

# INSIDER TIPS & TRICKS™

## 900+ WALT DISNEY WORLD®

### VACATION HACKS

Disney Made Easy

Save  
Time, Money  
& More!

2023



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Published and distributed by Travel Made Easy (last update 3/11/2023).

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Retail Price: \$9.99

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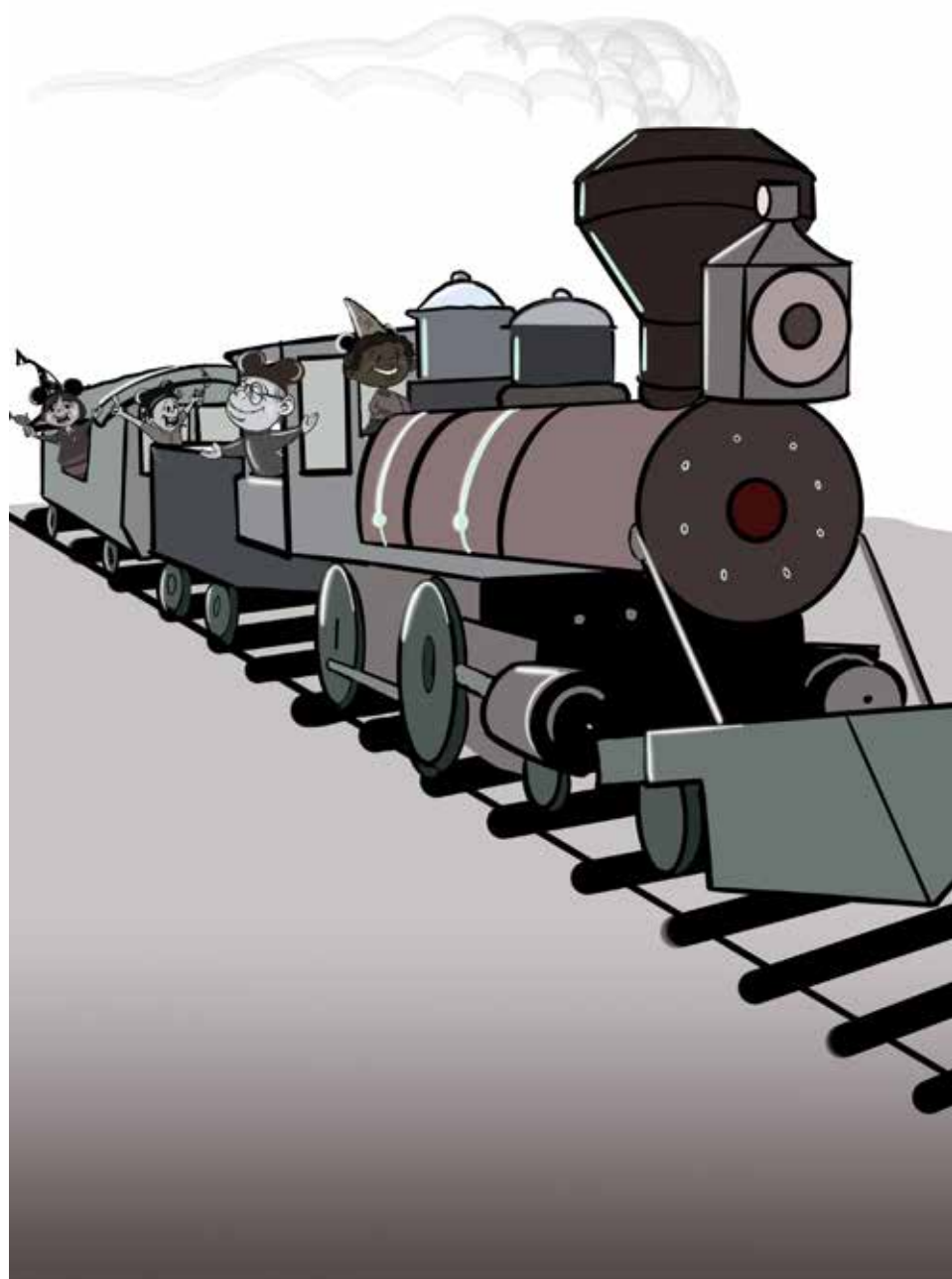
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ISBN: 978-1-956532-14-2

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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I only hope that we never lose sight of  
one thing – that it all started with a mouse.

- Walt Disney

# Introduction

Walt Disney World opened 50 years ago and quickly earned its motto as “The Most Magical Place on Earth.”

While many visitors don’t worry about all the details when they travel, others seek to maximize the value of their vacation.

Some want to save money, while others prefer to save time in order to squeeze as much as possible into each day. Most have a goal that includes efficient use of both time and money, while reducing complications, frustrations, and stress.

Whether traveling alone, with a partner, or with a large group with kids, this book offers hundreds of tips that will appeal to everyone. Unlike typical guidebooks, we have boiled it down to just the important Insider Tips that will help you maximize each day of your vacation.

You are bound to find dozens that apply to your specific travel plans.

Our tips cover the basics, including pre-planning, arrival, and how to plan each day to maximize the fun, how to navigate Orlando and the parks, and how to get the best dining values.

This book includes hints to save time in line using Disney’s brand new Genie+ ride queue system. It also offers great ways to get discounts on food and merchandise.

Those planning their first trip will want to take time to read every tip in conjunction with Travel Made Easy’s The Essential Guide™ To Walt Disney World® Resort. Visit our website to download a free copy today!

While many tips technically fall under several categories, we placed each within the chapter that best identifies it. Dozens of tips throughout the book help those who are touring with children, including how to master Character meet-and-greets.

Travelers who have already visited the parks will find new things to experience. Our hacks and tricks are certain to increase the enjoyment of future visits for even the most experienced Disney World pro.

Our tips are clear. They answer questions regarding when to visit, how to pack and prepare, and which tickets to purchase for the best value. We offer

solid advice about resort accommodations, restaurant selections, and how to get around Disney World.

Travel like a Disney Insider as you apply these time and money-saving tips and tricks. We promise they will help you get the most out of your vacation to the Most Magical Place on Earth.

Here's to happy travels and making memories for a lifetime. When you see Mickey Mouse, say hello to him for us!

When people laugh at Mickey Mouse it's because he's so human; and that is the secret of his popularity.

- Walt Disney

# Recent Changes: What to Expect

(UPDATED MARCH 11, 2023)

Walt Disney World's 50th Anniversary Celebration continues through March 31, 2023. Therefore, expect some of the largest crowds ever seen at the parks. Will you be there?

Please check our recommended blog and Facebook resources for regular updates about current events. See the *Helpful Internet Websites* section of our *Disney World Contact Information* chapter.

## Theme Park Operational Changes (Reservations Required!)

Visitors must obtain tickets in advance, set up an account (either online or through the My Disney Experience App), and make a reservation for the specific day and theme park through their account.

**Do not plan on** purchasing a last-minute park pass to gain entry into the parks. Walt Disney World Resort requires an advanced reservation for any of its parks.

Park hopping — visiting more than one park in a day — is available but limited (with a valid Park Hopper pass). Guests must make a reservation for the first park they plan to visit each day. No reservation is required for the second park. However, you must wait until 2 pm to change parks, and you may be turned away if that park is at capacity. (You can check the app for availability before changing parks.)

## FastPass/Lightning Lanes/Genie+

Another significant change is the retirement of the old FastPass+ reservation system. It has been replaced with the paid **Lightning Lane** reservation system. This means, if you don't pay for Disney's **Genie+** day-of reservation system (Tier 2 attractions) or pre-reserve a paid time for Tier 1 attractions, you must wait in a stand-by queue for each attraction (or use a virtual queue for select new attractions).

With large crowds and limited options, the lines for attractions may appear much longer than in the past. The lines move much quicker than you might think, though (and often quicker than the posted wait times).

This system can seem confusing at first. Please read our detailed explanation in the *Tools & How to Use Them* chapter.

## **Dining & Tours**

Some character dining venues may not have characters on the date of your visit. (Check the individual restaurant on [disneyworld.disney.go.com/dining](http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/dining) to see if the particular restaurant you are interested in currently has characters.)

Disney promotes the use of its Mobile Order system to pre-order meals at counter-service restaurants. Guests are encouraged to pre-order meals using a credit card or gift card through the My Disney Experience App. If you want to use cash, or simply want to order in person, ask for the cash line at the restaurant.

Some special guided tours and paid events are not currently being offered. Private, VIP tours are available. See our *Special Events and Tours* section for scheduling information.

## **Shows & Character Greetings**

There are a few shows and character greetings that are not currently being offered. Be sure to catch the Magic Kingdom parades and the evening projection or fireworks show at each park.

Character meet-and-greets, including hugs and autographs, are available. Returning visitors will notice fewer opportunities to meet characters than in the past. You can see many of your favorites in parades and Character Processions held throughout the parks.

## **Disney Pass & Ticketing Options**

Dining-related ticket upgrades and most annual passes are not currently available. Disney is currently testing alternatives to the Dining Plan option, so we expect that the program will be very different when it returns.

The previously popular Tables in Wonderland, which is a dining and entertainment discount membership for Florida residents and Disney Vacation Club members, is not available and may not return.

## **Lodging**

All Disney World and Orlando-area hotels are open and accepting reservations.

## **Disney Transportation Changes**

Parking lot shuttles are only running at Magic Kingdom and Animal Kingdom. (That means you need to walk from your car at the other parks!) Other Disney transportation options are open, but they run less frequently than in years past. Because of this, plan a delay of 15-30 minutes (depending on crowd size) into your schedule if you're using any Disney transportation.

Disney does not provide free airport shuttles to its onsite Disney Resort guests, as it did in the past. All guests must find their own transportation to and from their hotels.

## **Non-Theme Park Activities**

Be sure to read our *Other (Non-Park) Fun & Activities* section to discover unique, family-friendly activities available on-property, including golf, boat rentals, fishing, and horseback riding. You can find that section in the *About the World* chapter.

## **Package Pickup & Delivery**

Disney's souvenir package pickup and resort delivery services are currently suspended. While they are expected to return some time soon, guests must carry their purchases with them throughout the day at the parks (or rent a locker).

## **Security Screenings**

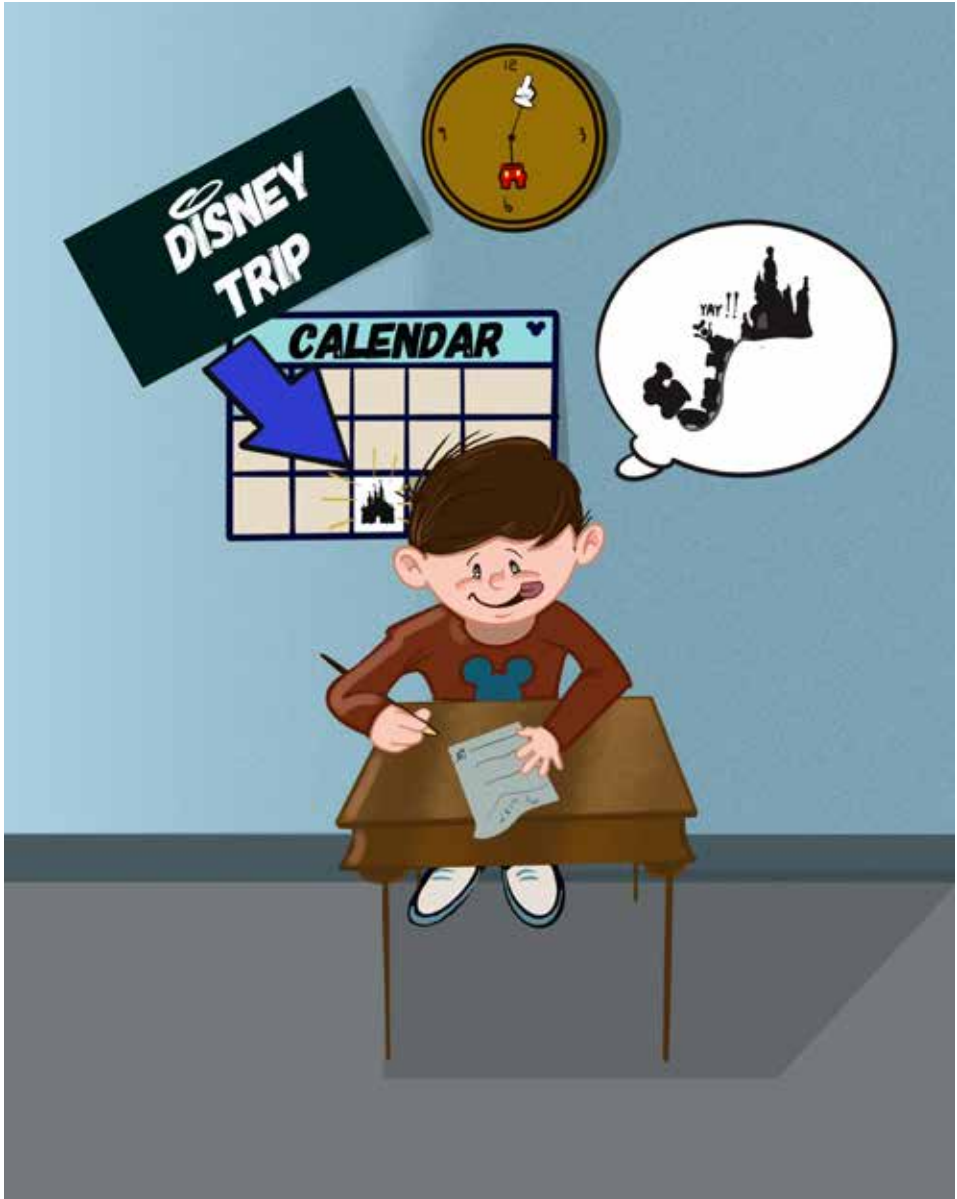
Standard security protocols include walking through a metal detector and the possibility of security personnel checking purses, backpacks, strollers, etc. for prohibited items.

Disney uses biometric (fingerprint) scanners when you enter the parks. If you're not comfortable with having your fingerprint scanned, or if you're concerned with germs at the high-traffic touch point, speak to Guest Relations prior to entry for an alternative entry method.

## **Mask Requirements**

Masks are only required in Disney First Aid centers. They are optional for guests elsewhere.

# Advanced Planning



1. Download our free planning resources at [bit.ly/DisneyPlanners](https://bit.ly/DisneyPlanners). Our free planners include a budget worksheet, packing checklist, dining planner, and attraction planner, among other tools.
2. Plan your vacation step-by-step to avoid confusion.
  - How many days will you visit the parks?
  - How many extra days do you need for non-park activities? Most people don't plan to visit the parks on travel days.
  - Determine the exact dates of your trip, including which day of the week you plan to arrive and depart. (Weekends are always the busiest travel days.)
  - Book your hotel. (Do this before booking your flight, as it is easier to change hotel reservations than flight reservations.)
  - Book your flights.
  - Schedule transportation to/from the airport (e.g., rental car, Mears shuttle, Lyft).
  - 60 days prior to the first day of your vacation, book Disney dining reservations. (This is extremely important for popular dining locations, such as Cinderella's Royal Table, Le Cellier, Be Our Guest, and character dining.)
  - 60 days prior to the first day of your vacation, book any special events, experiences (such as Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique), and Disney park tours.
3. It's a good idea for you to call and notify your credit card company of your out-of-country or out-of-state travel plans. Many credit card companies, particularly American Express, require prior notification when you are traveling. Take the time to call the one(s) you'll be using to make sure your card doesn't get put on hold during your vacation.
4. If you plan to stay super late one day, plan to take it easy the next morning. This method of touring is why we think that park visits are best scheduled every other day.
5. If you are taking a conventional D-SLR (digital) camera, have a few rubber bands around and a plastic bag. Wrap the camera, up to the end of the lens, so that only the glass is exposed to any water.

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6. Don't make the mistake of wearing brand-new shoes on your trip. Give yourself time to break them in properly. Plan to walk for several miles per day a few times before your trip to see how your feet hold up in your shoes. Remember, you can expect to walk four to seven miles daily on your Disney vacation, which is a lot different on your feet than a 20-minute walk back home!  
  
If you decide to wear tennis shoes, it's a good idea to use athletic, moisture-wicking socks and foot powder.  
  
Find a place to sit down and take your shoes off (away from other people, preferably!) a few times throughout the day to reduce swelling and to reapply powder. Also, bring blister bandages along (the thick, waterproof kind) just in case. Your feet will thank you!
7. Ponchos should definitely be part of your family's wardrobe, especially to wear on wet outdoor rides in the evening.
8. One favorite time of year to visit the parks is the week prior to Thanksgiving week. (The week of Thanksgiving is very crowded, but the week prior is usually slow.) However, visiting anytime after Thanksgiving week until the week before Christmas is more festive, as holiday decorations abound. The first week of December is particularly good, and the crowds are again moderately thin. Hotel prices drop and the weather cools to bearable temperatures without being too chilly.
9. The immense crowds during the holidays are heel-to-toe and claustrophobic. Guests who aren't prepared for what to expect can become angry or disillusioned. Lines are much longer than during off-peak periods and can easily reach two hours or longer (for a three-minute ride)!
10. If you're taking your child out of school for a Disney vacation, talk to your kid's teacher about an alternative project that reflects real-world things that your child will benefit from experiencing. Perhaps developing a well-written report about things your children learned during their trip can be substituted for their missed coursework.
11. During phased closures, park entrance is denied and you will be turned away at the parking lot security gate. Disney hotel guests

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get priority over other guests when parks reach capacity. If you are denied entry due to a Phase B or 3 closure, go to a Disney hotel and take Disney transportation back to the park.

12. Crowds are lightest at Disney Springs early in the day. Evenings, weekends, and holidays tend to be claustrophobic and overwhelming for many guests. Try to go before 5 p.m. on a weekday for the most pleasurable experience and shortest shopping lines.
13. Use your smart phone to take pictures of the tips and information you want to keep handy each day of your trip, so you can easily find it without thumbing through the entire book.
14. Keep a notepad (or notepad app) handy as a central repository of all your trip plans and ideas. Take notes as you read through this book to help remember important things. Write down the name of each attraction and show you want to see.
15. Bring an eye mask to keep the light out of your eyes when you sleep. This will come in handy on the airplane and in the hotel room. Bring one to the parks, along with ear plugs and an stroller, if you have a child young enough for naps. You can push your napping child around the parks without worry that the noise and lights will wake him/her.
16. Take this book on your trip with you. Remember to pack it in your luggage! You can glance back through it when you visit each park so you don't miss a thing. It also gives you something to look at while you wait in lines.
17. Use Post-it notes while making your Disney trip plans. They let you move things around without having to rewrite your notes.
18. Take a picture of your itinerary with your smart phone and send it to each member of your party in case anyone loses their printed copy!
19. Don't forget to bring dark sunglasses and a hat with a wide brim. The Florida sun is really bright.
20. Leave room in your suitcase for souvenirs you can take home with you.

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21. Plan to buy your souvenir Disney T-Shirt or hat as soon as you get to the park, so you can wear it throughout your vacation. Better yet, buy a great Disney shirt for each member of your party before you go. It'll cost less money and be a fun thing to wear as you travel to Disney!
22. Watch the tourist channel on Disney Resort TV to build excitement for the following day. It shows an exciting preview of some of the amazing fun you can find throughout Walt Disney World.
23. Make sure your cell phone is fully charged before you head to the park. You will be using it all day long to keep your party on schedule. This includes everything from reviewing your itinerary and managing Lightning Lane reservations to ordering meals and making dining reservations.

If you have a portable charger/power bank, bring it. Charging stations and available outlets are limited around the parks and in very high demand, especially later in the day, as batteries drain. Solar powered chargers are great options. After all, Florida is the sunshine state!

Make sure someone else in your party also has the app on their phone in case your phone runs out of power.
24. Do not schedule a theme park day on your first or last day (travel days). You won't be able to get the value of a full day at the park on those days, and you can use them to get acquainted with other Disney venues, such as Disney Springs, Disney's BoardWalk, and your hotel.
25. If you are planning a special evening out, pack carefully to avoid wrinkles in your evening wear. Coil a belt inside the collar of a dress shirt to keep it looking it from looking smashed. Place socks inside the belt coil if there is additional room. Roll your pants, rather than fold, to reduce creases. Place evening dresses in plastic before folding to avoid wrinkles.
26. Have a screen shot and print-out of your daily schedule in case you don't have access to the app (no wi-fi, etc.). Make copies for everyone in case you need to meet up later.

