uruguayan Murga, currently consists of **17 units: a scene and chorus director, 13 singers in the chorus divided according to their vocal range and 3 members that make up the percussion section which is composed by cymbals, bass drum and snare drum.**



**Since its origin the murga has been an expression of social and political criticism, displayed through its performances in the form of parody and humorous satire.**

Over the last decades its integration has become mixed. The so-called “Murgas Jóvenes” (Young Murgas) have revitalized the staging and the stage movement in the same way other murga groups have added innovations to the shows marking each historical moment. Their performances, which take place in what we call **“tablados”**, whether public or private, in Montevideo or in the interior of the country, put on stage humorous lyrics with humor, satire and criticism of current affairs, using multiple choral arrangements, eye-catching costumes and creative make-up. Carnival was born in the neighborhoods and most have a Murga group to encourage, support or follow, either on the parades or official competitions, which have qualifying juries that award prizes and mentions. Murga rehearsals are open to the public where entire families can learn and sing their repertoires. In Montevideo visitors can go to the **Carnival Museum** all year round and learn about this national traditional festivity. Thousands of visitors who have come to the country off season have still been able to be captivated by this exhibition and have enjoyed and shared this feeling with carnival goers as hosts.

