Notting Hill Carnival

What is the Notting Hill Carnival?
The Notting Hill Carnival is a huge multicultural arts festival. It is the second largest carnival in the world after Rio de Janeiro, and about two million people attend it every year.

When is the carnival?
The carnival is on August Bank Holiday weekend, which is always the last weekend of August. The main carnival days are Sunday and Monday – Sunday is a day for children and families.

How did the carnival begin?
In the 1950s, many Caribbean immigrants to the UK went to live in the Notting Hill area of London. They experienced a lot of hardship during their first years in Britain and often had poor housing and badly-paid jobs, and were victims of racial prejudice.
They missed the traditions and culture of their native countries, so they started organising their own social events, such as dances, where they could meet and socialise freely.

Some Trinidadians started playing steel-band music every Sunday at the Coleherne Pub in Earls Court. They were invited to a street festival, mainly for children, in Notting Hill in 1964. Recent immigrants and local people danced and had fun together and the event was a huge success. The Notting Hill Carnival was born!

What happens at the Notting Hill Carnival?

There are five disciplines of carnival. **Mas** comes from the word ‘masquerade’, and is about the costumes people wear, and **Steel-band** is the traditional music of the Caribbean. **Calypso** is political, social and satirical commentary with music, and **Soca** is the traditional music of carnival, which is a fusion of soul and calypso.

Finally, there are about 40 **Sound systems**, where you can hear not only traditional carnival music but also more contemporary sounds.

On the Friday before the carnival, the Calypso Monarch is chosen in the London Calypso Tent. The Calypso Monarch is the best calypso singer.

**Jouvert Morning**, a carnival celebration which is mainly for children and families, is on Sunday morning. The main carnival procession is on Monday and starts at about 11 a.m. and finishes at 9 p.m. This is a huge procession consisting of people on floats, or on foot, wearing brightly-coloured costumes, and other floats carrying steel bands. It starts in Great Western Road and ends in Ladbroke Grove.
Another reason people go to the carnival is to try the numerous different types of food for sale on stands all round the carnival route. Of course there are traditional Caribbean dishes like ‘jerk chicken’ but you can also try recipes from all over the world.