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27. Don't just tell your family that you've booked a Disney vacation. Make it a surprise reveal. Reveal ideas are easy to find on the Internet. Whether you prepare a fun scavenger hunt with the reveal at the end or you have the family open custom Disney vacation t-shirts on Christmas morning, you are only limited by your imagination.
28. If you plan a surprise reveal of an upcoming Disney vacation on one of your children's birthday, be sure to involve any other kids and family members in the fun reveal. This will help to make sure they understand the trip is a special event for the whole family and avoid jealousy.
29. Build excitement leading up to the vacation with fun activities. You can have a trip planning party to get everyone on the same page in a fun way. Even something as simple as weekly Disney movie nights leading up to the trip can help keep the excitement high.
30. Turn your Disney vacation into an educational experience. Epcot is full of opportunities, including learning some foreign language or culture and finding out about space exploration and sea life. Animal Kingdom is perfect for teaching the kids fun facts about unique plants and animals. (There's even a free Wilderness Explorers program for kids there!)  
  
Learn about America's history in Magic Kingdom's Liberty Square, or have the kids do a report on movie-making magic at Hollywood Studios. The possibilities are endless.  
  
This is a great way to convince concerned teachers that a trip during school time (which is usually less busy at the parks) is a great idea.
31. The most important thing to understand when planning your vacation is that you won't be able to do everything. The property is so vast, even locals who frequent the parks report finding new discoveries on a regular basis. Prioritize the shows and attractions that are most important to you.  
  
Make Lightning Lane reservations for your top daily priority, if possible. Once that is complete, go down your prioritized list to catch each subsequent attraction. Be flexible. If you miss

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something, use it as an excuse to start planning your next Disney trip when you return home!

32. Nothing is more magical than Disney during Christmas. Unfortunately, the week leading up to Thanksgiving and Christmas, and the week from Christmas to New Year's are among the busiest times to visit the parks. If you want that Christmas feeling without the crowds, go in the middle of November or the first week of December. The decorations and celebrations are already in full gear, and you can be back home to spend the actual holidays in peace with your family.
33. Make a list of items you need for your vacation, and start packing your suitcase about a week early. This gives you time to consider things you may have forgotten on the list.
34. Bring clothes that don't wrinkle easily. Roll shirts and pants, rather than fold them, to keep wrinkles to a minimum. Look for clothes packing techniques online, such as the KonMari Folding Method on YouTube to make the most of available space.
35. Disney parks may close early due to seasonal consideration or special events. Check the park hours ([disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com)) before making reservations. Review them regularly before your trip, as park hours may change. For instance, Disney may add extra dates to its after hours Halloween event, causing an early 7 p.m. closure on a date you planned to visit the Magic Kingdom.
36. Disney gift cards can't be used everywhere on-property, but most locations accept them. Use them for dining within the parks and for buying souvenirs. Disney's Character Warehouse stores (at two of the Orlando outlet malls) are great places to buy discounted souvenirs with your Disney gift card!
37. Make sure you have enough storage on your phone for photos and videos prior to your trip. Transfer photos and videos off of your device, and consider getting a larger SD card for your phone. There's nothing worse than running out of storage space for photos and videos in the middle of your vacation.

Delete any games and apps you don't need while on your trip. If your phone has a battery saving option, activate it. While on

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vacation, turn off wi-fi and Bluetooth, except when you're actively using it. Your phone battery will last much longer and, hopefully, eliminate the need to recharge during the day.

38. Different people have different touring styles, likes, and expectations. To maximize everyone's enjoyment, sit down with your whole party to determine which activities and attractions the entire group wants to do versus ones that only interest certain people. Plan to split up at times to allow smaller groups to break off and do the things they want. The time apart may also help to reduce the inevitable personality clashes that come from traveling together as a group.
39. Pin trading is tons of fun at the parks. Beware of counterfeit pins, though. You can spot the real thing by looking for certain features. Authentic Disney pins have a © Disney mark with a date, plus the words "Pin Trading" next to the Mickey head logo located on the back of each pin.  
  
If a character looks "off," such as the wrong color or strange features, it's probably a fake. You can't inspect pins purchased online, so you may end up with fakes ones if you purchase that way.
40. You can buy packs of Disney trading pins that usually cost less per pin than buying a single one. The Disney Character Warehouse stores at the Orlando outlet malls sometimes have discounted pins to get you started. Use those to trade up. Any Disney Cast Member wearing Disney pins on a lanyard is ready and willing to trade with you!
41. Glow or light-up necklaces are great for keeping track of family members. The ones sold at the parks can be quite expensive. Check your local dollar store to find inexpensive options to light up your trip.
42. If you have the Chase Disney Visa, use it to book your Disney hotel and park tickets vacation package directly with Disney. Not only do you earn extra points, but you will have six months to pay it back, with no interest! Additionally, those points can be used for a Disney Rewards Card, which can be used on-property exactly like any Disney gift card.

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43. For a fun, personalized option, order your gift cards at <https://www.shopdisney.com/gift-cards.html>. They allow you to customize and mail or email a personalized gift card to the recipient of your choice. You can add money to the gift card, and the funds never expire, making it a great keepsake!
44. Schedule flights into and out of Orlando in the mornings. Particularly during summer months, afternoons are often stormy, including extreme wind gusts and lightning. These storms can create a lot of turbulence in the air, and can even cause long delays or cancellations of flights.  
  
If you can get the second flight in or out for the morning, airports should be aware of any weather patterns, allowing planes to route around any dangerous conditions.
45. Bring your swimsuit in your carry-on luggage. This will make it handy to change into and enjoy your hotel pool, even if you arrive before scheduled check-in.
46. Take a photo of each piece of luggage before checking it onto your flight or leaving it with the front desk of a hotel. This will provide a record of exactly what you checked, as well as its condition, in case your luggage is damaged or lost on the way.
47. If you're driving (and parking!) in Orlando, the interior of your vehicle will get blazing hot during the day. Bring a sun shade (or pick one up at the Walmart near Disney World) to keep the dash and steering wheel from baking and getting cracks. If you forget the shade, the steering wheel and seats may become too hot to touch. Before leaving the car, turn the steering wheel as far to the left or right as it will go. That will keep the portion you use out of the direct sunlight.

If you have a spare shirt or blanket, hang it from the windows (using the rearview mirror or rolling it up into the windows to keep it in place). If you're in a safe area, such as on Disney property, you can leave the windows open just a crack to keep fresh air movement.

Be sure to remove anything that might melt or get damaged in the heat. For instance, a GPS device or cell phone left mounted to your

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window can get destroyed from the Florida heat! Of course, never leave children or pets in the car, even for just a few minutes. The interior of the vehicle can reach temperatures of over 100 degrees in just moments.

48. Bring a few gallon-size Ziploc bags for unexpected messes or leftovers. This is especially important if you have small children. Whether it's a diaper explosion, an ice cream disaster, soggy clothes after playing in a fountain, or just a partially eaten snack bar, you will be grateful to have something to keep the mess away from your other things. These bags will also come in very handy to keep electronics dry during the splash rides, such as Kali River Rapids.
49. Large scarves, pashminas, and sarongs are lightweight and versatile pieces of clothing that often come in handy. Whether you need a makeshift shade for a stroller, a quick picnic cloth, a swimsuit cover-up, or a wrap to fend off the indoor air conditioning, you will be grateful you brought one along!
50. When packing, bring extra chargers for your phone. If one gets lost or destroyed, you will be glad to have the extra. If you have lost all your chargers and can't get to a dollar store for a new one, check with the front desk of your hotel. They may have a spare they can loan you or one that was abandoned by a previous guest.
51. Don't take chances on uncomfortable airline seats, especially if you have a long flight into and out of Orlando. Check SeatGuru ([seatguru.com](http://seatguru.com)) to see what seat availability the flights you're considering have and find out how those seats are rated by actual customers.

Simply do a search for the airline, your travel date, then the flight number. A complete seat map, including bathroom locations, will show the available seats with color coding to identify which are good, bad, and "be aware," along with an explanation of each rating. They also identify the amenities offered, so you can compare between airlines.

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52. To facilitate getting reunited with a lost camera or cell phone, take a photo of your name and a number where you can be reached (another member of your party in case you lose your cell phone). For your camera, make sure it is the first photo on your memory card. For your cell phone, make it the locked screen image.
- Open the Settings on your phone and look for Lock Screen options to do this. (If it's your child's device, use an adult's name and phone number, not the child's!) That way, anybody who finds your device can easily contact you to return it.
53. Extend your phone battery life by doing the following:
- Reduce the screen brightness to the lowest level still visible;
  - Use a ringtone, not vibrate;
  - Turn the camera flash off;
  - Set the screen time out its quickest setting;
  - Delete any apps you don't need on the trip;
  - Turn off wi-fi, data, and Bluetooth when you're not actively using them; and
  - Wait to send texts and pictures to family and friends until the day is over.
54. Don't wait until the last minute to pack. Schedule time during the days leading up to your trip to pack your luggage. This will reduce stress and give you time to consider everything you need to bring. Use a checklist to ensure you don't forget anything, and double-check the list the evening prior to leaving.
55. Use Disney's Genie (the free portion of it, found in Disney's MyDisneyExperience app) to create your daily schedule through your My Disney Experience account. Take a screen shot of the schedule and set it as your phone's wallpaper to check it regularly without having to log onto the app.
- Keep in mind, the Disney Genie schedule may change throughout the day to adjust to expected wait times, so log into the app and check for changes once an hour or so.

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56. Bring a rain poncho. When the rains hit, don't despair! Florida is in the subtropics. During hurricane season, particularly the summer months, it can rain every afternoon (usually between 3 and 6 p.m.). Try not to schedule any outdoor rides during this time. This is the time when the parks clear out, leaving much shorter lines at indoor rides. Have fun splashing through the puddles, as you run from ride to ride. It may end up as one of the funnest moments your family will experience.
57. Pack lens cleaner for your (sun)glasses and camera lenses. If you forget to bring some, you can purchase a small bottle at the Sunglass Hut in Disney Springs. Alternatively, pick up some cotton swabs and isopropyl alcohol from the dollar store for a makeshift cleaner.
58. Buy a pack of Mickey-shaped pin backs from Amazon or eBay to bring with you if you plan to do any Disney pin trading. The little backs have a tendency to fall off, and you don't want to lose a pin. If you forget to bring extra backs and discover the back is missing from one of your Disney pins, the backs of some earrings make a quick-fix solution to keep them in place.  
If nobody in your party has an earring back that will fit, ask your hotel front desk for the eraser from a pencil. The spongy material will keep your pin in place, until you can find a better option.
59. Bring loose change to the parks for wishing wells and fountains found throughout the parks. Children love to toss the coins and make a wish, and you can feel good knowing the money is going to a good cause. Disney collects the coins and donates them once a year to a charity program.
60. Bring your own reusable straw. Paper straws are provided at the theme parks, and they tend to fall apart before you finish your drink (especially if it's a frozen drink). You can pick up a collapsible, reusable (and washable) straw online or at Walmart to carry in your pocket. For smaller children, bring sippy cups and transfer their drinks into those.

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61. Bring a spare pair of shoes. You may get caught in one of the famous Florida downpours, leaving your shoes soggy for a day or two. Even if that doesn't happen, the fun splash rides at Disney can soak them through.

If you forget an extra pair of shoes, put your socked feet in plastic before putting your wet shoes back on. You can use a Ziploc bag or even a plastic shopping bag over your feet. By the time you've walked around in the Florida sun for an hour or two, your shoes should be dry again and you can remove the plastic (although you may want to change your sweaty socks at this time).

62. Wear a secure, one-piece swimsuit to the Disney water parks and on water slides. Bikini tops, bottoms, and loose shorts often come off at the bottom landing of the more intense water slides, such as Summit Plummet, leaving guests exposed to the crowds. It's an embarrassing experience you won't soon forget!
63. Wear water shoes to the Disney water parks. The pavement gets HOT, and you won't be able to wear sandals on the water slides. Water shoes will protect your feet from the hot ground, rocks, and debris. They're snug enough to wear on the water slides and designed to dry off quickly. You can purchase a pair at any Target or Walmart in the area.
64. Bring a water poncho. It's lightweight and very compact with multiple uses. Wear it when you go on a ride that might get you soaked, such as Kali River Rapids. Toss it on when it starts to rain. Unlike an umbrella, your hands stay free, and your family will enjoy splashing from ride to ride.
65. If you want to keep your water poncho as a souvenir, purchase it from one of the retailers on Disney World property. Most ponchos are cheaply made and designed to be somewhat disposable, making them prone to tears. However, if you purchase the authentic Disney Parks poncho and keep your receipt, you can exchange it for a new one if it gets damaged.
66. If you don't plan to keep your water poncho as a souvenir, buy an inexpensive one from a dollar store, Target, or Walmart. They are significantly cheaper than the authentic Disney Parks ponchos sold

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on Disney property. The ones at Target and Walmart even have Disney characters on them.

67. Dress for a day at the park. We don't mean comfortable shoes and shorts (although you definitely want those). We're talking about DisneyBounding!

How often can adults and children alike dress in fun and silly outfits? When going to Disney World, there is a DisneyBound ([disneybound.co](http://disneybound.co)) movement, where people use fashion to imitate favorite characters without using actual costumes (which are only allowed for adults in the parks during Halloween events). DisneyBound: Dress Disney and Make It Fashion is a fun book by Leslie Kay that provides a way to "channel your love for Disney through fashion."

If you really love dress-up, a different option is Dapper Day at the parks. During these unofficial events, Disney fans dress in their finery from eras-gone-by and head to the parks. Go to [dapperday.com](http://dapperday.com) to get style tips and find out what dates this event is scheduled to see if your vacation dates match up!

68. Line your purse or backpack with a plastic grocery bag or the small trash can liner from your hotel room. This will protect the contents if your bag gets wet, which it likely will on certain rides and in those famous Orlando thunderstorms.
69. What can you do if nobody you know wants to go to Disney World with you? Go by yourself, of course! Don't worry, you won't be the only traveler by yourself. Lots of people go to the parks alone.

There's no shortage of things you can do on your own. Forget about planning meals and rides to meet each person's likes and dislikes. The itinerary you create will be just for you. Head to the single rider queues in the parks, where you can meet other solo travelers. Spend a day exploring the parks and hotels, or shop to your heart's content without anyone vying for your time.

For some great vacation photos, simply head to the nearest PhotoPass photographer. Even if you don't want to buy the Memory Maker package, you can hand the photographer your personal camera for some professional quality shots.

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If you decide you want a ride partner for part of your vacation, there are many Disney groups on Facebook and Meetup, where you can arrange to meet with others at the parks.

70. Turn your hotel bathroom into a laundry room. If you stay at a hotel with no washer and dryer, do a quick wash of underwear and light shirts in the hotel bathtub. The hotel-provided shampoo will do in a pinch if you can't find a nearby dollar store for laundry detergent. Once your clothes are clean, use the hair dryer to blow dry the ones you need right away. This also works well if you get caught in an afternoon storm and need to quickly dry your sopping shoes and socks!
71. Keep all of your family's daily essential items in a single location. Designate one counter or table top, preferably near the hotel room door, for items that you need to take with you each day. This includes park tickets, medications, credit cards, and cell phones. As soon as you get back to your room each day, have your family place the items back in the same spot. It's an easy way to make sure nothing is forgotten, so you don't have to make an unscheduled visit back to the room.
72. Get the family excited for your upcoming Disney vacation with a DIY countdown chain. Each day, you remove a link from the chain, until the big day arrives! Let everyone participate in the countdown by turning the daily link removal into a family event. Check out this website for a great template you can download: <https://www.themouseforless.com/disney-downloads/countdown-chain/>.
73. Traveling light at Disney is an art form. Pockets are very useful for all of those extras, but what if your outfit doesn't have any? Carry credit cards, park tickets, and cash in a lanyard. For some extra Disney fun, make lanyards for your entire family. Here's a great DIY tutorial on how to do it yourself: <http://cleverpinkpirate.com/diy-disney-lanyard/>.
74. Weather reports for the Orlando area can be confusing and difficult to track. While one area of the city may receive heavy downpours, another may stay completely dry. Additionally, the promise of rain may mean a five-minute or five-hour storm!

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Download a weather app with a radar map, such as AccuWeather. Check the radar map regularly throughout the day to help determine if and when the rain will hit your area, as well as anticipated length of the storm.

Plan your daily meals and breaks around the poor weather, so you can leave the parks prior to the rush that typically happens after the rain begins.

75. Make your road trip to Disney World extra magical with a road trip activity bag. Include games and activities to keep the kids engaged and prevent fighting. For some great ideas on what to include, head here: <https://oneshetwoshe.com/road-trip-activity-bags/>.
76. Check the long-range weather forecast on [AccuWeather.com](https://www.accuweather.com) to see the expected weather on the dates of your trip, even if you're still several months from your vacation. You can find the long-range forecast by doing a search for your destination, then clicking on the "Monthly" tab and changing the calendar dates.

This weather forecast service uses past weather patterns to predict the likely temperature and rain for future dates, so you can get an idea of what days are typically nicer than others.

77. Be aware of pending charge holds that Disney places on credit cards. When you link a credit card to your resort reservation, Disney automatically places a \$100 hold on your account. As you charge items to your reservation (using a MagicBand or room key to purchase items or food), Disney charges the actual amount spent to your card and places a new \$100 hold on your account.

As each hold can take several days (or even weeks) to be removed from your card, this can result in multiple \$100 holds on the account, causing you to quickly hit your charge limit.

Additionally, some guests report holds placed on their cards when booking a Disney dining reservation, though it does not always happen.

While charging to your room is convenient, we recommend purchasing and using Disney gift cards instead to avoid the hassle related to the credit card hold policy.

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78. People go online to Facebook groups and get stressed out with anxiety about all the tips and details to remember.  
Don't worry about the little things! You don't need dining reservations - counter-service restaurants abound and are great for most people.  
The only thing that is an absolute must is theme park reservations.
79. If rain is in the forecast, pack a change of clothes and store it in a rentable locker at the park. That way, you can change into dry clothes if you get caught in a storm, saving you a lengthy trip back to your hotel.
80. If you pre-purchase gift cards for your trip, keep your receipt and check the balances of them as soon as possible after purchasing to confirm they were activated properly. Occasionally guests purchase a gift card in advance, only to discover it was either not activated properly or switched out for a card with no balance by an unscrupulous checker.
81. If you're trying to obtain a popular reservation for dining or attractions the moment reservations open for your desired day, clear the cache in your My Disney Experience app and restart your phone just before the reservation system opens to ensure the app functions properly.
82. Bring a hand towel inside of a Ziploc bag to the parks. After a rain, you can use the towel to wipe off wet surfaces before sitting down!
83. Always check the refurbishment schedule before planning your vacation to make sure you will be able to experience the attractions you want. Disney shuts down rides, sometimes for weeks or months, during off-seasons to refresh them. During the winter, only one water park is open, while the other is refurbished.  
Check the park calendar on Disney's website to see which attractions are scheduled for refurbishment on any given day (<https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/calendars/day/>), or view the complete refurbishment schedule here: <https://www.disneytouristblog.com/disney-world-refurbishments/>
84. A rainy or drizzly day is a good time to visit any park, as the weather literally and figuratively puts a damper on the crowds.

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After thunderstorms, all parks thin out, and the water parks are often almost empty – even at the peak periods.

85. Plan your indoor or outdoor ride choices based on the time of day. Outdoor rides are best in the morning or in the evening. When the afternoon sun is beating down, plan to do indoor rides or shows. These have cool, shaded (and sometimes air conditioned) queues, so even if the line is a bit long, your family will be comfortable and out of the direct sunlight.
86. Plan your riding partner in advance. Many Disney World rides are designed to comfortably seat two people to a row. While there are a few that allow you to squeeze one adult and two children, the best plan is to come up with riding pairs for each attraction.  
  
