

HOW TO ENJOY Mardi Gras

WITH YOUR Family

Contrary to what many believe, Mardi Gras—and the full Carnival season—in New Orleans includes far more than the debauchery on Bourbon Street. Families can partake in colorful parades, elaborate costumes, and creative events stretching for weeks leading up to Fat Tuesday. A cultural tradition with roots in Louisiana as far back as 1699, Mardi Gras is a celebration of diversity and love. With the right planning and an open mind, kids and kids at heart will love the magical experience of Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

THROW ME SOMETHING, MISTER OR SISTER! !

See if your family can catch all the best parade “throws” during Carnival. Here are our top picks for the highly coveted, often handmade items that float riders give out during the parade.



MUSES SHOE



NYX PURSE



IRIS SUNGLASSES



ZULU COCONUT

WHAT TO BRING TO THE PARADES



A large bag to carry all your beads and parade throws



Snacks and drinks for the long day outside



Folding chairs to relax and save your spot



Rain gear and jackets, just in case



Ear protection for little ones



PRO PARENT TIP

You may notice locals setting up special Mardi Gras ladders at the parade route with a box at the top for kids to stand or sit in. These are available at most hardware stores around town, but keep in mind that you will have to transport them before and after parades.

PLAN YOUR MARDI GRAS TRIP

Follow our timeline of important dates and top picks for family-friendly parades during Carnival season.



TWELFTH NIGHT *(January 6 of every year)*

Also known as King's Day, the twelfth night after Christmas designates the official start of Carnival season. Celebrate with your family by watching the Phunny Phorty Fellows ride by on the St. Charles Streetcar or enjoying medieval costumes at the Krewe de Jeanne d'Arc.



'TIT REX *(10 days before Fat Tuesday or February 23, 2019)*

Enjoy the more petite side to Mardi Gras, with the only official MicroKrewe of 'tit Rex. Shoe boxes are transformed into magnificent mini floats with intricate details and creative, sometimes satirical themes. You may even get a few tiny trinkets in lieu of traditional throws.



TUCKS *(Saturday before Fat Tuesday or March 2, 2019)*

The Krewe of Tucks brings laughter and mischief to St. Charles Street each year with toilet-themed floats and throws, including bedazzled plungers and signature green, gold, and purple toilet paper that flies through the air.



BACCHUS *(Sunday before Fat Tuesday or March 3, 2019)*

For an evening showcase of lights and extravagant floats, you don't want to miss the Super Krewe of Bacchus. Young ones will enjoy a bounty of light-up throws and beads, and Bacchus is even known to host an annual celebrity monarch each year.



LUNDI GRAS *(Monday before or March 4, 2019)*

While you may need to rest and refuel before rising early on Fat Tuesday, there are still plenty of ways to have fun on the Monday before. From the DIY Red Beans parade in the Marigny and Treme neighborhoods to live music at Lundi Gras Festival in Woldenberg Park. For those families still seeking the larger parade experience, both Orpheus and Proteus parade Uptown. Just be sure to get there early to get a good spot.



MARDI GRAS *(Date varies annually, March 5, 2019 this year)*

You made it! Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, is packed with parades, parties, and tons of people. Get your spot early to enjoy the historic Krewe of Zulu, followed by the Rex parade. If you're lucky, you may even spot the Mardi Gras Indians dressed in elaborate feathers and beads.

PRO PARENT TIP

Download the Mardi Gras parade tracker to help you move from one parade to another and keep track of delays on the route.

PACK YOUR MARDI GRAS COSTUMES

Dressing up in costume is what Mardi Gras is all about. Go all out to make it a more fun and memorable experience for kids!



The traditional Mardi Gras colors are always a good starting point for your costume. They are gold for power, green for faith, and purple for justice.



DIY costumes are the standard. Encourage kids to plan their costume around something they love—from a favorite superhero to colorful face paint.



Add accessories like wigs, masks, and anything that lights up. For parades like Muses and Zulu, you can make a creative sign to score some goodies!

HOW TO GET AROUND DURING MARDI GRAS



Avoid driving and using Ubers or taxis during scheduled parades, as many of the roads will be blocked, or traffic will be heavy and slow. It can be quicker to walk in most instances.



Stay in a central accommodation close to the parade route so you can walk to parades and get back to your hotel quickly if needed.



If you need a car with a car seat to get back and forth to parades, you can find street parking—you'll just have to build in time to hunt for it. Plan to arrive early and bring a stroller or fold-up wagon to help carry tired kiddos back to the car post-parade.



Make note ahead of time of any restaurants and cafes between the parade route and your hotel in case you need to take a break and refuel. Bathrooms will be reserved for customers.



LOCATION, LOCATION

Uptown and the Garden District offer front-row access to watch the parades on St. Charles with smaller crowds and a more local vibe.

The Central Business District and French Quarter give you quick access to nearly all parade routes, but they will also be densely packed with visitors.



PRO PARENT TIP

Many businesses and community centers on the parade route offer a wristband or single-use access for a small fee to give you access to a clean bathroom. Just be sure to bring cash.