



# Carnival at Offida!

From Fat Thursday to Fat Tuesday, all the Offida carnival traditions!

## *The Bove Finto (Fake Bull Run) and the Vlurd*

### **Friday, 1 February 2008**

The origins of the Carnevale tradition in Offida are uncertain but began long ago. In the "style" of Pamploma, the Bove Finto run on Friday travels through many of the streets and plazas of Offida with an elaborately costumed, highly "altered" man beneath the bull head and his runners carrying the trailing bull "body" and guiding him. Check out [inoffida.it](http://inoffida.it)! Legend states that during this time of year, the rich would loose a bull at night as a gift to the poor who would chase and kill the bull in their nightclothes and feast on the bull the following day. Thus costumes are white nightshirts, with red bands, a red bandana and a red stocking cap.

The bull today is quite unpredictable in "his behavior" and there is always the potential for injury. In fact, I was told by one waiter in Ascoli, this is the most dangerous festival in the world! We will see!

Commencing at 2 in the afternoon and with the runners protecting the "bull" traverse the city in a wild procession finishing with the bull tied to the columns in the main square to a ring used also in times past to tie up the real animals prior to slaughter and this closes the festival. Everyone returns home

(or to the local hospital which is ready with gurneys and IV's) and continues the celebration with friends and relatives. I am told the university students in Italy have this marked on their calendars as a "must do".





with the festival.

### **The Vlurd**

When the Carnevale closes on Fat Tuesday, Offida after sunset is lit by a procession of costumed participants carrying long poles aflame which is quite a spectacle! 100's of people are involved to carry these long cane poles through the city streets and as the poles are somewhat unwieldy, they bob and weave and sway as they are carried creating a beautiful impressionistic scene.

Afterwards, Carnival is officially closed with a dance while the more courageous try to jump over the bonfire in the plaza from all the poles still aflame which gives good fortune during Lent. Those who are spent return home to recuperate or continue

## *Offida Parties and Dances*

### ***Serpente Aureo Theater***

All take place at the Serpente Aureo Theater in the Piazza del Popolo. Not to miss are the many parties at the local theater with live music and dancing (starting near midnight and finishing at 7 in the morning!). Some are masked and some not but all promise great fun. Remaining dates include Feb 2 - Dario Ballantini of Striscia la Notizia, Feb 3 - I Pupazzi orchestra, Feb 4 - Energy Live orchestra and the various clubs in Offida in full costume



## *Ascoli Piceno*

For those who love the comic and wild side of Carnevale must visit Ascoli Piceno. Hundreds of masks, costumes and various jokes are in evidence.

All takes place in the medieval center of the city creating a unique festival climate. Singles, small and large groups parade through the streets performing skits and jokes (many revolving around politics or ancient traditions) for the crowds. There is dancing in the streets, people reciting or singing nonstop all trying to attract the biggest crowd of onlookers with their local or national satire, costumes or performance.

Eventually all become involved in the game at least with their laughs and smiles. See you Sunday and Tuesday of Carnival. Don't miss it!