If you have children who are seven years or younger, each child should be paired with someone who is at least 14 years old. (This is a requirement on certain attractions, such as roller coasters!)  
  
Change up the riding partners occasionally to keep things interesting and to ensure that the same person isn't always responsible for the safety of the younger child in the group.
87. Use the paid Lightning Lane system as a gauge to determine how busy a particular park will be on the day of your visit. If the really popular attractions are available on the day you want, it's likely the crowds will be bearable that day. If you see those attractions are completely booked 30 days ahead of time, plan to avoid the park on that day.
88. Without Lightning Lane reservations for the major attractions, plan to arrive 30 to 45 minutes before the official opening of any theme park in order to be in the first wave of people advancing towards the rides. The most popular rides will get busy very quickly, and the lines will only get longer as the day goes on. If it's a slower day, you might be able to walk right onto certain popular rides, such as Expedition Everest or Peter Pan's Flight.
89. Bring healthy, high protein and high fiber snacks with you to the parks, since allowing yourself to get hungry leads to poor purchase decisions. You are walking 7-10 miles per day, so expect to eat – and drink – a lot more than usual.

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90. Freeze your sandwiches and juice boxes overnight. Uncrustables are excellent, low-mess peanut butter & jelly sandwiches that freeze well. (Look for them in the freezer aisle of the grocery store.) You can use them to keep the rest of your food items cold, and they should be nicely thawed by the time lunch rolls around.
91. Pre-popped popcorn is an excellent snack option to bring to the parks. It weighs very little, and it's something popcorn-lovers are likely to crave throughout the day due to buttery aroma wafting from the many fresh popcorn carts located throughout each park.
92. Book your theme park reservations the moment you receive your tickets. (You can currently book any date through 2023.)  
  
Schedule reminders for important dates leading up to your Disney vacation. Set an alarm for 5:30 a.m. on the first day you can make dining reservations to make sure you're ready to go when the system opens at 5:45 a.m. Eastern Standard Time.  
  
If you book a Disney hotel reservation through your My Disney Experience account, Disney provides a vacation countdown near the "Welcome" banner at the top of the page to help you keep track. Once the countdown hits 60 days prior to the first day of your trip, you can begin making dining reservations.
93. If you bring your own beverages (non-alcoholic) to the parks, they must be in a plastic containers (no glass). While juice boxes are okay in most of the parks, they are not allowed in Animal Kingdom (due to the plastic straws). You can also bring coolers to keep things chilled, but no loose ice is allowed in the coolers.
94. Enjoy a little romance at Disney with some careful planning. Kids are nearly everywhere, but it's not impossible to have some quiet, adult time. You are far more likely to find a quiet environment at any of the Disney Signature Dining locations, especially if you book dining reservations after 8 p.m. (except for California Grill around the time of Magic Kingdom's evening fireworks). While quite expensive, Victoria & Albert's is the best restaurant for romance, as children under 10 are not allowed in the award-winning establishment.

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You don't need to spend a lot of money for a little romance, though. A moonlit walk around the lake that sits between the Epcot-area resorts is an excellent option, with a great view of fireworks from afar. Similarly, a stroll around the Seven Seas Lagoon is usually quiet and peaceful, affording a great view of Cinderella's Castle and Magic Kingdom fireworks.

Lounges attached to Disney Signature restaurants are also great for romance without a high cost. Most lounges have small plate menus, along with adult drinks. One of the best Disney lounges for adults is the Enchanted Rose Lounge at Disney's Grand Floridian, which was inspired by Beauty and the Beast. A free boat ride from Disney Springs to watch live music at Scat Cat's Club in Disney's Port Orleans French Quarter Resort can also be a magical experience.

95. Don't plan to eat at a lot of table-service restaurants that require reservations. For those special occasions, space out the reservations to give yourself a day or two in-between.  
  
Having to stop all of your other vacation activities to make it to a restaurant in time can be stressful and can actually make your vacation much less enjoyable. Not to mention, table-service restaurants tend to be much more expensive than counter-service.  
  
Keep in mind, kids don't usually care about those experiences, leading to resentment when they complain about leaving the park or pool to make it on-time.
96. You can't bring loose ice through security into the parks. Place or freeze ice in Ziploc bag for a permitted way to keep your snacks and drinks cool.
97. If you don't get the Lightning Lane or restaurant reservations you really want on your first try, check back once (or twice) each day. Reservations often open up, as other families modify their plans. If you missed out on any Lightning Lane reservation for a ride that you simply have to do, plan to visit those attractions very early in the day, before the wait times get too long.

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98. Here are some fun terms you may hear at the parks:
- Cast Member - employee;
  - Fur Character - a non-speaking character that wears a complete costume, including full head and face covering (e.g., Mickey Mouse);
  - Face Character - a speaking character that doesn't wear a face covering, such as a princess (e.g., Cinderella);
  - Backstage - employee only areas of the parks;
  - Utilidors - hidden, underground tunnels that allow employees to move around the Magic Kingdom unseen;
  - Friend of (a Character) - a friend of a character is the term used for the Cast Member who plays that character (e.g., the Cast Member dressed as Minnie Mouse is a "friend of Minnie Mouse");
  - Costume - employee uniform; Code 101 - ride breakdown; Code 102 - ride restarting; and E-Stop - emergency shutdown of a ride.
99. With all the pre-planning involved, what can you do if you didn't have time (or the patience) to create a daily agenda or get Lightning Lane reservations for the best rides? Don't worry, your trip won't be a total loss!

While the attractions are fun, Disney is about more than that. It's an atmosphere and attitude, a break from the real world. In short, just being at Disney World is an experience.

Don't stress about the major attractions. Pick one per day that you really want to do, get to the park as early as possible, and head straight for it. For the remainder of the day, use the estimated wait times on Disney's My Disney Experience app to hit attractions with lower wait times. (If you start at the back of the parks, rather than go to the attractions near the entrance, the morning lines are usually shorter.)

If a rain storm hits, use it to your advantage. Race through the puddles to go from ride to ride, while other guests cower in the shops.

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Spend the rest of your time exploring the nooks and crannies that other guests don't take the time to see. How many people head down the small side street off of Main Street, where you can hear sounds from the upstairs windows? Who takes the time to pick up the old telephone in Le Chapeau and listen to the party line?

Use the Play Disney Parks app to play games and learn trivia as you go through the parks. Make a game of finding as many Hidden Mickeys as possible, or create your own scavenger hunt game to enjoy with family and friends. The possibilities are endless, and chances are you'll have more fun than sticking to a strict schedule!

100. Disney now requires guests to reserve attendance for their desired park in advance. This system has effectively eliminated the old phased closures that Disney would implement as parks began to reach capacity. If you have a park reservation for the day, you will be allowed entrance to that park.

If you are purchasing tickets at the gate, check with the ticketing agent to verify the park still has capacity for that day. The Cast Member will explain how to link your tickets to obtain a reservation.

If you have a park hopper pass, you can only make a reservation for the first park of the day. You must wait until at least 2 p.m. to go to the next park, and the park of your choosing may not be available.

Starting at 2 p.m. each day, the online park calendar shows that day's available park hopper hours for each park. These are the hours during which you can gain entrance with a park hopper pass after visiting your first park of the day. Before attempting to park hop, check the calendar in the My Disney Experience app for the next park you wish to visit. If it still has capacity, park hopper hours will be listed. If it doesn't have capacity, no park hopper hours will be listed.

101. Most hotels allow you to mail items to them for use during your stay. Many charge a fee (\$5 for Disney resorts) to accept and handle your packages, but it's a good option if you don't have the luggage space to bring something along.

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This option is commonly used for stroller and extra luggage purchases. You may also want to use it to ship sensitive items or secret gifts you don't want others in your party to see.

Check with your specific hotel to find out how to properly address packages. For Disney hotels, use the following format:

Guest Name: (The name of the person in your party who will pick up the package from the front desk.)

C/O: (Disney Resort Name)

Hold for guest arriving on: (Your Arrival Date)

Reservation number: (Your Disney Vacation Reservation Number)

Resort address: (Disney Resort Address)

102. Try to reserve your first Genie+ Lightning Lane time for early in the day (beginning at 10 am), as you will be able to get a new Lightning Reservation as soon as you use the first (or it expires).
103. Sometimes, you can only get a Lightning Lane reservation for an attraction that's high priority to you later in the day. If that's the case, park hoppers should use the morning to catch up on lower priority rides they missed at a different park in the morning.  
Non-park hoppers should try to get to the park at opening to see if they can get into the stand-by queue for the high priority attraction with a short wait or enjoy less popular rides until the Lightning Lane reservation time.
104. You can make separate Lightning Lane reservations for different members of your party on the same day if you plan to do different things.
105. If you're park-hopping and have Genie+, you can reserve your Lightning Lane time at any park you wish. Get your initial reservation at the first park. Once you've used up that reservations, you can park-hop and get a new Lightning Lane time through the app.
106. When booking an early paid Lightning Lane reservation for one of the most popular attractions, be flexible with your park scheduling. If the attraction you want isn't available on that day, change the date, until you find one that has availability.

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107. Need to change a park or Lightning Lane reservation? You can easily make changes at home from the MyMagic+ online system or the My Disney Experience app. If you're already in the park, ask any Disney employee (Cast Member) to direct you to someone who can help with reservations.
108. If someone in your party doesn't have park passes, there is still a way to obtain Lightning Lane reservations for him. There are two options. The first is to add the guest to an existing reservation once he has a pass. However, this may not work if no more reservations are available. The second option is for someone in your party to give up a reservation and switch with the late-comer. You can try both options by using the "Change Party" option in your existing reservation.
109. If you don't get the pre-paid, premium Lightning Lane reservation you want at first, keep checking multiple times a day up until the day of your visit. Other guests may modify or cancel their reservations, allowing vigilant people to take advantage of last-minute changes.
110. Disney lets you decorate your room for the holidays, as long as you don't change the outer appearance of the hotel, so go wild if you're visiting during a special occasion. Bring holiday lights to decorate the window, a happy birthday sign to hang on the door, or even a Christmas tree!

If you'd like to surprise your family with a few decorations, check the Disney Florist website for some extra special options (<http://disneyworld.disneyfloralandgifts.com/home.do>). They offer bouquets, wreaths, and other decorations that will be delivered directly to your room.

111. Take a photo to remember your parking space! This is true when you park at the airport, at the Disney theme parks, and even when you go shopping around town. Taking a picture of your row name/number (or some landmark) with your cell phone will make finding your car a breeze later, when you're most likely to have forgotten where you parked!

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Of course, if you do forget where you're parked at one of the Disney parks, just look for a parking attendant or security. If you tell them the time you arrive, they can point you to the parking lot area where you would have parked. If you still can't find it, security will happily drive you around until you do!

112. Once you receive your park tickets or MagicBands, link them immediately to your My Disney Experience account. Then, take a picture of the back of your park tickets or MagicBands, where they contain the identification numbers.

If any are misplaced or stolen, simply go to Guest Relations with the photograph. They will look up the park pass information from the number, cancel the old tickets, and issue you new ones to get you on your way! If you can't find the photo, Guest Relations can use the information from your My Disney Experience account to find the ticket and replace it. If all else fails, gather the tickets you still have. If they were purchased together, the numbers will be consecutive, allowing you to figure out the number of the missing ticket!

113. As a way to just relax when the crowds are lighter, many people use Early Theme Park Entry time (available only to Disney hotel guests) to stroll through shops and linger over a meal.

For those who love photography, this is the best time to get great photos of the parks and your family without crowds blocking the background and landmarks.

114. Check to see if there will be a RunDisney event during your vacation ([rundisney.com](http://rundisney.com)). If you're driving, these events shut down some streets around Disney property, causing detours and driving delays. The parks also tend to be busier on event days. Of course, if you like the idea of running, there are great activities for the whole family (not just the marathon race), and all participants get a great keepsake medal.
115. If you are not accustomed to a lot of walking or hot weather, plan a buffer day between each park day to relax and refresh.
116. Train for your Disney vacation by walking at least five miles a day in the weeks leading up to your trip.

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117. If you aren't able to walk long distances or for long periods of time, plan to bring or rent a wheelchair or electric scooter (ECV).
118. By the third day in a row of visiting theme parks, most guests are suffering from exhaustion and need to sleep in. If you don't take our advice to plan a rest day in between each park day, at least plan one after the first two days. If you still want to visit a park on your third day, try to schedule Lightning Lane reservations later in the day to allow everyone a lazy morning.
119. Find creative ways to save up for the expense of Disney food and souvenirs. Start a change jar and put loose change into it at the end of each day. Reward your children with small amounts for turning in school assignments early or completing chores without being asked. Hold a garage sale to make room for all of your new Disney souvenirs. Whatever you decide to do, the family will be grateful for the extra cash when the trip arrives!
120. Create a budget to determine expected costs. Even a rough budget is helpful to figure out what the required costs are (airfare, meals, lodging, parking, etc.), so you have an idea of what will be left over for souvenirs and treats.

You can easily estimate food and lodging for an on-property stay by going through the booking process in your My Disney Experience account without finalizing. Include Disney's Dining Plan during this process to give a rough estimate of the cost of meals.

If you have more than four people, check the difference in price for multiple rooms versus a suite (or cabin at Disney's Fort Wilderness). If you plan to stay off-property, you can estimate many of your costs through vacation companies like Southwest Airlines or Orbitz.

121. Give each child their own Disney gift card to spend on souvenirs and treats. It's easier to keep track of than cash, and you can use this to help them learn the value of money. (We recommend a wristband gift card, which is available for purchase during festivals at Epcot.)

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Prior to handing the card to your child, take a photo of the gift card number (on the back) and the receipt for the gift card purchase.

If your child loses the gift card, call (877) 650-4327 immediately to have the remaining funds frozen and request a replacement gift card.

122. Prepare your bag each night before you visit the parks. Use a single backpack or fanny pack with several zippered pockets to keep things organized. (The fewer bags you have, the less time it will take you to get through security.) Purses or shopping bags tend to be hard to lug around, so leave those at home and put only what you need into your backpack.

Don't wait until the morning of to pack your bag, as you are likely to forget things, and use a check-list to make sure you remember to bring everything, such as water bottles, snacks, and park tickets.

123. Bring your own cup holders! While larger strollers include cup holders, umbrella strollers typically do not. Head to your nearest grocery store or wine shop and pick up a reusable wine tote. Hang the tote from the stroller handles and enjoy an instant carrier for fountain drinks and coffee cups.

Carabiners (D-rings) also make great cup holders. Simply loop the handle of your water bottle or thermos (or bags!) through one and hang it from the stroller for an instant way to go hands-free.

You can even use a carabiner to hang your reusable cup from a belt loop or lanyard!

124. Beware of discount airline companies. Guests often complain about those offering low ticket prices (such as Frontier and Spirit), as they have been known to cancel flights at the last minute, leaving people stranded and unable to either get to their vacation destination or get home!

If this happens to you, at the most, you will only get a refund for the amount of the discounted airfare, which likely won't come close to covering the cost of same-day airfare you will have to pay on another airline.

125. When you purchase your park passes from a third party, request to have them mailed to you immediately. You can reserve your

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park choices 60 days in advance. If you are traveling during peak periods, especially during the holidays, it's important to make your park and Lightning Lane reservations as early as possible.

To start making reservations from home, you need a MagicBand linked to your reservation or the numbers located on the back of your park pass. (Passes purchased online through Disney's website are immediately linked to your My Disney Experience account, so you don't need to wait for them to be mailed to start making reservations.)

126. When you decide which ticket options you want, don't delay, buy right away! You need tickets to begin making park reservations. Additionally, ticket prices increase each year in February, so lock in the current rate to ensure you don't pay more.
127. Plan a scavenger hunt for kids in the parks. It will keep the kids entertained and working together, while exploring.
128. Bring a Disney book or movie for each night of your vacation to keep the magic going, while the kids are winding down.
129. There are some great shows on the Disney Channel, but your kids may not be familiar with all of the Disney classics. Many of the attractions and decorations around the parks are based on older movies and Disney shorts.

Take some time to read or watch the stories they're likely to see in the parks, such as classic cartoons with Black Pete and Clarabelle Cow, Mr. Toad's Wild Ride, Pinocchio, Dumbo, and Swiss Family Robinson. Talk about the stories you loved as a child. You may find a new way to bond, and the attractions will mean that much more when you visit the parks.

130. If you plan to surprise a family member with a Disney vacation reveal, make sure you get it on video. The memories will last you a lifetime!
131. No vacation plan is fool-proof, so add some flexibility into your schedule. Prioritize a few must-dos each day, such as one or two attractions and a meal, but leave room for free time. Remember, not everyone enjoys sticking to a rigid schedule, so your family will appreciate a break from it.

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Disney isn't just about the attractions. Many of the most magical moments on a Disney trip happen with spontaneous interactions and just having rare together time with the whole family, rather than on rides.

Above all, use any missed attractions as an excuse to start planning your next Disney vacation!

132. Order glow-in-the-dark body paint from Amazon prior to your vacation. Take a few minutes to paint fun patterns onto everyone's faces each morning.

Most dark rides have black lights that will make your face paintings glow.

For some extra-special photos, head to Pandora in Animal Kingdom after dark. The entire land is lit up with lights that will cause the paint to glow brightly!

133. Do you enjoy DIY projects? Create your own Disney shirts! This is a fun project for the whole family to get in on, and your family photos will be extra fun. Here's a great tutorial on some DIY shirts: <https://the-wilson-world.blogspot.com/2011/08/disney-crafts-personalized-mickey-t.html>.
134. Make your own DIY Disney water bottles for an inexpensive and useful souvenir. Check out this website for instructions on how to turn dollar store bottles into lifetime memories: <https://thefrugalgirls.com/2013/05/water-bottle-crafts.html>.

Adults are only kids grown up, anyway.

- Walt Disney

# Disney Tools



1. Guests can purchase a MagicBand for as little as \$19.95. This rubber bracelet uses wireless technology to replace all plastic passes you might be used to, including hotel room keys and park admission passes. You can also link these to your credit card and use them for purchases throughout your entire stay if you are staying on-property. MagicBands have Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chips in them to track and link everything together.
2. Disney World has technology that helps it track its visitors. There is no way to keep Disney from tracking you inside the parks completely, but the best way to reduce Disney's ability to keep tabs on you is to leave the MagicBand at home. Instead, request an old-fashioned pass at Will Call or from the front desk, if you're staying at a Disney Resort.

Every theme park ticket has a radio frequency identification (RFID) chip in it, but the ones inside of the credit card-style passes are short-range chips versus the long-range chips inside of the MagicBands. Long-range RFID chips allow Disney to easily track your movements within the parks, and as they're linked to your name and credit card information, they provide much more information about you to Disney than other bits of technology.

To further reduce Disney's ability to keep tabs on you and your habits, turn the GPS tracking feature off of your phone and keep it offline, except when you specifically need to use it.
3. You can help safeguard your privacy by turning off the GPS feature on your phone, especially if you're using the My Disney Experience app. You will lose a little bit of functionality, such as the ability to search for restaurants based on your current location, but Disney won't be able to profile you and your buying decisions so easily. This will also save your battery life for when you really need your phone.
4. If you notice something missing during your visit, go immediately to the nearest Disney Cast Member. The Cast Member is likely to direct you to Guest Relations at the front of the park. However, if the item is something of great value or importance, request that they bring security out to you immediately. The quicker

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the investigation begins, the more likely you are to recover your possessions!

5. You can make or modify Lightning Lane reservations either on a computer ([disneyworld.com](https://disneyworld.com)) or on your smart device (MyDisneyExperience app).
6. While Disney allows you to use your phone as a park ticket, you may still want to get MagicBands as souvenirs for the family. These colorful bracelets or slap bands are fun to wear and customizable. Look on Etsy for MagicBand wraps with fun and unique designs. You can even pop out the center “button” sensor from the band and place it into another band to mix and match colors and designs. Disney also sells MagicKeepers, which hold these sensor buttons in fun clips you can attach to your clothes or bags.
7. Charging purchases with your MagicBand is limited. Only Disney hotel guests can link a credit card to their MagicBand to use it for purchases. If you have a credit card linked, there is a daily spending limit of \$1,500 for Value Resort guests and \$2,000 for Moderate or Deluxe Resort guests.

