

## Grenada's J'Ouvert: Oil, Paint or Chocolate?

As the dawn struggles to overcome night, shadowy visions emerge—men covered in pitch black oil and pulling heavy chains, technicolor bodies covered from head-to-toe in brilliant paints, revelers of all ages, shapes and costumes—bumping and maneuvering down the shadowy streets, energized by pounding Soca music and rum. This is Grenada's J'Ouvert, possibly the favorite part of Grenada's Carnival. J'Ouvert is a wild and fun street party filled with music and color. It's a huge, raucous event that begins in the early morning twilight and parades until noon.

### The Origin of J'Ouvert

It's believed that J'Ouvert originated as result of slaves being excluded from the plantation owners masquerade balls which were the highlight of the Carnival season. Slaves covered themselves with oil and paint to disguise themselves as they partied the night away and parodied their owners.





## **How to Prepare for Grenada's J'Ouvert**

Experienced revelers start by covering themselves with body oil or Vaseline, they don their oldest clothes or fanciful costumes and often add shower caps to protect themselves from the inevitable smears of paint, chocolate and oil that will cover their bodies as they dance and bump against each other in the huge crowd-packed street party.

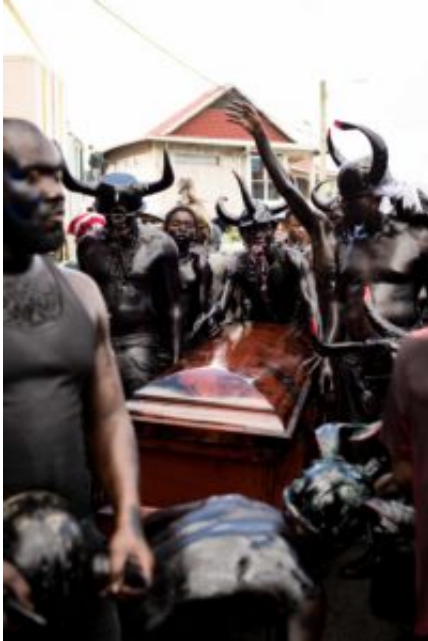
## **Who Participates in Grenada's J'Ouvert?**



Don't be surprised to see hunched, elderly women shaking their booty right next to young Adonis studs, glistening with oil and paint. Children participate also, hanging on tight to their parents, eyes wide with excitement and wonder.

Visitors don't need to be afraid to attend. If you stand on the side of the road, no one will bump you - *but where is the fun in that?* Jump into the action with clean clothes and people will politely indicate they'd like to brush their colors onto your pristine body. Once initiated, all bets are off and you'll need to burn or trash your clothes.

### **Why is Grenada's J'Ouvert World Famous?**



What makes Grenada's J'Ouvert world famous is the quality and quantity of Jab Jab players – the mostly men, and some women, who cover themselves in used motor oil – usually sporting horned helmets with raw whole fish clenched in their mouths and dripping fake blood while dragging chains, disemboweled mannequins and other whimsical items.

Jab Jab is a representation of the devil. Jab Jabbers move in groups and often carry brightly lit torches at night that add to their mystique. Everyone stops and watches as the Jab Jabbers strut and tantalize their audience with their heavily oiled, glistening bodies, their outrageous embellishments and zany antics.

### **Alternatives to Used Motor Oil**

For those who don't want to be covered in used motor oil, brightly colored paints have been the traditional alternative and revelers end up sporting multiple colors swirled across their bodies. Still, this may not be an enticing alternative for some and now liquid chocolate has been added to the mix. The chocolate sort of looks like oil, is non-toxic and is easier to remove once the party has ended. And, it smells great. I'm still partial to the traditional oil or paint.



### **How and Where to find Grenada's J'Ouvert**

J'Ouvert loosely begins around 4:30 AM so the start is fairly dark with the sun finally winning over the night when it rises around 6:00 AM. It's a little mysterious, a little spooky, but not scary at all. The party starts at the Lagoon and people dance and parade down the two mile stretch to the Carenage-Grenada's picturesque harbor. This is Grenada, and it's a party, so of course there is music. Loud, thumping Soca music blares from gargantuan speakers mounted on trucks. Steel bands also play the pan music that is so recognizable throughout the Caribbean. There is a wide variety of street vendors selling food and drinks which also adds to the chaos and the fun.

### **Where is the Best Place to Experience J'Ouvert?**



Position yourself at the Lagoon for a taste of Grenada's J'Ouvert - where there is still room to move and you have some control over how painted you become. Go to the Carenage for a full body immersive experience, where the music is louder, the crowds are bigger and pandemonium reigns. J'Ouvert is an important part of Carnival all over the world, but Grenada has elevated it to an art form that is fabulous and fun.

### **J'Ouvert is Part of a Larger Carnival Experience**

Grenada's Carnival is called Spicemas. Spice refers to Grenada's reputation as the Spice Island of the Caribbean because of the abundance of spices that are grown here and Mas is short for masquerade – the parades of costumed revelers. The kick off for Spicemas starts in April and there are regional competitions between the parishes (counties in the US) happening monthly and then weekly until August. Once August begins, Grenadians get serious about Carnival and the events are larger and the final competitions take place to determine the best Calypso and Soca Singer/songwriters, Pan (Steel drum) players, the best masquerade band across the Island and to crown the King and Queen of the Bands as well as the Carnival Queen.

### **When to Go?**

The essential days of Carnival are Sunday night until Tuesday night but for a full experience try to be there by Thursday so you can see all the competitions. These events showcase the best talent and are happenings you don't want to miss. Grenada's J'Ouvert always happens just before dawn on Carnival Monday.

### **Why go to Grenada's Carnival?**

Best reason is that it is really fun. Grenada's J'Ouvert and the rest of Carnival is large enough to have a really good time but not so overwhelming or out of control that you need to be worried for your safety. Grenadians are warm, friendly people and welcome visitors. It is an experience that you will always remember, so grab your oldest clothes, oil yourself up, put on a hat and join the party.

**For More:**

- For More Information on visiting Grenada, [Pure Grenada](#)
- Grenada Spicemas Carnival, [spicemasgrenada.com](http://spicemasgrenada.com)
- Grenada's 2018 dates: Main Carnival events begin on Aug 9, 2018, Key Dates: Aug 13-14, J'Ouvert: Aug 13, AM
- Flights to Grenada from the U.S.: American, JetBlue, Delta, and Caribbean Airlines.
- For flights to Grenada from Europe: British Airways and Virgin Atlantic
- Flights to Grenada from Canada: Air Canada and West

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