



## Sydney Mardi Gras: ndWILD Neuroinclusion Guide for people attending the Parade

### Quick Start (Read This First)

The Parade is a high-sensory environment: **loud, bright, and crowded**. To have a great night, you need a plan, so that if overwhelm hits, you and the people around you know what to do without thinking.

1. **Arrival:** Get there early (before 6:00 PM) to avoid the biggest crowds.
2. **Position:** Decide now if you are in the general crowd or an Accessible Viewing Area.
3. **The Cut-off:** After **6:45 PM**, you cannot cross the road. You will be 'locked in' to your side of the street until the parade ends (approx. 11:00 PM).

### Sensory Reality Check

Trigger	What to Expect
Sound	Deep bass, sirens, whistling, and constant cheering
Sight	Strobes, lasers, and high-intensity LED screens on floats
Touch	Dense crowds, unintentional brushing/bumping in narrow streets
Smell	Street food, perfume/cologne, and occasional generator exhaust

**Specific Sensory Warning: sirens and whistles are the most common sudden noises. If you have a startle reflex, this is what to watch out for.**

### The Best Support: Free Accessible Viewing Area

Located on **Flinders Street** (Entry via Short St), this is the Sensory Safe Haven. Space is limited so book early.

- **The Quiet Room (by Aspect):** Includes bean bags, noise-cancelling gear, stim toys, and low lighting.
- **Amenities:** Accessible toilets, Changing Places unit, and wheelchair charging.
- **Alcohol-Free:** A much calmer vibe than the rest of the route.

**Vital Ticket Info:** Registering online is **Step 1**. Then check your for a **Claim Code** and use it within **48 hours**, or your spot is given.



## Hidden Disabilities Sunflower

If you have a Hidden Disability Sunflower lanyard, wear it! Mardi Gras staff and volunteers are trained to recognise that you may need:

- More time to process information.
- Clearer, direct instructions.
- A bit of extra physical space.

## ND-Friendly Logistics

- **The 'Anti-Trap' Strategy:** If you feel overwhelmed, head *away* from Oxford Street toward the side streets of Surry Hills or Darlinghurst early.
- **Transport:** Use the **Accessible Shuttle Bus** from Central Station. It's significantly less stressful than navigating the packed train station stairs.
- **Weather:** No umbrellas (they block views and are a sensory hazard in wind). Use a **soft poncho**.

## Your ndWILD Checklist

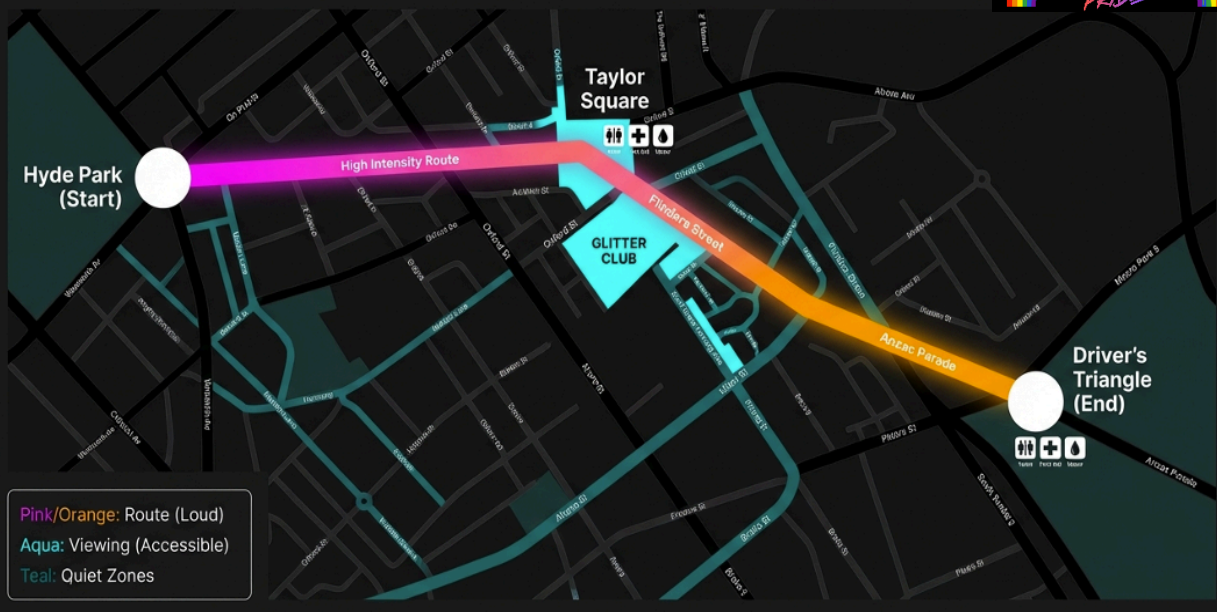
- [ ] **Ear protection** (Loop plugs, foamies, or noise-cancelling headphones)
- [ ] **Sunglasses** (Essential for those 1,000-watt LED floats)
- [ ] **Power bank** (Don't let your "safe" communication tool die)
- [ ] **Exit Map** (Mark a "Meeting Point" outside the parade zone)