However, if you decide to go “hog wild” and hit your daily limit, there are a couple of options. First, contact the front desk at your hotel and ask them to transfer the MagicBand charge to the credit card on file. This will reset the MagicBand, allowing you to make an additional \$1,500 or \$2,000 in purchases for the day. Second, if you’re trying to make a purchase and get declined, have the Cast Member contact the hotel and request a limit reset for you.

8. If you need to modify a Lightning Lane or Disney dining reservation and your phone is dead, just look for a Cast Member wearing a blue shirt. These Cast Members can help you change or cancel reservations.
9. There are no re-rides allowed on the same day using Genie+. If you make a Lightning Lane reservation using the Genie+ system, make sure you use each reservation or cancel it, as you will not be allowed to book the same ride again that day.

## Disney Tools

If you love an attraction and want to experience it again, you must either wait in the stand-by queue or purchase Genie+ and reserve it on a different day.

10. You can only book one Lightning Lane reservation at a time when using the paid Genie+ app. Try to plan your first daily Lightning Lane reservation for rides between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., so you can keep doing rides once the standby queues are too long but will still have plenty of time to get additional Lightning Lane reservations for the day. Once each Genie+ Lightning Lane reservation is used up, you can book the next reservation.
11. Disney World replaced its free FastPass+ queues with paid Lightning Lanes. Lightning Lane reservations for the most popular rides (including Seven Dwarfs Mine Train, Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance, Remy's Ratatouille Adventure, Flight of Passage, and others) must be purchased in advance through your My Disney Experience account. These popular rides are not available for reservation through Disney's paid Genie+ app. The price for a reservation varies based on the ride and the day of visit. Less popular rides with Lightning Lanes can be reserved through Disney's paid Genie+ app. Genie+ starts at \$15 per person per day. Reservations through the app must be made one-at-a-time on the day of your visit. You can make the first reservation as early as 7 a.m. that day. Once you use a reservation, you can make the next reservation.  
  
Keep in mind that both reservation systems are based on ride availability, so booking as early as possible is vital. With Genie+, you may not be able to get the Lightning Lane reservations you want on particularly busy days.
12. Download the MyDisneyExperience app on your phone well before your vacation and practice using it. It can be somewhat confusing to navigate, especially when you're in the parks surrounded by hungry family and trying to figure out how to make it work. Play with it to figure out how to make Lightning Lane reservations, make dining reservations, or order food for pick up. (You can go through the process without finalizing the order, until you get the

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hang of it.) Your whole family will be grateful for your quick and efficient use of the app once you're at the parks!

13. Disney World no longer has free FastPass reservations. The system has been replaced by two paid systems.

The first, called Disney Genie+ starts at \$15 per day and gives you one selection at a time on the day of your visit to go through the quicker Lightning Lane on a lower popularity (Tier 2) ride, rather than the regular stand-by queue. This is similar to the old paper FastPass system (except for the fee), which requires guests to use a reservation before making another one on the same day.

The other paid system is for the more popular Tier 1 attractions. With it, Disney allows guests to reserve two of the most popular attractions per day (based on availability) to bypass the regular queue and use the Lightning Lane.

Disney changes the price based on the season and day of visit, as well as the popularity of the ride, so expect to pay less during mid-week, off-season visits.

The new systems are ideal for park hoppers, as you can make each reservation for whatever park and attraction has availability and travel from park to park to hit the most attractions.

14. If your entire group can't get Lightning Lane reservations at the same time, split the reservation request into smaller groups. You may be able to get staggering reservations that have some overlap, or back-to-back reservation times.
15. There is no way to cancel or modify your individual paid (Tier 1) Lightning Lane reservations, so make sure you choose a time when everyone in your party will be available.
16. When making a Lightning Lane reservation, you can select everyone in your travel party to make sure you all ride an attraction at the same time, or you can choose to make separate attraction reservations for different members of your party. You can also make changes to each individual's Lightning Lane reservation.
17. If you are park hopping, you can get Lightning Lane reservations for whichever park you plan to visit. If you just want to get on as many rides as possible, reserve your first Genie+ reservation

## Disney Tools

at an early time in the first park you plan to visit for that day, and reserve a new time as soon as you use each prior reservation. (You can reserve your next Lightning Lane time as soon as you enter the queue for your current reservation.) Once you're ready to park hop, reserve a time for an attraction at your next park before heading to it.

18. You can only pre-reserve one Genie+ Lightning Lane selections each morning of your visit. Once you use that selection, you can continue to reserve attractions for that day one-at-a-time, on a rolling basis. In other words, after you use the first Lightning Lane reservation, you can reserve a second. After you use the second, you can reserve the third, etc.
19. Log into your My Disney Experience account and go to the Genie+ Lightning Lane reservation system just before 7 a.m. The morning you plan to visit a park. Hit the refresh button on your phone or browser constantly to get the first available selections for that day.
20. Buy your park tickets and link them to a My Disney Experience account for each member of your party prior to making Lightning Lane reservations. You can't make Lightning Lane reservations without a valid ticket and account for each guest.
21. Keep refreshing Genie+ for better Lightning Lane times. If your next available time is too far out, keep checking the app to see if a better time is available. People swap reservations all day long, so you may be able to grab a ride or time that wasn't available earlier if you're vigilant.
22. Just because an attraction has a Lightning Lane doesn't mean it needs one. Many attractions have an afternoon or evening lull, meaning you can usually (but not always) find wait times of 15 minutes or fewer if you check mid-afternoon or later. Easily keep an eye on wait times with the My Disney Experience app. These attractions include:
  - Magic Kingdom's Mickey's PhilharMagic, Under the Sea ~ Journey of the Little Mermaid, it's a small world, and Monster's, Inc. Laugh Floor;

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- Epcot's Journey Into Imagination with Figment, Spaceship Earth, Pixar Short Film Festival, The Three Caballeros, The Seas with Nemo and Friends, Living with the Land, and Mission: Space;
- Hollywood Studios' Indiana Jones Epic Stunt Spectacular!, Muppet Vision 3D, Beauty and the Beast, Star Tours, and A Frozen Sing-A-Long Celebration; and
- Animal Kingdom's DINOSAUR, Expedition Everest, It's Tough To Be A Bug!, and Feathered Friends in Flight.

23. If the attraction for which you have an individual paid (Tier 1) Lightning Lane reservation goes down during your return time window, your return window will automatically be extended to last for the remainder of the day, or until you use it.

If the attraction stays down the entire day, Disney will automatically refund the Lightning Lane purchase price to your account.

If you still want to go on that ride, you will need a park reservation (for whichever park the attraction is in) for a different day of your vacation, and you must purchase new Lightning Lane reservations on that day, provided any are available.

24. When using Disney's Genie+, schedule your first attraction as early in the day as possible. You can't schedule your next ride until you've used your current reservation, so plan those reservations as close together as you can.
25. Download the Play Disney Parks app for even more Disney fun at the parks. This is an interactive app, designed to have different game and trivial functionality, depending on where you are on Disney property.

To use it properly, give the app access to your location services, then check it each time you enter a new land of the park or the queue for a ride.

Play around and try swiping left or right on occasion to access special features. Easter eggs (hidden surprises) are hidden in the app that can only be accessed if you're in the right location, so

## Disney Tools

be sure to check it often. It's a great way to stay entertained and engage with the family while waiting in a long line.

26. Use the free version of Disney's Genie app to create and manage your daily park itinerary. The app provides estimated wait times throughout the day for attractions and updates your itinerary based on changes to those wait times, providing the best times to hit rides for which you weren't able to get a Lightning Lane reservation.
27. Pay phones still exist in a few places at Disney World. It may be the one type of technology in the park you need to explain to your children, instead of the other way around! If your cell phone battery dies, you can use these phones to reach certain Disney services for free, such as Guest Relations, Ticketing, and Reservations. (Instructions are located on the front of the phones.) If you need to use one of these pay phones, just ask a Cast Member to direct you to one.
28. Disney Vacation Club (DVC) is Disney's vacation ownership program. Similar to most modern timeshare programs, members pay an upfront buy-in fee and monthly fees to purchase membership points that can be used at any DVC properties in the world. DVC properties at Disney World are part of the Deluxe Villas classification.

Many offer multiple bedrooms and full kitchens, making DVC membership a popular option for families. As part of the program, members receive perks similar to that of Annual Passholders. These perks include free parking at Disney hotels and parks, as well as the ability to purchase the Tables in Wonderland discount card.

29. Take advantage of Disney's shipping service for large souvenirs. Before buying a giant stuffed animal or toy train set that you must figure out how to pack and transfer onto your airplane, check with the store clerk to see how much it would cost to ship the item.  
Before actually making the purchase, check [shopdisney.com](https://shopdisney.com) to see if the item is available there. Shipping is usually cheaper when ordering from the website, they often run percentage off discounts, and you can combine your souvenir purchases together for greater savings on the shipping cost.

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30. **Merchandise Returns.** If you change your mind about a purchase from a Disney-owned store, you can return it anywhere on Disney property. If you buy a specialty glass ornament from the Germany pavilion in Epcot, for instance, you can return it when you go to Hollywood Studios later in your trip. Of course, you need to present your receipt to return an item, and Disney won't give refunds on used or customized merchandise (such as embroidered hats).
31. Use the My Disney Experience app to see when the wait times to get on a ride are low. The app is great for ordering food, getting a Lightning Lane reservation (with the paid Genie+ feature), checking out showtimes, among other things. For really popular rides, check expected wait times on the app during parades or fireworks shows to see if you can sneak on a popular ride without too much standing in line.
32. Download the Shop Disney Parks app before your vacation. As you spot special souvenirs that you absolutely need, you can scan the barcode with the app for purchase later. At the end of your trip, the items will be in your online shopping basket for you to order and have shipped to your house or Disney hotel.

Are you at the parks and looking for something in particular that you can't find? Search the app. It will tell you if there is one in stock at a nearby store. If you have a Disney Visa, an annual pass, or are a Disney Vacation Club member, you can use your discount through the app to save a little money!
33. If you get to a park and discover you don't need the Genie+ ride reservation you scheduled, cancel it immediately and schedule a new ride. Otherwise, you must wait until after that reservation time has passed to plan your next one.
34. If you have paid for Genie+ but can't get a reservation for an attraction that's important to you, plan your first Genie+ reservation for 11 a.m. or later. Use the time prior to that to race to the important attraction, as the line is likely going to be shorter before 11 a.m.

## Disney Tools

35. Get the most from the My Disney Experience app. There are tons of features, aside from the obvious ones, such as making dining and park reservations.

The Genie feature allows you to create an itinerary and modify it based on attraction wait times. Find the nearest Character meet-and-greet or PhotoPass opportunity. You can also find complete park and transportation maps, as well as information about Disney hotel properties. Do you need to reach the front desk of your Disney hotel? You can do that with the app!

There's even a Spotlights menu item, which includes special opportunities that may be of interest to you.

Be sure to check the app when you enter a queue, a new land, or a different section of a park. Special trivia or games may pop up to enhance your park experience!

36. Package Pickup. As you make purchases at a park, there is no need for you to carry them with you all day long.

Guests staying on Disney property can have their purchases (including photos) delivered directly to their hotels.

Are you staying at an off-property hotel? No problem! You can also have your purchases held at a package pickup location (near Guest Relations just inside the entrance of each park and also at the International Gateway exit in Epcot) for easy retrieval on your way out of the park. Allow a minimum of 3 hours for purchased items to be delivered to the park entrance.

37. Pre-register for Disney's Disability Access System (DAS) to receive the DAS Pass if you have a valid disability or injury that prevents you from standing in long lines. The DAS Pass is good for you and up to five guests. (Contact Guest Relations to request an exception to the party size limit if you're traveling with more people.)

The pass acts as a virtual queue, allowing your party to return and use the Lightning Lane after the estimated standby queue time has passed, less ten minutes. (In other words, if you request a return time at 1 p.m. And the estimated standby queue wait at that time is 40 minutes, you can return to the attraction after 30 minutes.)

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The disabled guest must go on the ride with the rest of the party. (The pass can't be used to get only the others in the party quick access to a ride.)

While you can request a DAS Pass at any point during your trip, to save time and hassle, request your DAS Pass at least 48 hours prior to your vacation. Rather than waste time at Guest Relations when you arrive in the park, you can schedule a video chat with a live agent up to 30 days prior to your arrival to set up this service.

The best part is, if you complete this registration at least two days prior to your visit, you can pre-reserve the Lightning Lane for up to two attractions each day of your visit (subject to attraction availability). If you wait to request your pass at Guest Relations in the park, you will not receive these pre-reserved attractions.

Once you have the DAS Pass, you can make your own same-day attraction reservations once you enter a park directly through the MyDisneyExperience app or by asking a queue attendant at the attraction to assist. It's a great system for those who need it.

38. There are a few places you can get your name embroidered on a hat or set of mouse ears on Disney property (for a fee). These are Adrian and Edith's Head to Toe in Hollywood Studios, Creations Shop in Epcot, The Chapeau in Magic Kingdom, and Disney's Days of Christmas in Disney Springs. However, if you buy a hat you like at another Disney retailer, you can take it to any of these locations to have the embroidery done for an additional charge.

Disney (World) is something that will never be finished...I wanted something alive, something that could grow, something I could keep plussing with ideas; the park is that. Not only can I add things, but even the trees will keep growing. The things will get more beautiful each year.

- Walt Disney

# Ticket Options



1. If you choose to upgrade your park tickets with additional days or options, the upgrade fee you pay is for the entire length of your pass, so try to determine if you need the extras within a day or two of arrival.
2. When deciding on ticket options, the Water Park and Sports ticket add-on may not be the best value if you only plan to spend a day or two at the water parks and won't take advantage of the other options.

Consider carefully how much you will actually be able to do outside of the theme parks. Did you schedule enough off days to spend at the water parks or golf course?

A single day ticket to a water park is cheaper than adding the Water Park and Sports ticket to your pass, plus that single day ticket allows you to park hop between the two water parks on the day you visit!

3. As you consider getting the park-hopper add-on for your pass, keep in mind that trying to visit multiple parks in a single day can be exhausting and can also be very difficult to accomplish with young children and older folks. When in doubt, get the basic pass. You can upgrade if you need the additional options later.
4. Buy your tickets directly from Disney without the park hopper or water parks & more options if you're unsure about needing these features. You can upgrade directly at the ticketing counter of any park if you decide you want to park hop or visit the water parks later.
5. If some, but not all, members of your party want additional options or days on their tickets, purchase the most basic passes for everyone.

Disney doesn't let you book different types of passes for different people in your party when you book a hotel and parks vacation package through them. However, once you check into your hotel, you can upgrade only those passes that need the additional options or days.

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6. Be wary of any company offering discounted Disney World tickets. There are a few legitimate companies other than Disney that offer tickets, sometimes at a discount, such as [undercvertourist.com](http://undercvertourist.com) (or Auto Club South for annual passes).

However, many companies advertising discounted tickets online or at roadside booths are either scammers or timeshare companies. Scammers will sometimes sell used tickets. Unfortunately, Disney tickets are non-transferable, so even if there are days left on the ticket, you won't be able to use them. It's an expensive lesson to learn.

7. If you purchase tickets from a company other than Disney, have them mail paper tickets to you immediately. You can't make park reservations until you have the tickets in-hand and have linked them to your My Disney Experience account.

Generally, eTickets must be redeemed at the will call booth once you reach Walt Disney World. In addition to taking extra time, you won't be able to take advantage of early park or premium Lightning Lane reservations.

If you purchase tickets directly from Disney through your My Disney Experience account, the electronic tickets will be linked to your account right away, and you can begin the planning process.

8. If you bought e-tickets that need to be exchanged for physical tickets prior to park entry, do so the day before at the Disney Springs Guest Relations or ticketing center. Waiting until the day-of to take care of it at the theme park will waste time and energy that would be better spent enjoying the rides.
9. The Disney Dining Plan is more for convenience than saving money. Many people find they don't use all the available options, preferring to snack throughout the day. If you plan to split up and want to make sure everyone has great dining options, though, it can be very convenient.
10. If you're not sure that you want or need additional options on your pass, such as park hopper, purchase a basic pass directly from Disney without the bells and whistles. You can easily upgrade your pass to add options at the park's ticketing booth and just pay

## Ticket Options

the difference. (This upgrade option isn't usually available if you purchase from a non-Disney seller.)

11. If you plan to come back to Disney World for another vacation in the same year, you can upgrade your current ticket to an annual pass. Just make the upgrade before your current pass is used up (when you still have at least one full day left on it) and before it expires. How does the upgrade work? Disney will put the value of your current ticket toward the purchase price of the annual pass, so you just need to pay the difference.
12. If you plan to visit and don't know the exact date of your visit, choose the cheapest date available. Once your plans are confirmed, you can pay the difference if your actual visit date is a higher rate. However, Disney won't give you any money back if your actual date is cheaper than you initially purchased.
13. Disney raises its ticket rates without warning once or twice per year (usually in February), so if you're planning a vacation, don't wait to purchase. You can lock in the lower rate now for use any time in the future. Remember, the 14-day expiration doesn't start until the first time you use the ticket!
14. Plan for more than one day at each theme park, if possible. The more days on your pass, the lower the daily rate. The best discounts happen with passes that are five days or more.
15. Ticket prices vary based on season and even the days of the week you visit the parks. If your dates aren't set yet, purchase tickets for the cheapest dates available. You can always change the dates later and pay the additional fee, but Disney won't refund you if you buy tickets for a more expensive date and end up visiting on a cheaper one.
16. If you plan to visit the park for more than ten days or multiple times in a single year, consider getting an annual pass. With perks, including free parking, special hotel rates, and discounted Memory Maker (Disney's photo service), you may save money. The best part is only one person in your group needs the annual pass to enjoy many of the benefits!

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Annual passes also include 10-20% discounts at select Disney restaurants and snack locations. Considering the price of dining, this could really help your budget. Passholders also get discounts on full price merchandise at Disney stores. Keep in mind, the passholder must be present and paying the bill to take advantage of discounts.

17. Don't waste the daily admission price for a regular park pass on the day you plan to attend a paid special event like Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party. Those with the special Halloween Party pass can enter the gates early at 4 p.m., and the party doesn't end until midnight, giving you plenty of hours at the park for less money than it costs for a one-day pass. Plus, attendance is usually limited to far less than during regular hours, so it's easier to get on popular rides.
18. You may discover there are no available reservations for the park you want to visit on a particular day. If you have a park hopper pass, you can start the day at another park, then hop to the park you want in the afternoon (if availability opens up).
19. If you need some assistance making your ticket selections or finalizing your order, book your Disney park tickets using the chat feature in the app or online. The Cast Member will happily answer your questions and complete the booking for you!

I just want to leave you with this thought, that it's just been sort of a dress rehearsal and we're just getting started. So if any of you start resting on your laurels, I mean forget it, because...we are just getting started.

- Walt Disney

# Disney Freebies



## **Included with Park Admission**

1. **Free Water** – The cheapest way to stay hydrated in the Orlando heat is to simply ask for a cup of ice water from any Disney restaurant that sells fountain beverages. It's Orlando's tap water, which sometimes has a slight sulfur flavor (due to the natural underground aquifer), but it's safe to drink. If you need a flavored drink, bring along Crystal Light and Kool-Aid flavor packets.  
  
It may not be glamorous, but this little tip can save a family hundreds of dollars over the course of a vacation. Disney charges \$3 for a bottle of water or \$5.50 for premium Smart Water, and fountain beverages cost even more. Many people want three or four drinks per day, which can add up for a large family. Consider a four-person family, each buying four bottles of water per day. That's \$48 per day plus tax!
2. **Colorful Disney Souvenir Pins** – You can request a free souvenir pin/button to attach to your lapel or hat that commemorates the purpose of your vacation. They are available at any Guest Relations location and in some retail shops. You just have to ask.  
  
