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## Mardi Gras essentials: A quick guide to safely letting the good times roll

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Courtesy of Smithsonian Magazine

Mardi Gras has returned this season after a 2-year hiatus due to COVID-19. For some students, this year will be their first Mardi Gras experience. Whether it's your first time attending or the 100th time, preparation should be the priority.

As a longtime parade goer, these are suggestions from those born into Mardi Gras (yes, it is a thing) and can help make the carnival season one to remember. This year, more than ever, it's important to head out to relieve some lockdown stress.

Here are some essentials and information that will lead to a fun and safe Mardi Gras.

## **What to pack**

Bringing a medium-size bag, preferably a mini backpack, can help you carry items that may come in handy at any moment.

It may be wise to bring cleaning supplies that will help in the long run – an emergency may arise at any given time. Packing some toilet paper will most likely come in handy. One may never know when you have to go and where you may need to go.

Another valuable item would be some hand sanitizer. As we have learned over the last two years, the world is a very gross place. Please, let's continue to clean our hands. Sanitizing wipes may also come in handy. Bring one set of wipes for surfaces and another set that's safe to use on skin.

Packing some snacks may also come in handy. During long walks and waiting for parades, snacks can go a long way. Especially during any unexpected weather (that's Louisiana for you), taking a small snack break will help control hunger levels and stay hydrated.

These items are available for purchase at the dollar section or travel area of any store. Travel sizes may be more efficient.

## **Safety first**

Mardi Gras is always a fun time, but it is still necessary to stay cautious.

If you are driving and parking your car, make sure to secure it. Lock your doors before leaving the car and take photos on the street/block you park so that you remember its location. Long hours in traffic are likely, so make sure to fill up the gas tank.

## Partying it up

Everyone is curious about where to go and how to live Mardi Gras to the fullest. There is also debate between celebrating in Baton Rouge or New Orleans. For the max experience, consider New Orleans. First time? Consider staying in Baton Rouge to get a feel for it.

For those heading to New Orleans, head out with some friends versus alone. As fun as carnival can be, the buddy system is essential in the madness.

Professional parade-goers know which locations are ideal, and Bourbon Street is not one of them. To experience the actual parade, watch them near the uptown area off St. Charles Avenue. Get the full experience with some more space and a better location to hear the bands. Another plus with watching the parades uptown is that there are many places for a bathroom break and restaurants that offer specials.

If the parade gets you pumped up, consider heading to Frenchmen Street for more Mardi Gras festivities and live local bands. As locals would say, Frenchmen Street is where the locals go. The vibes and drinks are so much more New Orleans than anywhere else.

Don't forget to get some beignets in New Orleans before ending the night – Cafe du Monde is open 24 hours.

Here are some blogs and bloggers with more suggestions to help guide you into all the most popular spots throughout this season:

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