## Post-Parade Plan

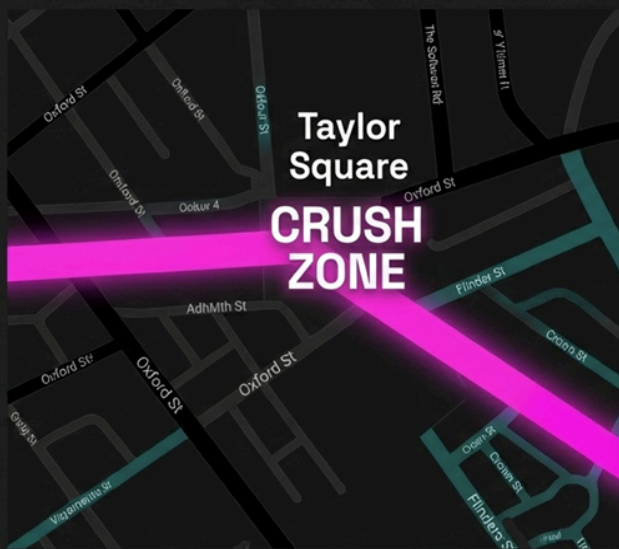
The moment the parade ends is the most chaotic (thousands of people moving at once). We suggest staying seated for 20 minutes *after* the last float to let the initial rush dissipate.

**Keep Reading for tools, hand signals, and scripts you can use if you get overwhelmed, as well as maps and other information to help you have your best Parade experience.**

# The Master Navigation Map



## High Intensity Zones: The Pink & Orange Sectors

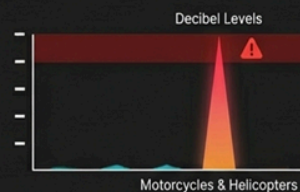


**Taylor Square:** High Density / Crush Zone. Expect maximum crowd pressure.

**Oxford Street:** The Loud Zone. Expect confetti cannons, smoke effects, and PA systems.

**Sensory Warning:** Earplugs recommended. 12,000 people cheering + helicopters + motorcycles.

**Strategy:** Move to the center of your group for insulation. Use companions as human shields to block cameras if overwhelmed.



## Operation Timeline: The Evening Flow



**3:00 PM**  
Road Closures Begin

**3:30 PM**  
Marshalling Opens (Hyde Park)

**5:00 - 8:30 PM**  
Shuttle Bus & Buggy Service Active

**6:45 PM**  
**THE LOCK-IN.**  
Barriers close. Dykes on Bikes start (LOUD)

**7:30 PM**  
Parade Starts

**9:00 PM**  
Post-Parade Shuttle Loops Begin

**11:00 PM**  
Parade Ends



## Scripts for when you're feeling overwhelmed

When sensory overload hits, finding the right words can be hard. These scripts are designed to be **direct, short, and functional**. We recommend saving these as a **Note** on your phone or printing them on a small card to show staff if you are non-verbal or struggling to speak.

### **Script 1: I Need the Quiet Room**

"Hi, I am neurodivergent/have a sensory disability. I am feeling overwhelmed by the noise and lights. Can you please direct me to the **Quiet Room** or the nearest low-sensory space?"

### **Script 2: I Need an Exit**

*Use this if you are in a thick crowd and need to get to a side street fast.*

"Hello. I'm having a sensory overload/panic response to the crowd. What is the quickest way for me to get **behind the barriers** or to a quieter side street? I need to get out of the main flow of people immediately."

### **Script 3: I Need Support**

*Use this if you need a staff member/volunteer to slow down.*

"I'm finding it hard to process the noise/directions right now. Could you please give me a moment of space and speak clearly/slowly? I just need to figure out my next step."

### **Script 4: The Non-Verbal/Visual Card (Text to show staff)**

*Copy and paste this into a large-font Note or save as an image.*

#### **I AM NEURODIVERGENT & OVERWHELMED.**

I need a quiet area away from the music and crowds.

1. Please don't touch me.
2. Point me toward the nearest quiet street or the Quiet Room.
3. Give me a few minutes to regulate.

#### **Thank you for your help**



## Non-Verbal Signals for High-Volume Spaces

Share these with your parade companions and friends. Make sure you're all familiar with them and able to use them in times of high sensory input. They are quick and direct immediate action from those around you, in a way that feels safe.

Signal (Color)	Meaning (Status)	Action (Gesture)	Photo of Gesture
<b>Green:</b>	All Good. Regulated. Enjoying it.	Thumbs up	
<b>Amber:</b>	Warning. Reaching limit. Buddy check needed.	Arms crossed in front of chest	
<b>Red:</b>	Exit Activated. I need to leave now.	'Hurt' sign in front of chest	
<b>Alert:</b>	SOS. I need your help to leave and to keep me safe.	Simplified 'Help' sign	