Special Occasions:
  - 1st Visit!
  - Happily Ever After
  - I'm Celebrating!
  - Happy Birthday!
3. **Character Phone Calls** – While you're picking up your pins at Guest Relations, ask if you can get a phone call for whatever occasion you're celebrating. The Cast Member will get a character on the line to give you a very "special" greeting.
4. **Professional Photography** – Disney PhotoPass photographers are everywhere throughout Disney parks. While the system is designed to sell you additional pictures, they will also snap a family photograph using your personal camera. That means you get the same professional-quality poses at the best photo opp locations, without having to pay for a Memory Maker package.

## Disney Made *Easy*™ Insider Tips & Tricks

If you want a photograph taken almost anywhere of the entire family, don't hesitate to ask any Cast Member. They are always accommodating. Barring one of them, most other guests will certainly oblige your request.

5. **Vacation Planning App** – The My Disney Experience app with its standard Genie feature is completely free. It is an all-in-one tool that allows you to reserve your daily theme park selections, dining, and more. Included in the app is Disney's MagicMobile, a free tool you can use as your park ticket, hotel key, and more. You can even customize the look of it!
6. **Play Disney Parks App** – The Play Disney Parks app is another free perk. This one is used to unlock special trivia and adventures in each of the theme parks. Just check the app as you walk through the property to see what's available (such as Duck Tales World Showcase Adventure in Epcot)!
7. **Baby Care Centers** – As a free service to parents with small children, each park has a quiet, air-conditioned location where you can take your child to rest or nurse. These centers feature clean changing tables and peaceful nursing rooms. Toddlers enjoy the relaxing storybook area. Diapers and other supplies are available for purchase.
8. **First Aid Centers** – You can pick up aspirin and bandages or receive minor first aid care for no charge in every park. Medically trained staff are on hand to assist guests with special matters. This area also has a very tranquil, cool place for guests who need to relax and get out of the sun.
9. **Wi-Fi & Electronic Device Charging Stations** – Free Wi-Fi is now available throughout the parks and hotels on-property. Fortunately, there are also places to plug in your mobile device if the extra usage drains the battery. Just look for an outlet near your table at most counter service restaurants or one of the D-Zones.
10. **Relaxation Areas** – Known as D-Zones, there are a few areas meant purely for relaxation. They typically include a comfortable place to sit down and take a snack break. These areas may also have food and drink carts or kiosks as well as electronic device charging stations.

## Disney Freebies

The concept for the D-Zone relaxation areas began at Magic Kingdom with the introduction of a Tangled area, near the restrooms in Fantasyland. There is also an indoor, big top area in Storybook Circus (in the newest area of Fantasyland).

The idea is for people to have a space to cool down, charge their all-important devices, and to take a break from some of the hustle and bustle of the park.

11. Character Autographs – You don't need to purchase an expensive autograph book to take advantage of this benefit. In fact, if you print out your favorite princess or character picture at home to have it signed, you are likely to get more face time with the characters of choice.

In our Traveling with Small Children section, we offer tips and tricks to make signature collecting fun and exciting for the entire family. (If you miss a character autograph, you can contact Disney after your vacation and ask them to send a signed photo of that important character!)

12. Picture Spots – Look for specially marked locations that are ideal for taking pictures. These signs highlight the best scenery to stage a memorable photograph.

## Just for Kids

13. Free Theme Park Admission for Tots – Children two years old and younger get free theme park admission. While they may not remember the experience, there is plenty to entertain the wee ones, and the Rider Switch freebie makes bringing them along a potential huge advantage to families with older children.

Also, when your child is older, these pictures may become his or her most cherished “baby” photos. Our special Traveling with Small Children section shows you how to maximize the safety, comfort, and overall experience for the little ones.

14. Rider Switch – If you have a child in your family who is too small – or becomes too afraid – to go on a ride, don't fret. Disney has a program that allows one parent to wait with the child while the rest of the party goes on any ride.

## **Disney Made *Easy*™ Insider Tips & Tricks**

This is actually a huge benefit, as the first adult who goes on a ride then switches with the other parent. The rest of the party gets to go on the ride with the second parent again **WITHOUT** the extra wait in line.

15. **Stickers** – Certain locations, such as Cosmic Ray's Starlight Café and Monsters Inc. Laugh Floor at Magic Kingdom and the Fort Wilderness boats sometimes have stickers to hand out. And you can always get complementary stickers from any Disney Vacation Club kiosk throughout the property.

### **Epcot Exclusives**

16. **Soda Samples** – Club Cool in Epcot has samples of soda from around the world, and there's no limit to how many samples you are allowed to enjoy.
17. **E-Postcards** –Locations throughout Epcot let you send either a picture or video postcard via email. Look for the kiosks after riding Spaceship Earth, Mission: Space, and Test Track, as well as inside the Mexico Pavilion. Children tend to enjoy taking time working with the kiosks and developing a proper family message.

While these are a great way to remember a trip, they do not replace text messaging for speed. Just be aware that, for whatever technical or business reasons, it often takes days (and sometimes weeks!) to receive your postcard, so this is better suited as a memento of your trip, rather than a "Wish You Were Here" postcard to a friend.

18. **Kidcot Cards** – Kidcot is a program of fun and educational things for kids to do. Children receive a Ziploc bag with commemorative fact card at each Kidcot location that is found in each of the Epcot World Showcase pavilions.

The Cast Member manning the station will also put a stamp on the card. In China, Japan, and Morocco, they'll even spell your child's name in their foreign alphabet. We provide more information about this and other special attractions for children in the Epcot section.

19. **Head to the Seas Pavilion in Epcot to play Finding Dory's Friends A Fin-Tastic Scavenger Hunt.** This completely free experience also comes complete with a free sticker book!

## Disney Freebies

### Magic Kingdom Exclusives

20. Sparkling Hair Glitter – Your little prince or princess can look especially regal if you go to Harmony Barber Shop or Castle Couture and ask to get sprinkled with pixie dust. If it is not too busy, your children will enjoy the diversion, and there is no cost. You can also go to Guest Relations and ask for a bag of pixie dust to do your own sprinkling.
21. Candy Samples – At the Magic Kingdom Confectionary on Main Street, you sometimes find a sign up, near the cotton candy maker, with a “secret” password. Say the word to the cotton candy maker to receive a free sample. The Ghirardelli chocolate shop at Disney Springs also offers free chocolate samples each time you enter the door.
22. Jungle Cruise Map – When your boat returns to the station after the ride and you disembark, ask a nearby Cast Member about getting a map of the ride. There are a limited number available each day, so it’s best to ask for it as early in the day as possible. Make sure you ask for the Guest Skipper Card at the same time.
23. Specialty Ride Cards – At the Barnstormer roller coaster within the Magic Kingdom, tell the Cast Member if it’s your child’s first roller coaster experience. They sometimes have a commemorative card to hand out. Other specialty cards you can request (but aren’t always available) include a “Guest Skipper” card on the Jungle Cruise (just for helping to drive the boat) and an authentic “driver’s license” at Tomorrowland Speedway.
24. If you’ve already seen Magic Kingdom’s fireworks show, make a beeline to Gaston’s Tavern in Fantasyland when the show begins. It doesn’t always happen, but Cast Members sometimes give out free samples of Magic Kingdom’s iconic, giant cinnamon rolls during this time.
25. Sign up for A Pirate’s Adventure ~ Treasures of The Seven Seas in the Magic Kingdom’s Adventureland for a free souvenir treasure map of the land.

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This is a completely free scavenger hunt-style experience you play on your own or with the other members of your party. When you sign up, you are assigned one of four experiences with a corresponding map. Follow the clues to get special messages throughout Adventureland. Each clue leads you to the next, until you find the treasure!

Once each adventure is complete, you can sign up for another one (and receive another of the four possible maps).

If you wish to go on a specific adventure and receive the associated map, simply ask the Cast Member there to get the correct assignment.

### **Hollywood Studios Exclusives**

26. Disney Historian Magical Moment – Visit the Walt Disney Presents attraction in Hollywood Studios. As you enter, ask the Cast Member if he has any trivia for you. He will produce a card with questions for you to complete while discovering details about Walt's life throughout the museum.

Once you have answered all the questions, proceed to the back, and give your completed form to the Cast Member located there. You will receive a nice “Disney Historian Magical Moment” card as a memento, and you will be allowed to sign a very exclusive guest book to commemorate the moment.

27. Free Dessert – Visit Backlot Express for a meal at any time throughout the day. If you receive a rare “magic tray” with your meal, you will also be given a free dessert! (This only happens to a handful of lucky guests each day.)

### **Animal Kingdom Exclusives**

28. Wilderness Explorer Club – Kids and adults can join this special club at several kiosk locations throughout the Animal Kingdom. You get a free booklet to help you complete tasks, which ends up being a great commemorative souvenir of your trip.

### No Park Admission Required!

29. Transportation/Trading Cards – These are small trading cards (similar to baseball cards) that Disney’s transportation drivers have available to hand out to guests. They are one of Disney’s best kept secrets.

Check with transportation drivers on Disney buses, boats, etc. to see if they have any available cards with them that day. You can also catch African “Goodwill Ambassadors” at the Animal Kingdom Lodge Hotel who sometimes carry free trading cards to give out with information about their homeland.

30. Disney Boat, Monorail, & Bus Transportation for Fun – Disney provides some unique transportation choices for no charge to visitors. Aside from the buses, which you can pick up at any hotel, park, or Disney Springs, you can also ride the Disney boat and monorail transportation. There is no better way to cool off and relax after a hot day than a jaunt across the lake. Additionally, the Epcot monorail provides a stunning overhead view from inside the park, and you don’t need to pay for park admission to see it! In case you missed where we mentioned it above, don’t forget to ask Disney’s transportation drivers if they have any trading cards available to give out to youngsters.

All Disney transportation is free for everyone, not just guests staying on-property. This includes Disney buses, boats, monorails, and the Skyliner (gondola). If you need to relax and rest your feet, whether you’re at one of the parks or Disney Springs, feel free to take a free ride anywhere on property.

A boat ride from Disney Springs to the area hotels is especially relaxing and gives you a chance to explore the great dining and entertainment options at places such as Port Orleans French Quarter and Riverside. A ride on the Skyliner is every bit as thrilling to children as many of the theme park rides and gives you a great overhead view of the property.

31. Park Guidemaps – You can pick up a Guidemap for each park (and Disney Springs) at any Guest Relations or Disney resort lobby. Of course, they are also available at stations as you enter the parks. Not

## **Disney Made *Easy*™ Insider Tips & Tricks**

only do the maps guide you through your vacation, they also make great mementos.

- 32. Autographed Photos – If you don't have the time to meet each character, contact Walt Disney World Guest Relations (see contact info above) and ask them to send you an autographed photo of your favorite character. (Great for vacation reveals!)
- 33. Free Jewelry – Get a free necklace or charm bracelet simply by visiting Diamonds International in Disney Springs and asking at the counter.

### **Disney Resort Extras**

- 34. Hotel Recreation – Check with the front desk of each Disney hotel for a Recreation and Activity Guide, which outlines fun events held each day at that hotel. For instance, Port Orleans French Quarter Hotel holds a daily Mardi Gras parade. If you want a set of authentic Mardi Gras beads for the parade, you can often find a Cast Member giving them out around the hotel.

While these activities are designed for the benefit of hotel and resort guests, many of them can be experienced when you visit a property for your meal reservations or other scheduled event (no questions asked).

- 35. Fireworks – You don't have to pay park admission to experience some of the nightly fireworks shows. The monorail hotels and Disney's BoardWalk have excellent viewing locations for the Magic Kingdom and Epcot fireworks, respectively. Additionally, the audio from the Magic Kingdom show is piped in for visitors sitting along the beaches at Disney's Polynesian and Grand Floridian properties to enjoy. (You do not need to be a guest staying at the hotel to take part.)
- 36. Electric Water Pageant – One of the advantages of watching the Magic Kingdom fireworks from a monorail hotel is the opportunity to watch the nightly parade of lighted floats on the Seven Seas Lagoon. Depending on the resort from which you choose to view the parade, this water show can be seen shortly before or shortly after the fireworks.

## Disney Freebies

37. **Holiday Decorations** – It's not just the parks that get decked out for the holidays. The resorts also get in on the action. For instance, Disney's Contemporary, Grand Floridian, BoardWalk Inn, and Beach Club Hotels all have giant gingerbread displays, most of which also offer sweet treats for sale.  
  
Fort Wilderness Campground is also aglow each year from tourists decorating their RVs and camping spaces. Anyone can visit and walk around to see the displays, but you can also pay to go on a wagon or sleigh ride that shows you around the property.
38. **New Year's Eve Souvenirs** – Several locations both inside the parks and at the hotels, including Port Orleans French Quarter Hotel, have New Year's Eve parties, where you can celebrate in a gloriously festive fashion. You may get free hats, beads, and other trinkets at these parties to commemorate the annual event.
39. **Other Entertainment** – Three hotels (Disney's Grand Floridian, Port Orleans French Quarter, and Port Orleans Riverside hotels) offer live music and entertainment on select evenings in their lounges. There is also a piano entertainer in the lobby of Disney's Grand Floridian Resort hotel who plays most days (no purchase necessary).
40. **Resort Maps** – Ask the lobby Cast Member of any hotel for a map of the resort property. Each property has a colorful map with its own personality, which makes a great scrapbooking keepsake. They also depict the location of the nearest bus stops.
41. **Parking** – It's always free for non-hotel guests to park at Disney Resort hotels with a valid dining reservation (excluding Swan & Dolphin), making each unique property an excellent choice for exploration and dining when you're not in the parks. In addition, the two Disney water parks, both Disney miniature golf courses, conventional golf locations, Disney Springs, and Disney's BoardWalk also offer free parking.
42. **Valet Parking for Disabled Guests** – The only thing better than free parking is free valet parking! Guests with a disabled parking pass (permit) can receive complementary valet parking at the Deluxe Disney hotels. Of course, you may feel obligated to tip the valet

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attendant (standard \$2 to \$5), but this is a great option if disabled parking spaces are scarce.

43. Marshmallow Roasts – Several Disney Resort hotels have evening campfires where guests can enjoy free roasted marshmallows. These events happen just before the “Movies Under the Stars” begin at the following resorts:
  - Animal Kingdom Lodge
  - Animal Kingdom Villas – Jambo House
  - Animal Kingdom Villas – Kidani Village
  - Beach Club
  - Boardwalk Inn
  - Caribbean Beach
  - Contemporary
  - Coronado Springs
  - Grand Floridian
  - Old Key West
  - Polynesian Village
  - Port Orleans French Quarter
  - Port Orleans Riverside
  - Saratoga Springs
  - Wilderness Lodge
  - Yacht Club
  - The Cabins at Fort Wilderness
  - The Campsites at Fort Wilderness
44. Movies Under the Stars – Each Disney Resort hotel plays an outdoor movie on select nights (weather permitting). Anybody visiting the hotel can sit down and enjoy the movie free of charge. Find the current schedule at [buildabettermousetrip.com/wdw-outdoor-movie-schedule](http://buildabettermousetrip.com/wdw-outdoor-movie-schedule).

### Animal Kingdom Lodge Hotel Exclusives

45. Day & Night Vision Viewing of Wild Animals – Many people don't realize the Animal Kingdom Lodge Hotel has real live African animals roaming around on-property. Anybody can stop in to see them (from a safe distance). And after dusk, a host provides high-tech night vision goggles to watch nocturnal activities.

### Art of Animation Exclusives

46. If you miss out on the Animation Experience at Animal Kingdom, head to Disney's Art of Animation Resort on a non-park day. They offer free, 30-minute classes for any Disney Resort guests, where you learn how to draw a Disney character. You can even keep your final drawing when you're finished, for a great souvenir!

Classes begin at 9 a.m. and end at 4 p.m. daily. Verify times with the concierge at your Disney Resort, before you visit Art of Animation's lobby for this experience.

### Fort Wilderness Campground Exclusives

47. Campfire Sing-Along with Chip 'n' Dale – Sit around the campfire and enjoy singing and dancing with these loveable characters each evening at Fort Wilderness Campground.
48. Walking/Jogging/Wilderness Trails – Many of the Disney Resort Hotels have excellent trails. The Wilderness Trail from Wilderness Lodge to Fort Wilderness Campground is especially nice. Not only can you expect to see non-aggressive live animals along the way, including families of wild deer, but the trail ends at the Tri-circle D Ranch horse stables and outdoor stalls located at the Fort Wilderness Campground. You can view live horses and ponies and maybe even pet one (or pay a little extra money to go on a ride).
49. Real Horses – Fort Wilderness is where all the beautiful Disney World horses are kept and maintained. If you go early in the day, most of them are still on hand before they have started their daily chores around the property. However, you will find some horses at the outdoor stalls at any time of the day. If you are lucky, you will be able to pet one on the nose.

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Cast Members are usually not around in force, and when they are, they are busy taking care of the animals. If you are there early enough, you will be able to watch as the big animals are loaded up to travel from their homes to Main Street, U.S.A. for their trolley car trips.

(As an aside, the Cast Members who you see actually working with the horses are the same ones responsible for their daily care. Disney horses [and all other animals!] are well-taken care of and quite happy.)

### **Grand Floridian Hotel Exclusives**

50. Rise & Shine Yoga Classes – At 8:15 a.m. each Tuesday and Thursday, guests can enjoy a free yoga class near Building 8 at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort, Disney's premier deluxe resort.

### **Non-Resort Entertainment, Tours, Events, and Excursions**

51. Entertainment, Dining, & Shopping – Visiting Disney Springs and Disney's BoardWalk is free. (Parking at the BoardWalk may be limited to paid valet parking during busy times if you don't have a valid dining reservation.) Both locations offer excellent options for dining and shopping, along with some free entertainment. Magicians and other performers grace the BoardWalk each evening with multiple performances.

Free live entertainment abounds on Disney property. Visit Disney Springs, grab a drink to go and walk around. Live musicians play outdoors at several venues, including House of Blues, Raglan Road, Splitsville, and the food truck court. Magicians and other entertainers often do live shows outdoors for guests at Disney's BoardWalk, as well. Add to that the free campfire marshmallow roasts and movies under the stars held select nights at many Disney hotels, and there is never a dull moment!

Expect to hear live music or see an amateur act perform while visiting Disney Springs. It even offers free events throughout the year, such as the Festival of Masters Art Weekend in November and holiday entertainment, including a free visit with Santa Claus from mid-November through December.

## **Disney Freebies**

52. Guided Tours – The daily BoardWalk Ballyhoo Guided Tour starts at Disney's BoardWalk Inn and is absolutely free. It leaves at 9 a.m., so check in no later than 8:45 a.m. at the Belle Vue Lounge if you wish to join the tour.

## **Special Honors**

53. Veterans Honor – Veterans can go to Guest Relations at the Magic Kingdom to request to be the “Veteran of the Day” if one has not already been chosen.  
  
The veteran gets to help with the flag lowering ceremony when the formal Disney color guard retires the colors (takes down the flag) each evening just before sundown. The honored veteran also receives a certificate to commemorate the occasion.
54. Special Veterans Honor - On three US federal holidays (Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Independence Day), Magic Kingdom Cast Members who are also military veterans will come to the flag to be specially honored in a moving ceremony that is worth watching. It is not uncommon for a military fly-over to take place right above Main Street, U.S.A.
55. Family of the Day – Early birds definitely have it made at Disney. Each park chooses a family of the day just before park opening. The honor includes being part of the opening ceremony and parades (at Magic Kingdom), a picture with opening characters, as well as special ride access. Unfortunately, only one family gets this fun each day.

## **Restaurants (Meals and Libations)**

56. Drink Refills – While technically not completely free, given the high price of soft drinks at theme parks, you will appreciate this tip by the end of each day. With your soft drink purchase, at least one location in each park has self-serve beverage stations where you can freely refill your coffee, cocoa, or soda. These are offered at the following restaurants:

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### Fountain Refill Locations

- Animal Kingdom - Restaurantosaurus and Satu'li Canteen
- Hollywood Studios - Backlot Express
- Epcot - Sunshine Seasons and Electric Umbrella
- Magic Kingdom - Tortuga Tavern

57. Recipes – If you eat something enjoyable at any restaurant, ask your server if the recipe is available. You can also email Disney customer service after your trip, and someone will let you know in a couple of days whether or not they can give you the recipe. Not all recipes are available, though, as some specialty chefs want to keep theirs secret.

