Notting Hill Carnival – The Jobs That Make it Happen

Notting Hill Carnival is a huge street festival that takes place in London every year.

It's all about celebrating Caribbean heritage, arts and culture - including music, food and dancing.

When and why did it start?

The first festival was in 1966 and it was put on by someone called Rhaune Laslett, a local resident and social worker. Rhaune, who lived in Notting Hill with her mum and dad, wanted to highlight and celebrate the diversity in her area by putting on a festival.

It's got bigger and bigger since then. Organisers today say it's the second biggest carnival in the world, and the biggest one in Europe! It's thought that around 50 people went to the first festival – nowadays organisers expect up to 2 million!

What happens?

It's loud, colourful and vibrant! There's plenty of dancing, singing and processions that take place through the streets. People spend months working on their festival costumes, and show them off in the huge parade.

There's all kind of music, including steel bands, reggae and salsa artists. There are approximately 40 static sound systems, ten steel pan bands and 70 performing stages. And there's a lot of traditional food to choose from. There are over 300 food stalls selling things like curried goat, roti and jerk chicken. Yum!

Lots of people come together to make this huge event happen. Let's take a closer look at some of the jobs they do...
Performers

You can expect to see up to 50,000 performers every year at the carnival. These include:

- **Steel bands** – a steel pan is a musical instrument originating from Trinidad and Tobago. Steel bands bring the unique sound and energy of the Caribbean to the streets of London.

- **Mas bands** - Mas Bands create and provide the colourful costumes for the carnival. Every year each band has a new theme and the general public are welcome to buy a costume and join a band to ‘play mas’ on the parade route at Carnival. A group of judges decide on the best mas band and the winners are announced on social media.

- **Sound systems** - Rooted in Jamaican culture and ‘Reggae’ music, sound systems were officially introduced to the carnival in 1973. Today there are over 30 sound systems catering for different musical tastes. Everything from ‘Dub’, ‘Rare Groove’ and ‘House’ to ‘Jungle’, ‘Samba’ ‘Blues’ and ‘Hip Hop’. Each sound system is manned by a team of people, who together create a unique party vibe wherever they set up and play recorded music of their choice.

Food traders

The carnival offers food from around the world and there are over 300 stalls to choose from. These include traditional Caribbean foods such as ‘Jamaican Jerk Chicken’, Trinidadian ‘Roti’, and Guyanese ‘Pepper Pot’. If you don’t eat meat there are also veggie options at most stalls and an increase in vegan food traders in recent years.
Street cleaners

A team of street cleaners, refuse staff and waste managers along with a huge fleet of some 30 vehicles will lead the clean-up. This is arranged by the local council, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Security and welfare staff

Each year over 1000 stewards are hired to help keep people safe at the carnival. More than 12,000 Police Officers are also called to be on duty in and around the carnival. St John’s Ambulance will also have staff in attendance to look after anyone who becomes unwell.

Organisers

The Carnival Village Trust (CVT), are a registered charity located in the heart of Notting Hill. It is their responsibility to organise the festival. People who work for the charity have to work together to make important decisions about how the carnival will be delivered each year.

The information and images in this pack were gathered from below sources:

Official Notting Hill Carnival website: https://nhcarnival.org/

BBC Newsround ‘What is Notting Hill Carnival?’ article

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea website: rbkc.gov.uk
Activity: Host your own carnival

Have a go at hosting your very own mini-carnival at home!

Pick one or more ideas from those listed below to try:

- **Food trader** – Ask an adult to help you cook a traditional Caribbean dish, or cook something that is traditional from your own culture and serve it to your family.

- **Make a costume** – Use items in your home to make a colourful costume. You can use the accessories that you designed earlier as the base!

- **Host your own sound system** – You could pick some of your favourite songs, or some traditional carnival music and play it for your family. Maybe even start your own dance parade! If you have access to Spotify they have ready-made carnival playlists. Or, if you play an instrument or sing, why not put on a performance at home!

- **Design a poster** – Advertise your mini-carnival by designing a colourful poster.

Don’t forget to clean up after, just like the street cleaners who make sure everything is clean and tidy for people who live in the Notting Hill area.