



The Living Chess Game of Marostica



Imagine watching a life-size chess game played on a massive pink-and-white marble chessboard in the piazza of a small Italian village. Every other September, you can do just that in Marostica, an hour northwest of Venice. Each of the town's 700 residents plays a part dressed in ornate black or white 15th-century costumes complete with matching horses for the knights and arms for the pawns.

So how did this chess game begin? The story of *La Partita a Scacchi di Marostica* (Chess Game of Marostica) dates back to 1454. According to the legend, two valiant knights, Rinaldo D'Angarano and Vieri da Vallonara, fell in love with a beautiful girl called Lionora and challenged each other to a duel to win her heart. To avoid needless bloodshed, the girl's father, Lord Parisio, decided to give his daughter's hand to the winner of a chess game and the loser the hand of his younger daughter, Oldrada. How refreshing! The lady's hand goes to the dude with the bigger brain.

Since it is impossible to reproduce the original moves made by the two knights in 1454, the organizers of the event get inspiration from some of the greatest chess games of all time. With different moves for each of the four games over the September weekend, history could potentially be re-written as the two lovers move the life-size pieces during each game.

Like the grand festival which prefaced the 15th-century match, the weekend also has parades, period dances, music, and fireworks. All of this is orchestrated to fully recreate the Renaissance for the huge number of tourists who flock to Marostica for the weekend.

Click here to watch a video of the pageantry of this magnificent event. Be sure to watch for who wins Lord Parisio's daughters and the marriage that follows.

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