There are also websites where visitors share Disney recipes, such as [wdwrecipes.com](http://wdwrecipes.com) and [disneyfoodblog.com](http://disneyfoodblog.com).

58. Free Dessert – If you're celebrating an anniversary or birthday, check with Sunshine Seasons and Liberty Inn at Epcot. You may find a Cast Member willing to give you a free treat.
59. Free Birthday Meals! – While not technically a Disney-specific tip, and one that most readers may also be aware of, many restaurants in the area around Disney World offer free birthday meals if you sign up for their e-clubs.

Most notably, Landry's Select Club provides \$25 to use at any of its restaurants (including Rainforest Café and T-Rex at Disney Springs!). There is a \$25 membership fee, which you get back immediately as a credit to use at the restaurant. Earl of Sandwich at Disney Springs also offers a free brownie to the birthday boy or girl.

Of course, it does not hurt to mention your special day (e.g., birthday, anniversary or other) at any restaurant. You may be surprised at what special treatment you get.

Around here, we don't look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things... and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.

- Walt Disney

# Save Money



1. While we are not promoting this novel idea, alcoholic beverages can be a big expense at the park. Some people have figured out that replacing water with clear alcohol in their water bottles is an inexpensive way to forego this expense...at least until Disney security starts testing liquids at security checkpoints! Other guests suggest pre-mixing juice and alcohol in plastic juice bottles, then freezing them overnight. For a particularly sneaky option, you can purchase novelty alcohol flasks, such as those shaped as sunblock containers.
2. Guests are supposed to return their rented wheelchairs to the rental location within each park before going to the parking lot. However, many guests ignore this requirement and take their rental wheelchairs out to their cars.

This means you can often find rental wheelchairs in the disabled parking lot later in the day, which you could theoretically take and use for the rest of the day, thus avoiding the fee for the entire day if you only need a wheelchair for a few hours.

3. Check for discounted gift cards at big box stores, such as Costco. You may occasionally find Disney gift cards, but more frequently, you can find Landry's gift cards at a discount. Landry's gift cards are accepted at several restaurants, including T-Rex and Rainforest Cafe on Disney property and others located nearby.
4. Sign up for a Target RedCard (debit or credit card). These get you 5% off on purchases at Target, including purchases of Disney gift cards!
5. Gas prices vary widely in the tourist areas. Avoid any gas stations directly off Interstate-4 at the Lake Buena Vista exit (near Disney Springs) or the Shell on Vineland Avenue (near the Orlando Vineland Premium Outlets).

Instead, travel down State Road (SR) 535 to the Walmart Supercenter. There are multiple gas stations near there that are competitively priced.

If you are driving around Disney property, the Speedway gas stations (near Disney Springs, Disney's BoardWalk, and Magic Kingdom) are also competitively priced.

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6. Ask for vacation discounts! Even if you've already made your reservations, keep watching for special offers and discounts. If one becomes available, call Disney Reservations at 407-939-4357 to request that they change your reservation to include the special offer.  
You can't modify a reservation to include a special offer code online. Have the code ready and speak directly to the agent. A change to your reservation may require you to modify hotel or ticket options, so check the details carefully before making a modification. Most special offers have limited availability, so make the call as soon as one becomes available.
7. Purchase a plastic refillable mug at any Disney hotel to get unlimited refills on coffee, hot cocoa, and soft drinks. You can't use them at the parks, but they allow refills for the length of your stay at all the Disney hotels, making it even more fun to check out the other properties.  
You don't have to be staying on Disney property to purchase one of these mugs. It's a great souvenir that you can use as a coffee mug at home for years to come.
8. Don't throw away your receipt without looking it over for discount offers first. Disney stores sometimes offer special discounts on a future purchase. Just look at the bottom of the receipt to see if you're eligible to receive a discount of up to 20% by showing your receipt at the next store. Act fast, though! Offers are usually only good for a few hours or a day.
9. Ask your cashier if there are any special purchase offers available. There are sometimes items available to purchase with a minimum purchase amount, such as Christmas blankets available to buy if you're already spending \$50 or more.  
If you spot one of these offers after you've already made a purchase that would have made you eligible (even if it was at a different Disney store), just show the receipt to the cashier. They can usually make an exception to allow you to buy the limited item.
10. Annual passholders get discounts at most merchandise locations, but not at snack and beverage kiosks. If you have an annual pass, head to one of the larger Disney stores, such as Emporium in

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Magic Kingdom. There, you can find snacks and bottled soft drinks, and you get a discount on them!

11. If you have an annual pass, get your coffee drinks and smoothies from Joffrey's, rather than Starbucks on Disney property. Joffrey's offers a discount to annual passholders. You just have to show your pass!
12. Find a travel website (such as [SkipLagged.com](http://SkipLagged.com) or [CheapTickets.com](http://CheapTickets.com)) to search multiple days and find the best airfare. Use it to find the cheapest day of the week to travel during your possible vacation dates, and then comparison shop on different sites to find the best deal for those days. Don't forget to factor in the price of hauling your luggage when comparing rates!
13. Travel discounts for Orlando and Disney World are commonly offered around mid-January.
14. What can you do to control any impulse food (and souvenir!) purchases? We suggest you leave the credit cards behind and don't use the charging feature on your phone or MagicBand. Take only your budgeted amount of cash to the park each day and stick to it!
15. Souvenir rain ponchos do a better job of keeping people dry than umbrellas and can be worn on water rides. Disney sells rain ponchos at the theme parks. For a fraction of the cost, you can purchase ponchos at Target and Walmart that are more durable and have all your favorite characters on them, including Disney Princesses for the little ones! If you get branded, quality ponchos, your kids will be able to use them when it rains back home and remember the fun times from your trip.
16. If you know you'll need a wheelchair or scooter during your vacation, it's often much less expensive to rent one from an outside vendor. There are plenty in the Orlando area who will drop your scooter or wheelchair off at your hotel for you.

Some of the larger companies who provide rentals include: Apple Scooter ([applescooter.com](http://applescooter.com)), Best Price Mobility ([bpmobility.com](http://bpmobility.com)), Buena Vista Scooter Rentals ([buenavistascooters.com](http://buenavistascooters.com)), CARE Medical Equipment ([caremedicalequipment.com](http://caremedicalequipment.com)), and ScooterBug

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([scooterbugmobilityrentals.com](http://scooterbugmobilityrentals.com)). Shop around, though. You may find even better prices!

17. If you are staying at a Disney Resort, ask your front desk if they have any wheelchairs available to use for free during your stay. Wheelchair availability is very limited, but you may get lucky.
18. Save money by picking up light up wands and glow necklaces at a dollar store. Hand them out to family members and friends during evening shows and fireworks. They don't pulse and change colors like the expensive ones sold at the parks, but they are still quite fun!
19. Start checking for seasonal discounts on packages early. Sign up for a My Disney Experience account well before you book your vacation and check the Special Offers at [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com) regularly. Make sure you check the box to accept communications and offers from Disney via email. This is especially important if you may want to stay on-property.

You are most likely to find good deals for travel between mid-August and early-October if you book in April. For travel between January 4th and mid-April, try to book in early-October. However, if you log into your My Disney Experience account and repeatedly go through the process of booking your vacation package without finalizing it, Disney may send you a unique offer code with better discounts than offered to the general public. The more you appear to be planning and looking at prices, the more likely you are to receive an offer code.

20. If you have a Costco membership, check for discounts on Disney park tickets and vacation package discounts. Look at [costcotravel.com](http://costcotravel.com) under Theme Parks & Specialty to see what special offers are available to members. While the package price might not be much cheaper, Costco packages sometimes include upgrades or perks that make them worthwhile.
21. Check your credit cards for available redemption points. There is no better time than a Disney vacation to use those credit card points that have been accumulating. Some credit cards allow you to use points towards airfare, hotels, car rentals, and other perks that may benefit you on your trip.

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22. Check your memberships and employer for discount opportunities. Check with your Human Resources Department to see if your company is affiliated with any discount clubs. Memberships like AAA and Costco often provide great opportunities for travel discounts, as do enrollments with retirement plans, insurance companies, credit cards, and more. Even if you don't find Disney-specific discounts, you may save on airfare, auto rental, dining, and other travel options.

23. When comparing the cost of various vacation options, be sure to calculate all the expenses. For instance, a company may appear to provide cheaper park tickets than you can get directly from Disney, but are the savings still there once all the fees have been tallied?

During the comparison, it's important to go through the checkout process, up until the point just before you pay for it. That way, you can see what the final cost would be with taxes and fees included. Don't forget to calculate the "hidden" costs.

When comparing hotel prices, does your hotel add a resort fee that's not included in the online price (most Orlando hotels have one)? Is there an additional parking fee? (Remember, Disney hotels charge a daily parking fee, but it includes parking at the theme parks, as well as at the hotel.) How much money and time will it take you to get to the parks each day? (Your time is worth valuable money!) Does the hotel offer any Disney perks, such as early entry to the parks (offered by some Good Neighbor hotels).

24. Always ask about discounts for active and retired military members and eligible spouses. Eligibility can be confusing, and valid ID is required. Check out this link to see if you qualify: <https://www.militarydisneytips.com/blog/the-disney-armed-forces-salute-military-ticket-and-room-discounts/#eligibility>.

Here are some benefits offered:

- Discounted Disney Armed Forces Salute theme park tickets (available through your military base ticket office). Check here for available options: <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/special-offers/>;

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- Discounted hotel stays at select Disney hotels (specific hotels and available dates vary). Check here for available options: <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/special-offers/>;
- Ability to stay at Shades of Green, the exclusive military hotel on Disney property;
- Discounted hotel stays at many non-Disney hotels (call each hotel for its offered discount, but usually around 20%);
- Memory Maker discounts (available at Guest Relations); and
- Discounts on cruises, including Disney cruises, leaving from Port Canaveral.

25. Check Skiplagged ([skiplagged.com](https://skiplagged.com)) for cheap airfare and to determine the cheapest days to fly. They provide a line graph at the top of the page that shows the changes in flight costs per day. Once you've determined the cheapest days, double check the actual airline's website to see if they offer a better deal.

Don't forget that Southwest Airlines ([southwest.com](https://southwest.com)) and Allegiant Air ([www.allegiantair.com](https://www.allegiantair.com)) must be checked separately. They don't show up on aggregator searches, such as Skiplagged or Orbitz. Don't forget to check surrounding airports for great deals. Just north of Orlando is the Sanford Airport (about an hour from Disney World), while the Tampa Airport is about an hour west. (Rush hour makes these drives much longer.)

26. Luggage fees on flights can quickly add up. Travel as light as possible, fitting as many items as you can into carry-on bags. If you normally carry a purse, put it into a backpack. The backpack counts as a personal item, the same as your purse, and you can carry much more onto the plane with it!

Check with the airline to see if they have loyalty programs or credit card offers that give you free luggage perks. It might be worth it to sign up for a credit card if it will allow your entire family to bring checked luggage for no additional fee.

If you want to bring extra luggage for souvenirs, put smaller suitcases into the empty larger ones on your flight to Florida, so you only need to pay for the extra suitcase on your way home. You

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can also pick up an inexpensive suitcase in Orlando at places like Walmart.

Finally, check the price of first-class tickets versus standard tickets. Many airlines offer free checked luggage with your first-class fare, making the additional cost worthwhile.

27. When calculating the total price of airfare, be sure to include luggage fees. Southwest Airlines ([southwest.com](https://southwest.com)) allows each person to bring two checked bags for no additional cost, while most other airlines charge a hefty per bag fee.
28. Bring your own ice water to the parks. If you have a freezer available, fill water bottles about 2/3 full with water and freeze them overnight. (Don't put a full bottle in, as the ice expands and can cause the bottle to break.) In the morning, fill the rest of the bottle with water. The ice will take hours to melt, keeping you drinking cold water all day. You can place the remaining bottles in pockets, keeping your body cool in the heat!
29. Bounceback to Disney! Disney often extends "bounceback" offers, which are special deals to get current guests to book a follow-up vacation prior to the end of the current vacation. Look for any offers in the welcome booklet of your hotel room.

There's no risk to book one of these great deals, which may include hotel discounts or free Dining Plan upgrades. You can cancel or modify your plans within 30 days if you change your mind.

30. If you have plenty of time (45 - 60 days) before your Disney vacation, consider purchasing discounted Disney gift cards from [GiftCardDeal.com](https://giftcarddeal.com/) (<https://giftcarddeal.com/>) to pay for your vacation.

While buying and receiving the cards goes smoothly for most, some people report a bit of a hassle to get delivery of all the cards. Even so, it may be well worth it for the savings. One person reported a savings of \$960 on a purchase of \$6000 worth of Disney gift cards. That's 16% off!

31. Disney has done extensive research about the purchasing habits of guests and has determined you are more likely to make a purchase if it's extra convenient. Disney makes it easy to spend with reckless

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abandon by allowing guests to use Apple Pay, Google Pay, and even link their credit cards to their MagicBands.

Because studies suggest that people are less likely to make a purchase with cash than a credit card (or MagicBand), we strongly recommend you bring a set amount of cash for purchases. Try to avoid any credit card use during your stay if it is very important to stay within a fixed budget!

32. Sign up for an account on the [disneyworld.com](https://disneyworld.com) website if you're considering a Disney vacation but haven't yet booked your stay. You will receive special offers delivered directly to your email that will notify you of upcoming deals to help plan your vacation.
33. Order take-out and avoid sitting down at full-service restaurants. By taking your meal back to your room with you, you'll instantly save the 20% you would otherwise be paying as a gratuity. Table-service restaurants within the parks do not allow take-out (although counter-service locations do!), but this tip will help you save money if you are eating off-property.
34. Plan to share an entrée with someone else in your party. You can always share a dessert or have a snack later if you're still hungry! You will still come out ahead financially and limit wasted food that would otherwise just get thrown away. This is especially true if you don't have a large appetite.
35. If you will be traveling during a time that any one in your party will be celebrating a birthday, take advantage of the club memberships that provide free birthday perks available at many chain restaurants.

For instance, Earl of Sandwich (Disney Springs) provides a free dessert and Red Robin gives away a free burger, while Landry's restaurants (including Rainforest Café and T-Rex) give you \$25 to spend during your birthday month. Many of these clubs are free or charge a nominal fee to sign up. Even if you don't have a membership, don't forget to mention the special occasion to your server at any restaurant. You might get a free treat!

## Save Money

36. Consider buying a Tables in Wonderland membership (available only to Florida residents and Disney Vacation Club members) to get a discount at select Disney restaurants. The membership also gets you free valet parking at Deluxe Resorts with a food purchase. Even a nominal purchase, such as a \$3 beverage, is sufficient to save you the \$33 cost you'd otherwise pay for valet parking for Tables in Wonderland members.
37. Most area grocery stores have hot meals available, as well as made-to-order sandwiches. You can save a great deal of time and money by purchasing your food at a grocery store and taking it elsewhere to eat.
38. Plan a special meal for breakfast or lunch (rather than dinner) to save money. Disney table-service restaurants all have a unique theme, making the dining experience a special treat that has nothing to do with the food (although the food can be pretty great).

Whether your dream is to dine at Be Our Guest, Cinderella's Royal Table, Space 220, or Biergarten, dinner is always the most expensive option. If the restaurant is open for breakfast, that will generally be the cheapest meal. However, many specialty restaurants are only open for lunch and dinner. Choose lunch to save on that special experience.

39. Food at the parks can be an unexpected expense. Even snacks at Disney can cost your family hundreds over the course of your vacation. To save your wallet, bring non-perishable snacks to satisfy the cravings between meals.

You can freeze items the night before to keep them cold all day long. Protein bars and chips are lightweight to carry and filling. Try freezing a protein shake and peanut butter & jelly sandwiches for even more great options.

A few frozen bottles of water thrown into your bag will ensure you have cold water to drink all day long, and it will also keep cheese and fruit cool for an afternoon snack.

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40. In addition to bringing snacks and picnic items, have a large breakfast before heading to the parks each morning. It's much cheaper to eat before you get to the parks, plus a complete breakfast will keep you fueled and needing to stop less for snacks during the day.
41. Dine in at your hotel. You may think you're limited to restaurant food for your entire vacation. Not so! Check to see if your hotel has a mini fridge. You can fill it with easy-to-make food, such as sandwich ingredients, frozen meals, instant soups, oatmeal, and fruits.

Hack some common hotel items to heat up your meals. Hot water from the hotel coffee pot makes for great instant soups and oatmeal. Wrap your sandwich in aluminum foil and press it with the clothing iron for a hot grilled cheese sandwich. Toss some frozen, steamable veggies into the microwave for a quick and healthy addition to your vacation diet.

For a quick and filling breakfast option, get single serving cereal bowls (found at any grocery store, Walgreens, and CVS), and slice a banana on top. Don't forget to buy instant hot chocolate packets for the little ones!

Even if you don't have a car, there are several grocery delivery services that will bring fresh foods directly to you. Amazon offers Prime Now delivery, while Costco and Walmart provide grocery delivery directly on their websites. For another grocery store option, head to Instacart.

42. Check your local Costco or Sam's Club for discounted gift cards for Landry's Restaurants. They often sell them at these big box stores, and you can use them at both Rainforest Café and T-Rex at Disney World!
43. If you accidentally drop food or a beverage, most Disney counter-service restaurants will replace it if you just ask. There's no point in letting your child cry over spilled ice cream!
44. Sign up at [disneyworld.com](https://disneyworld.com) to receive promotional emails. Occasionally, Disney offers vacation packages that include a Dining Plan for no additional cost!

## Save Money

45. Disney sometimes runs specials on their room rates with a sliding scale. Greater discounts are given to Moderate and Deluxe Resort reservations than to Value Resort pricing. This means your per person cost during one of these specials could be less if you upgrade to a nicer room! Look for special offers during your planned vacation here: [disneyworld.disney.go.com/special-offers](http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/special-offers)
46. Can you get free Disney hotel upgrades? It's possible, though it depends on the individual Cast Member and availability. Demanding an upgrade isn't likely to get you anywhere, and hotel desk employees aren't allowed to take cash gratuities to sweeten your chances.
- Instead, be extra pleasant at check-in and mention any special occasion you may be celebrating. It never hurts to ask politely if there's any way for a room upgrade. Often, the Cast Member will try to make it happen.
47. Compare prices for larger suites and villas versus multiple rooms if you have more than four people in your party. Many of Disney's rooms are limited to four, but there are some limited options for larger parties.
- Most rooms at Art of Animation are suites for up to six guests. All-Star Music also has a few of these suites available. For a more rustic option, Fort Wilderness Cabins hold up to six people and have a kitchen.
- If you have an even larger group, look for the Deluxe Villas category when making your reservation. You can find a two-bedroom villa that sleeps eight or nine guests. Some three-bedroom options, such as the Wilderness Lodge Copper Creek Grand Villa, allow for up to 12 people in a single cabin.
- Look for special offers on the Disney World website before booking a Deluxe Villa, as you may get discounts that make them cheaper than multiple rooms at a Value Resort.
48. Disney hotel guests with a valid disabled parking permit can request to have their daily parking fee removed from the front desk of the hotel, so they can park for free at the hotel and parks.

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49. Check for room upgrade options when making your reservation. Once you've worked with the Disney Reservations agent to firm up pricing and availability, ask the cost to improve the room or resort category.

You may be offered a special deal that is less than the difference if you booked online. During check-in, always ask if a better room is available. You may get a better view or location for free if there is enough availability.

50. Don't wait to buy your autograph book until you get to one of the parks. Disney charges a pretty hefty premium for these books, and we can almost guarantee your child will want one. Stop by Target or Walmart to pick up an autograph book for a fraction of the cost. Your child will love getting his/her favorite characters to sign it!
51. Disney Visa Card members receive discounts (when using the card) at various locations throughout Disney World, including select shopping and dining venues, as well as spas.

Other perks include 6 months at 0% interest to pay off your Disney vacation (if it is purchased entirely with your card), special cardmember-exclusive character meet-and-greets with a free printed photo of the encounter (available once per day!), special vacation offers (including early booking for the free Disney Dining Plan vacation offers, when offered), early booking access to Disney On Ice events around the country, and reward dollars that can be used during your vacation.

