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Slovenia gets ready to 'chase away the winter' at Kurentovanje

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- The carnival, or 'pust' is an annual tradition known as Kurentovanje, celebrating the end of the winter season
- Over 100,000 people visit the town of Ptuj in Slovenia to take part in the celebrations
- Event organised by various ethnological groups who celebrate ancient Slovenian cultural traditions

By John Hutchinson for MailOnline

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Most of us are glad to see the back of the winter season, but this group of Slovenians are keen to give it more of a nudge.

To celebrate the nearing of the end of the cold snap, Slovenians and members of various ethnological groups took to the hills to perfect their moves ahead of the annual carnival, the 'pust,' to 'chase away' winter.

Also known locally as Kurentovanje, locals wear traditional masks and costumes to scare off the winter and are arriving in their masses in various towns in the country to honour the tradition.

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The main figures, called Kurent or Korent, wear massive sheepskin garments and a chain with huge bells around its waist

The carnival celebrates ancient traditions of Slovenia, using a variety of somewhat intimidating dress

Members of the Laufarji Ethnological Society dressed as traditional native characters named 'Ta Terjast' pose ahead of the carnival

The festival will run until February 17 as townsfolk get set to welcome in the spring.

People dress in all sorts of weird and wonderful designs. The main figures, called Kurent or Korent, wear massive sheepskin garments and a chain with huge bells around its waist.

The Skoromati are known as one of the oldest traditional characters in Slovenia, and they help lead the charge to chase away winter.

Numerous events are staged in the country over an 11-day period, and it is thought over 100,000 people will join in the celebration.

A member of the Hrusiski Skoromati Ethnological Society dressed as a traditional native character named 'Skopiton', and right, a member of the Liski Pustje Ethnological Society dressed in a native mask and costume named 'Bajer

Members of the Liski Pustje Ethnological Society wearing their native masks named 'Handsome', right is fellow society member 'Ramaston'

The main parade takes place on Shrove Tuesday (February 17) in Ptuj.

The purpose of such events is to preserve and develop a unique cultural heritage and ethnographic tradition.

Kurentovanje adds a touch of mysticism, and is one of the most important traditional events in Slovenia and middle Europe.

A pair of 'Pustjes' practise their chasing as they get set to say goodbye to the winter season in the carnival celebrations

A member of the Kurent Ethnological Society dressed up as a native folklore character named 'Devil', and right, a man dresses as a 'woman carrying a man'

The first festival was thought to have been on Shrove Tuesday back in 1960. The procession leaders were spearmen followed by ploughmen, a bear, fairies, cockerels, and Kurents, all dancing at the sound of music played by a local band.

The performance and customs of each traditional mask were explained to the gathered crowd via loud-speakers.

The event met with tremendous success and aroused general interest which encouraged the organisers to continue.

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