52. Save money on souvenirs by making a trip to Disney's Character Warehouse at one of the two Orlando outlet malls. This is Disney World's own clearance store, where they sell last season's merchandise, often at huge discounts. (There is also regular-priced merchandise at these stores, so check the price tags!)

The closest outlet mall to Disney World, Orlando Vineland Premium Outlets, has a free shuttle bus that picks people up at more than 40 area hotels for a free ride to the mall. This is a great way to see a little bit of Orlando without worrying about the notorious traffic.

## Save Money

53. If you're staying off-property, a taxi or Uber to the Disney parks can be cost-prohibitive at peak times. First, check the cost difference for direct transportation to the closest Disney hotel versus the theme park. It's often much cheaper, and from the hotel, you can take Disney's free transportation. If that's still too expensive, you can ride Orlando's Number 50 LYNX bus to Disney and pick up a free Disney bus to your final destination from there.

54. Save money by renting a vehicle in town, after you take a shuttle to your hotel, rather than at the airport. Some car rental companies, such as Enterprise, will pick you up from your hotel and take you to the office to complete paperwork and pick up the car.

This really saves in cost if you only need the rental for a few days of your vacation, as you will only pay for the days you use the car, as well as save the money of the hotel's daily parking fee for those days you don't have the car.

55. When comparing car rental rates, don't forget to check with [Turo.com](https://www.turo.com) and [Sixt.com](https://www.sixt.com). While these companies aren't as well known in the United States, they sometimes offer great rates.

56. Tap water on Disney property has a sulfur-like flavor. Local minerals create the strange taste. The water is safe to drink, but most guests dislike it.

Rather than pay for pricey bottled water, you can request a cup of ice water from any Disney counter-service restaurant that serves fountain soft drinks from a dispenser. The water will come from the dispenser, so it is filtered and tastes much better.

Another great alternative is to bring flavor packets to add to the tap water. Companies like True Lemon and Crystal Light make single-serve packets that you can pick up at any grocery store. They taste great and are far cheaper than buying soft drinks at the parks.

57. Timeshare Company Presentation "Freebies"

Many timeshare companies pose as discount ticket sellers or information booths to draw you into a timeshare presentation. You may find these folks at many locations including highly visible store fronts along the road. Westgate Lake Resorts, for example, has had

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a long-standing a relationship with many “along-the-side-of-the-road” information kiosks.

These companies promise to give away admission tickets for free or at a discount if you only agree to sit through a (high pressure!) time share sales presentation.

While the offers of free or discounted tickets may be legitimate, don't believe the time commitment the salesperson claims you should expect. Instead, plan to spend at least two to three times longer at the presentation than promised! It is hard to be certain the savings are worth spending an entire morning or afternoon of your vacation.

The companies may offer a “free breakfast” and then start the sales pitch as you try to enjoy your meal. If you try to leave after your promised “two hour” time frame with your tickets, they will indicate that the presentation didn't begin until “after the meal was finished.”

Few people actually value listening to a pressured pitch, and the meals are not noteworthy. The salespeople are extremely successful at convincing skeptical couples to sign an agreement.

We regularly hear of people who agree to a sale even though they attended just for the freebies. The easiest way to prevent becoming a victim to buyer's remorse is to say no to the presentation.

Timeshare purchases rarely make good financial sense, no matter what you might be offered. (However, if you make a mistake and succumb to the sales, laws may allow you to cancel the contract within a very short time frame. Additionally, if you decide you want to make a purchase, look around at the many timeshare reseller companies for a 50% or greater reduction on the purchase price.)

### Deposit Scams

Not only do we think that it is not worthwhile to agree to listen to a sales pitch, some of these folks actually require you to give them a “refundable” deposit that they promise will be returned to you at the presentation. Never agree to pay a deposit to these companies!

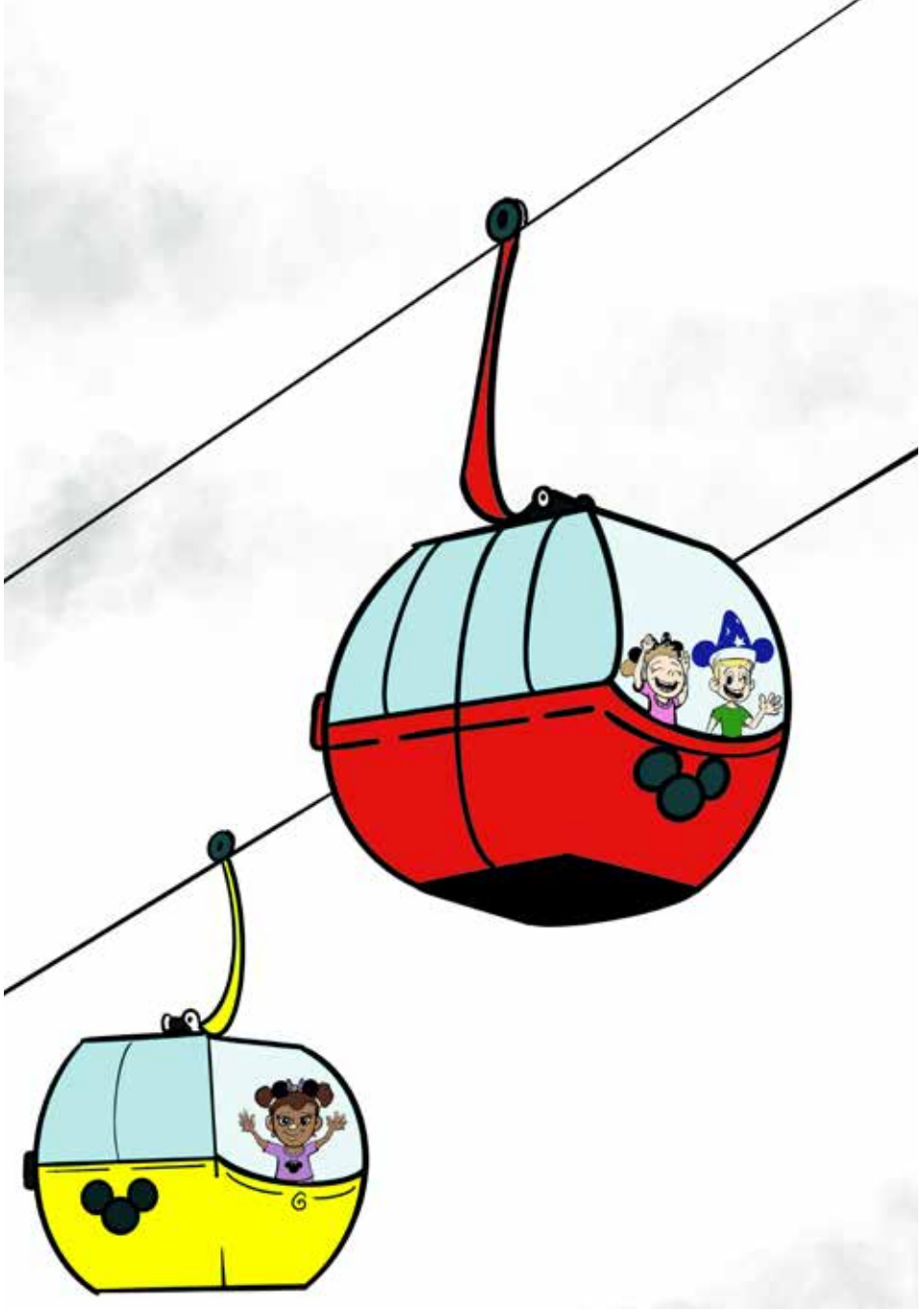
## Save Money

Some companies claim that they are saving you a limited seat, but they actually make money from people who never show up! Worse yet, they hold your pending refund over your head to keep you attentive and patient during their “dog-and-pony show.”

58. Only one person in your party needs an annual pass to take advantage of some of its added benefits during your vacation. Just make sure that person will be the one reserving your hotel room and will always be present when parking or dining to get the discounts. For example, if you need parking, only one person would need to purchase a pass that includes parking. It will cover the entire party, assuming you all travel to the parks together and fit into a single vehicle.
59. Check the Disney Freecycle Facebook Page for items that people no longer need and are giving away, including strollers.
60. What kid doesn't want to dress up at Disney? If you don't want to pay the hefty price tag of a special princess look at the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique, order a princess or pirate costume online and bring it with you. You can often find them for \$30 or less.

To complete the look, there are several YouTube videos that will show you how to do a princess hairstyle. A little sprinkling of glitter finishes it off nicely!

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1. There are various services you can use for merchandise delivery, not just groceries. For instance, Target ShipIt and Walmart will deliver any merchandise, including strollers, directly to your hotel.
2. If you're driving your vehicle, reduce foot exhaustion and give your family a head start on rides by having the quickest person drop the rest of the family off at the park entrance before parking the car. They can race ahead to get into line for the rides, and whoever parked the car can catch up with them in line. This drop-off option is especially useful for small children, elderly, or disabled family members.
3. If your vehicle breaks down at Disney, there is an onsite auto repair shop located near the Magic Kingdom. It's called the Car Care Center, and it provides free shuttle or bus service on-property. This is by far the most convenient way to get your vehicle fixed, and the company is trustworthy. However, you will pay a premium for the service.

There are also some mobile mechanics in the Orlando area, who will drive out and perform simple repairs on the spot. Just be sure to check Google Reviews thoroughly before hiring any of these mechanics.

4. When trying to determine which turnstile queue will move fastest, look at the people in line. If you see large groups of people bunched together, there will likely be confusion and delays when they try to enter.

Families with small children almost always create delays, as one parent must deal with the entry for each child. Non-English speaking people sometimes get confused about the entry process, requiring a translator to assist.

Just like you did with the security lines, look for people who seem to "know the drill." They have MagicBands or tickets at the ready and are walking single file to the turnstile.

5. Send one person through security with all the bags. Everyone else can go through the "no bags" line and run ahead to save a place in the turnstile queue.

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6. Queues at Disney sometimes have two sides. For instance, security checkpoints allow guests to line up on either side of the checkpoint table, and counter service restaurants allow guests to line up on either side of the person taking your order. Guests often think only one side is open, leaving one lane with no wait. If you don't see a sign that a certain lane is closed, feel free to get in it. The Cast Member will politely direct you back to the other line if you made a mistake.
7. If you plan to bring a lot of stuff to the park, bring an umbrella stroller...even if you don't have kids.
8. Rent a locker inside the park to hold your things. Lockers outside of the park entrance are cheaper, but they require you to exit the park each time you need to access it.
9. If you prefer to carry cash (as we do) and need to exchange foreign currency for American dollars, Disney will happily do so for you. Head to any Guest Relations at the theme park or to the front desk of your Disney hotel for this service.
10. The Orlando International Airport is quite large. It is often most efficient for family members to split up to take care of tasks, then meet up. For instance, you may send your teenage kids to pick up the luggage, while those adults who will be on the car rental agreement take care of the rental paperwork. (Remember, every adult who will be a driver must show their ID at the rental counter!)
11. Put your change in a coin holder to make it easier when going through security metal detectors. If you don't have a coin holder, repurpose a plastic container, such as the tubes used for M&M Minis.
12. If you're not sure what to do next, get into a nearby attraction queue. While waiting in line, you can spend the time planning out your next steps. By the time you have your day mapped out, you should be near the front of the line.
13. Attend the parks the day prior to a holiday, not the day of, to avoid crowds and transportation nightmares. The parks, especially Magic Kingdom and Epcot, often reach capacity on special days, such as

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Independence Day (July 4th), Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve. In fact, it can take hours to get back to your hotel on holiday evenings, as the parking lots become gridlocked at closing time.

While the masses create a crush on these days, the parks are in full celebration mode the day before. You can enjoy everything Disney has to offer with lower crowds.

For instance, the incredible Independence Day and New Year's Eve fireworks shows at Magic Kingdom and Epcot are also shown on July 3rd and December 30th (weather permitting).

For a special holiday, spend it touring the Disney resorts. Each has incredible decorations and a festive atmosphere unique to its theme. Port Orleans French Quarter holds a Mardi Gras-style New Year's Eve. Disney Deluxe Resorts each have a massive gingerbread sculpture for Christmas, including a famous giant gingerbread house at Grand Floridian. The house is so large, employees sell edible gingerbread shingles out of it!

14. If you arrive at a park near opening time, head straight to the attractions near the back of the park and work your way towards the front of the park as the day goes on. Most guests stop at the first attractions they come to, making the ones near the entrance busier in the mornings and slower in the evenings.
15. Be first in line for your must-do attraction with an early dining reservation. By the time you make your way through the turnstiles and race to the attraction, it can already have a long line. Each park has at least one restaurant that opens for breakfast prior to park opening. A reservation at one of these restaurants grants you early entry into the park.

Just look for the turnstile line marked for dining reservations and show your proof of reservation to the Cast Member (separate theme park admission is still required). When you arrive at the restaurant, have your fastest eater race to the queue to save your place in line, while the rest of the family finishes their meals.

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16. If you don't mind splurging, Disney VIP Tours are the way to go. With a private tour, you hire a guide to take you and up to nine others through the parks. Your guide gets you onto the rides with little to no wait and gets you the best seats at the popular shows. These tours aren't cheap, though. You are required to book for at least seven continuous hours at a cost of \$425 - \$850 per hour, depending on the season. This can set you back thousands, but the cost may be worth it if you're celebrating a special occasion. To book, contact Disney Reservations at (407) 560-4033.
17. Beware companies that promise to perform the same services as Disney VIP Tours. They use Disney's Disabled Access System to try to bypass queues in the parks. While this scam system may work some of the time, many guests report being turned away from attractions when Cast Members catch on to the tour guides and their tactics.
18. When you are leaving the park for a short break (or at the end of the day) order food delivery on your way to the hotel and have your meal waiting for you.
19. Are special dining and show packages worth the cost? That all depends on when you're visiting and how you value your time. Disney offers dining packages for shows, such as Hollywood Studio's Fantasmic! and Epcot's Candlelight Processional. These packages guarantee you a seat in the theater and reservations at one of the park's signature restaurants, but they come with a hefty price tag. If you are visiting during peak periods, the package price will likely be worth it, as the alternative would be to stand in the show's queue for two hours or more to ensure you get a seat.
20. If you see something you like, there's no reason not to buy it then and there. This will make sure you don't have to try to hunt it down later, and you can easily return a Disney Parks item to another Disney-branded store on-property if you change your mind. Guests frequently experience remorse about not being able to find the right size or that perfect item again near the end of their vacation. (Take a picture of anything you might want to ponder, along with its sales tag, to help you track it down later.)

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Use Disney's Package Pickup service (available to all guests) to have your purchases sent to the park entrance within three hours of purchase, where you can pick it up when you leave the park.

21. Generally speaking, crowds are thinner first thing in the morning. Therefore, the Early Theme Park Entry provided to Disney hotel guests is an especially great perk if you are an early morning person and don't need the extra rest. You're able to complete most of what the park has to offer within a few short hours, allowing you to park hop later in the day or just enjoy a quiet evening away from the parks.
22. If you arrive at a theme park mid-afternoon or later, there may be better parking spots available than those indicated by the parking attendant. The attendant parks vehicles by section, simply filling up section after section throughout the day. However, many people leave the parks during the afternoon for lunch or naps, leaving the occasional open space nearer the front of the park. If you want to search for one of these closer spaces, indicate that you're dropping your family off near the entrance (which you are welcome to do), and go row by row to find one.
23. Hedge your bets at Disney's security and entry turnstile queues. Before you jump into one of the many lines available, take a moment to look around.

Lines farthest away are often shorter than the ones nearest where you entered the area. Additionally, some lines tend to move much faster.

If you have multiple people in your party, split them up between lines. Once you determine which is moving fastest, the rest of your party can join the person waiting in that queue.

If it's just you, take a moment to find one of the quicker lines and stick with it.

24. When trying to determine which security line will move fastest, look for a few things. Large families with lots of bags and strollers tend to hold up the lines. However, sometimes large families wait together when only one or two people have bags. Those lines move quickly.

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People with coolers or backpacks with several pockets are likely to take longer in screening. People who seem to “know the drill” and already have bags ready (off shoulders with pockets unzipped) tend to move very quickly through security.

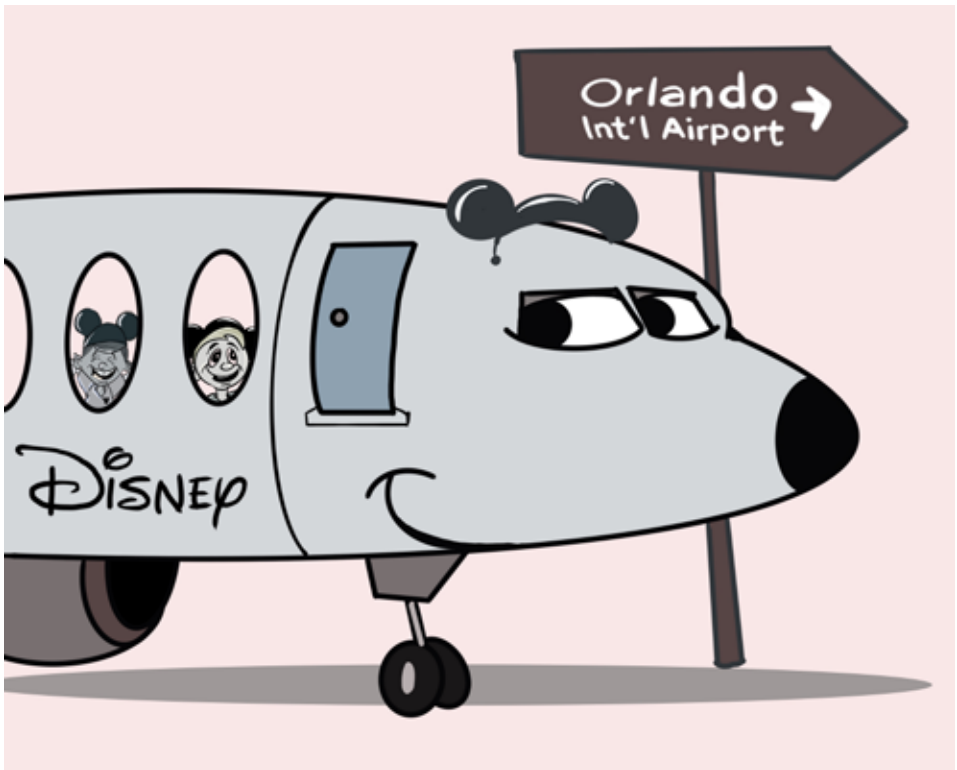
25. A stroller or wheelchair doesn't give you more rights than others to pass through crowds. When people are crowded together, they may not see the stroller or wheelchair coming through. Pushing through without notice is rude and may lead to injury of others. Have one person go in front and announce that a stroller or wheelchair is coming through. Be polite and thank people for stopping.
26. Take the single rider queue to save time. Only a few attractions have single rider lines, which are almost always quicker than the regular stand-by queues. These lines are used to fill all available spaces on an attraction. You will be seated with a stranger and you will be separated from others in your group if you use the single rider queue. Also, you won't be able to request the front row on any roller coasters.
27. Security lines at the park entry points can get very long. If you want to make the experience as pleasant as possible, follow these etiquette guidelines:
  - Only the people in your party with bags need to wait in line. Send everyone without bags through the entrance marked “Guests Without Bags.” They can save you a place in the turnstile line, while you get the bags inspected. Other guests will appreciate that they can better gauge the length of the line if only people with bags are waiting in it;
  - Before reaching the bag inspection table, have purses, backpacks, and any other bags off your shoulders (or out of the stroller, wheelchair, etc.) with all pockets unzipped. The security guard requires that you open each pocket for inspection. (They are not allowed to do this for you.) Having the pockets open and ready to go will get you through quickly; and
  - Have loose change and keys out of your pocket before reaching metal detectors. Find a small container, such as the tube in which M&Ms are sold, to place loose change into and make this process faster. Nothing irritates other park goers like

## **Save Time & Hassle**

someone holding up the line by taking several minutes to dig through their pockets.

28. It's easy to determine the quickest route from one point to another in the parks. Simply open the My Disney Experience app, select your destination, and the app will calculate the best walking route with the estimated time from your current location.
29. If you are visiting Magic Kingdom for the day and have an evening dinner reservation at a nearby Disney hotel, move your car to the hotel location to avoid the exit rush from the Transportation and Ticket Center.

# Navigating Orlando & Disney Parks



1. The Orlando International Airport (MCO) is large but relatively easy to navigate. Upon arrival, you must take a monorail to the central portion of the airport. Once there, taxis and shuttles are near the baggage claim. Car rentals are on the lower level.
2. There are two entrances to Disney property on SR 535. One is near the south end of the highway: World Center Drive entrance. The other, close to the I-4 exit, takes you directly to Disney Springs. If you don't mind walking a bit, you can walk to Disney Springs (and the Orlando Premium Outlet Mall) from many hotels along SR 535, avoiding vehicle traffic altogether.  
  
From Disney Springs, you can take free Disney transportation anywhere on-property. This is the only entrance to Disney property accessible by foot.
3. US 192 is the main highway that runs through Kissimmee, providing access to Disney World for visitors staying in that area. For most of its route, US 192 is known as the Irlo Bronson Memorial Highway.  
  
It was named after former state representative, senator, and cattleman Irlo O. Bronson, Sr. It is also known as Space Coast Parkway, as it leads westerly to the Space Coast (where Kennedy Space Center is located).
4. The entrance to Hollywood Studios has moved in the past couple of years. Some GPS services will take you to the old entrance, which no longer exists. We recommend you use Google Maps when driving to Hollywood Studios to make sure you don't get lost!
5. When parking at an off-property restaurant, read signs carefully to ensure your spot is designated for the correct restaurant. Your car can (and likely will) be towed away if you park in a spot designated for a business other than the one you're visiting.
6. Buses travel to the Transportation and Ticket Center two-three hours after the last theme park closes. However, monorails only run for approximately one hour after parks close.
7. Disney transportation is great if you have teens. They can travel by themselves; transportation is safe and easy to get around.

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8. Expect delays with Disney transportation during peak periods. Disney increases the number of buses running at those times, but you may find yourself waiting for a while with the crowd.
9. Some of the hotels have no identified queue for the buses. Start your own line near where the bus will be approaching if you wish to avoid clamoring for a space on the bus at the last minute. Other people will naturally line up behind you. This is particularly helpful during peak periods. When the bus arrives, wait until guests disembark and the driver gives you the go-ahead to climb aboard.
10. Day guests can board the express monorail at the Transportation and Ticket Center 45 minutes prior to opening. If you are parking at the Transportation and Ticket Center and arrive more than 45 minutes prior to Magic Kingdom park opening, walk to Disney's Polynesian Resort hotel and take the resort monorail from there.
11. If the express monorail queue is backed up at either Transportation and Ticket Center or Magic Kingdom, check the queue for the resort monorail. It typically has a much shorter line than the express monorail. However, resort monorails don't run as often as the express monorails and, of course, they make stops at the hotels between the Transportation and Ticket Center and Magic Kingdom.
12. Don't take a bus or monorail to Epcot if you plan to transfer to an Epcot area hotel. Buses don't run between Epcot's parking lot and its resorts (with the exception of Caribbean Beach). Instead, take a bus to Hollywood Studios and walk, take a boat, or Disney's Skyliner to the hotel of your choice.
13. The terminology for the layout of each theme park is a bit different. Both Magic Kingdom and Animal Kingdom have "lands." Epcot calls its buildings and lands "pavilions," while Hollywood Studios separates its areas into "streets."
14. Cast Members may allow you entrance into the theme parks 15 to 30 minutes prior to the official opening time to reduce congestion and give you a head start on your shopping. During this time, you will not be allowed in the areas of the parks that have rides, but you can position yourself a bit closer to your ride of choice to race there as soon as the park officially opens.

## Navigating Orlando & Disney Parks

15. Using Disney transportation can take a very long time and often requires transfers to get to your final destination. For instance, buses don't go from one Disney hotel to another (unless it's a combined property, like the two Port Orleans hotels).

If you go from one of the parks to a Disney hotel for dinner and want to go directly to a different Disney hotel, you must first go to one of the theme parks or Disney Springs and transfer to another bus to get to your final destination.

Consider hiring a Minnie Van through the Lyft app or getting a Mears taxi for a direct transfer if time is limited. (Check the app for each to find out the cost and estimated wait time.)

16. If you are staying on Disney property for your entire vacation, there is no need for a rental car. While Disney transportation can take some time, with some planning, the cost savings are worth it. On-property guests with their own vehicle must pay a daily parking fee, which covers the cost of parking at the hotel and any theme parks.

While it may seem more convenient to have a car, consider that it usually takes just as long to get the parking lot tram out to your vehicle as it would to wait in line for a bus or monorail. In fact, at Magic Kingdom, it often takes much longer to reach your vehicle, since you must first take a boat or monorail to the Transportation and Ticket Center, then take a parking tram to your vehicle, while the buses to the Disney hotels leave directly from the park.

17. Make your way through crowds in single file. It's easier to slip between guests this way. Each person should hook a finger through a belt loop or backpack strap of the person in front, creating a "train." The most assertive member of your group should lead the train. Don't push, but wind your way through the crowds, slipping between people. Don't forget to say "excuse me" and "thank you" as you pass by.
18. If you don't get a prepaid toll road pass (such as SunPass) and end up on a toll road that doesn't have a manned toll booth, don't stop or try to turn around! That is very dangerous and won't do you any good.

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Don't worry, though, the penalty isn't too severe. Once you get home, you will receive a bill in the mail for the unpaid toll with a nominal fee added on for each toll point you passed and didn't pay. (This charge can really add up, so get off the road at the next exit to avoid multiple fees.)

19. If you need foreign language assistance at Orlando International Airport, there are multi-lingual tourist information centers, located by the security checkpoints, open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.
20. If you are visiting from outside of the country, please remember that taxi drivers expect tips in the United States. It is considered bad form not to tip approximately 15%.
21. Always keep a few dollars in quarters in your vehicle. Florida has several toll highways and turnpikes. The term "turnpike" comes from older days when drivers had to pay a toll to pass a pike (i.e., a pole), which would be raised, or turned, upon collection of the fare.
22. Here is a site to determine how much you can expect to pay for shuttle and taxi cab services to/from your chosen hotel:  
[MearsTransportation.com](http://MearsTransportation.com)
23. Disney provides free and easy transportation to each hotel from the parks and Disney Springs. Just ask any Disney Cast Member where to pick up a ride. Getting back to the park is just as easy with Disney's free transportation. If you have your own car, parking is free at the hotels for non-overnight guests with dining reservations. Explore the many dining possibilities at:  
[disneyworld.disney.go.com/dining](http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/dining).
24. Make note of where you parked. Use your phone or camera to take photos of your parking location. We see people searching for their car every day in the humongous parking lots. If you do get lost, contact a security patrol for help. They will drive you through the parking lot to help you find where you parked your automobile.
25. Bring a roll of quarters and take the toll roads in town! They provide the most convenient way to get anywhere around town, especially when driving to Disney World from the airport. While Sea World and Universal Orlando are in Orlando, Disney World is actually south of Orlando, in Lake Buena Vista.

## Navigating Orlando & Disney Parks

Driving from the airport on a toll road to Disney World can take as little as 25 minutes (in lighter traffic), while that same drive avoiding the tolls can easily take more than an hour! The cost of the toll is easily worth it when you consider the amount of time and gas you save.

26. Save your Google Maps for offline use. If you are driving around Disney or Orlando, you will definitely need directions, and you never know when you might lose cell phone service. The good news is you can download a map for use later, and you can still get driving directions even when offline.

To do so, while online, open the Google Maps app on your cell phone or tablet. Do a search, such as for Disney World or Orlando. Simply click on the name of the location searched at the bottom of the map and look for the Download link. Select it, and the map will be available on your device when you're offline.

27. Visit Celebration, Florida, the "town that Disney built." This nearby town is just a few miles from Disney World. It was designed by Disney to look like an all-American town. It's a beautiful community with a nice park and downtown area that are perfect for a casual stroll.

They also have a cute and friendly post office, in case you purchased too many souvenirs and need to ship them home. (Hint: Use flat rate shipping boxes. They are generally much cheaper than standard postage.)

During the holidays, you can enjoy an "ice" skating rink (made from a type of wax) and evening "snow" falls, as well as great entertainment.

28. Complete a rate comparison of taxi (and alternatives) versus car rental and parking. Go to [Mearstransportation.com](http://Mearstransportation.com), [Uber.com](http://Uber.com), and [Lyft.com](http://Lyft.com) to do a fare calculation for taxis and shuttles to/from your chosen hotel.
29. Each year, usually during the slow season, the monorail is refurbished. During this time, it will have modified service or routes. Check with a Cast Member on the day of travel to find out the best option to use. Other transportation options may be faster.

## Disney Made *Easy*™ Insider Tips & Tricks

30. There's a secret route to Disney's Animal Kingdom area (Animal Kingdom Park, Animal Kingdom Lodge, and Blizzard Beach) that usually has far less traffic during peak hours. Travel State Road 429 to Western Way. From there, take a right to get to the Animal Kingdom Park or left to get to the other parks. (There is usually a small toll to go this route.)

31. The Animal Kingdom theme park can only be reached by car or bus. No monorail, boat, or Disney Skyliner route services it.

If you want to get to the Animal Kingdom theme park, but your current location has no direct bus to it, the fastest alternative is to get a ride to the Animal Kingdom Lodge and take a bus from there.

While Coronado Springs appears to be a closer hotel, the buses from Animal Kingdom Lodge have a much shorter and quicker route to the park. (Plus, your family will really enjoy exploring the hotel and its live animals!)

32. Single rider lines are available at four Disney World attractions:

- Rock 'n' Roller Coaster in Hollywood Studios
- Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run in Hollywood Studios
- Test Track in Epcot
- Expedition Everest in Animal Kingdom

These queues are intended for people who are riding alone and often have wait times that are much less than the regular stand-by queues. When you reach the front of the line, you will be paired with an odd-numbered party to fill an available space in the vehicle.

Keep in mind, if you have multiple people in your party and try to use the single rider line, you will not be allowed to sit together! Do not ask or pretend you did not understand when you reach the front of the queue, as Cast Members will not make an exception for you. You will simply hold up other guests waiting for their turn.

## Navigating Orlando & Disney Parks

33. Disney parking lots sometimes fill to capacity. On the busiest days of the year, parking lots can get full before park capacity is actually reached. In these instances, parking attendants will direct you to another parking lot, where you can catch a shuttle to the theme park.

You may be tempted to park at a nearby Disney hotel in these instances. This won't work in the mornings or on special event evenings, as Disney hotel parking lots are usually limited to guests with dining reservations.

However, you can often still park at a Deluxe Resort without a dining reservation if you tell the attendant you want valet parking.

In fact, paying for valet parking at Disney's Contemporary or Grand Floridian Resorts is often a great alternative to the Transportation and Ticket Center. While valet parking costs a bit more than standard parking, each hotel offers a walking path that is quicker than getting to the park from the Ticket and Transportation Center.

If you plan ahead and get dining reservations, which come with free parking at the hotel, make sure the reservation is under two hours from when you try to park. The guard will likely turn you away if you try parking there in the morning, but your reservation is for later that day.

34. To avoid parking at a theme park, get reservations for an early morning breakfast at the nearest hotel to the theme park you plan to visit that day.

For instance, get breakfast reservations at Chef Mickey's in Disney's Contemporary Resort as early as possible on the morning you plan to visit the Magic Kingdom. You can park at the Contemporary early in the morning. Eat breakfast, then take the short walk from the hotel to the Magic Kingdom entrance.

A breakfast reservation at Cape May Cafe gets you free parking at Disney's Beach Club, which is very convenient to Epcot's back entrance and Hollywood Studios via walking path, Skyliner gondola, and boat.

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35. Orlando's Sand Lake Road is also known as Restaurant Row, due to its many dining options. Traffic gets very busy on Sand Lake Road. If you plan to eat dinner at a restaurant on Sand Lake, it's best to determine which of the other main thoroughfares is closest to your location and get onto Sand Lake from there to minimize the amount of time spent sitting in traffic. You can easily reach Sand Lake from Turkey Lake Road, SR 535, and I-4.
36. Valet parking is free for guests with a valid disabled parking placard at Deluxe Disney hotels if you are unable to find an available spot in the designated parking area. Just let them know when you arrive that you were unable to find appropriate parking. Your parking placard must be properly displayed to receive this benefit.
37. If you find the noise and congestion of Disney Springs overwhelming, relief is just a (free!) boat ride away. Take one of the water taxis to any of the five Disney hotels which are accessible along canals, past pristine golf courses. There is no charge to take the boats between the hotels and Disney Springs along the scenic waterways. Each hotel has a unique theme, restaurants, lounges, and the two Port Orleans properties even boast free live entertainment on select evenings!
38. Bus transportation can take a very long time for Disney's Fort Wilderness Campground and Caribbean Beach Resorts. This is because they are huge properties, and the buses make several stops throughout.  
If you are staying at Caribbean Beach, request a room close to the pool and dining area of the property for the most convenient bus stops.  
Disney's Skyliner offers more convenient access from Caribbean Beach to Epcot and Hollywood Studios. (If your room is close to Disney's Riviera Resort, which connects to Caribbean Beach Resort, take a short walk there to take the Skyliner directly to Epcot.)  
For Disney's Fort Wilderness Campground, consider renting a golf cart during your stay to get around quickly and easily. If you're just visiting Fort Wilderness, the most convenient transportation option

## Navigating Orlando & Disney Parks

is usually a boat ride from the Ticket and Transportation Center. It drops you off near Pioneer Hall, where the property's dining and horse-drawn wagon activities take place.

39. Using a shuttle at non-Disney hotels can be a time consuming and frustrating experience. Most area hotels use shuttles that service multiple hotels. Because of this, shuttles can fill up fast and take up to an hour to reach Disney property, depending on where you are located on their service schedule.

Drivers of off-property hotel shuttles also work for gratuities, meaning there is an expectation that you will tip the driver. Non-Disney shuttles drop off at the Transportation and Ticket Center, meaning you must transfer to Disney transportation to get to your final destination.

The most convenient non-Disney shuttles are the ones that service the Disney Springs area hotels. They run every 30 minutes and tend to be very consistent.

If you just missed your shuttle in the morning and your hotel is close to Disney Springs, walk there and take a Disney bus to Disney's BoardWalk and walk to Epcot or Hollywood Studios; take a bus to Disney's Contemporary Resort and walk to Magic Kingdom; or take a bus to Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge and transfer to another bus to get to Animal Kingdom.

40. It is often quicker to take boat transportation from Disney's Polynesian Resort to the Magic Kingdom, rather than wait for the bus or monorail.
41. It is often quickest to walk to/from the Magic Kingdom for guests staying at both the Contemporary and Grand Floridian hotels, rather than take boat, bus, or monorail transportation. However, at park closing, your feet may thank you to take a leisurely boat ride back.
42. If you're staying off-property and visiting the Magic Kingdom on a busy day, park at the Ticket and Transportation Center and check the lines for both the Magic Kingdom Monorail and the Resort Monorail. The Resort Monorail often has shorter lines, but the monorails run less frequently.

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Only use the Resort Monorail at the Ticket and Transportation Center if the line is less than half of the Magic Kingdom Monorail.

If both lines are very long, take the short walk to Disney's Polynesian Resort. From there, you can use the Resort Monorail to Magic Kingdom.

On busy days, the wait to get onto the Resort Monorail is often much shorter. In addition, the Resort Monorail starts 30 minutes earlier than the Magic Kingdom Monorail, which travels from the Ticket and Transportation Center, giving you a head start on the crowds!

43. The main path isn't always the fastest way to get from place to place in the parks. Here are a few shortcuts we love:
- In Magic Kingdom, if your first stop is Tomorrowland, don't go all the way to the hub in front of the Castle. Instead, head to the right at the end of Main Street, to the Tomorrowland Terrace Restaurant. There's a path that goes past the restaurant, directly to Tomorrowland.
  - Another Tomorrowland pathway is just to the left of the Space Mountain gift shop (between the gift shop and Tomorrowland Speedway) that takes you from Tomorrowland to the train station and Barnstormer in Storybook Circus.
  - If you're heading to Adventureland from Main Street, but the street is really congested (such as during a parade or fireworks show), pop into the Emporium gift shop. The shops on that side of the street connect, so you walk all the way through to bypass Main Street. It brings you out near the First Aid Center and Baby Center, close to the entrance of Adventureland.
  - About halfway through Adventureland and Frontierland, there are restrooms with a pathway that connect the two lands.
  - Look for the pathway that runs along the water from the Tiana's Bayou Adventure and Big Thunder Mountain Railroad area to the Haunted Mansion. Not only is it more scenic, it's a great bypass route when a parade is running through the street.

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- In Epcot, there are three pathways that connect Future World with World Showcase. Most people take the main pathway. If your destination is Mexico, Norway, China, Germany, or Italy, it is quicker to take the Odyssey path that runs between Test Track and Mexico (and the Friendship Boats that go to Germany).
  - If your destination is Canada, United Kingdom, International Gateway (the back entrance to Epcot), France, Morocco, or Japan, it is quicker to take the path near the Imagination Pavilion that runs directly to Canada (and the Friendship Boats that go to Morocco). The American Adventure is in the center of World Showcase, so take whichever path is closest to you if that's your destination.
  - In Animal Kingdom, there's a pathway that runs along the water between Pandora and Africa, allowing you to bypass the circular route through Discovery Island. Look for this path near the restrooms past the Festival of the Lion King theater.
  - If you want to travel between Epcot and Hollywood Studios, use the back entrance/exit to Epcot, called International Gateway. It's located between the United Kingdom and France Pavilions. From there, you can walk (past Disney's BoardWalk, which is located between the two parks), take a Friendship Boat, or take a Skyliner gondola to Hollywood Studios.
  - Take a walk from Magic Kingdom to either Disney's Contemporary or Grand Floridian hotel. Leaving Magic Kingdom, turn right to follow the pathway to Grand Floridian. Continue on this path to reach Disney's Polynesian Resort. Turn left when leaving the Magic Kingdom to follow the pathway to Contemporary. It's a great way to explore more of Disney property and see the deluxe hotels.
44. If you're driving into Florida for your vacation, stop at the Florida Welcome Center. These rest areas and visitor information centers are located just inside the Florida border on the major Interstate highways.

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Purchase a SunPass transponder sticker at the vending machine and register your new pass at the SunPass activation machine located there.

SunPass is a prepaid toll pass that you stick to the inside of your vehicle window. It allows you to travel on any toll road in Florida without stopping at the toll booth.

Passes cost \$5 or \$15, depending on the type of pass you get. When you activate it, you “charge” the sticker with a pre-paid amount to use on toll roads. Don’t worry, you can get a refund when your vacation is over and you de-activate the pass.

Using the sticker gets you discounted toll rates at any of the designated SunPass roads, making this a win-win for convenience and cost savings!

If you miss the Florida Welcome Center, just stop in at any Publix grocery store (found in nearly every town in Florida). They sell the SunPass transponders at the customer service desk in each store.

45. At the Transportation and Ticket Center (parking for the Magic Kingdom and the main drop off for off-property shuttles), if the Express Monorail has a huge line, check the Resorts Monorail. It also makes a stop at the Transportation and Ticket Center.

If the line is too long there, consider making the short 5-minute walk to Contemporary Resort and taking the monorail from there, often with little to no wait in line (but not always)!

46. When using any bus or shuttle, get a seat as close to the door as possible. You’ll be one of the first off the bus, putting you at the head of the crowd to get through security or other transportation queues.
47. Buena Vista Drive, the street that runs in front of Disney Springs and its area hotels, is notoriously bad for traffic delays. At the best of times, you can expect 15-20 minute delays on this stretch during the evening, especially on the weekend. Fortunately, there is an exit right off the highway that leads directly into a huge, state-of-the art parking garage to make visiting Disney Springs an easy choice.

## Navigating Orlando & Disney Parks

We recommend you avoid the State Road (SR) 535 and Buena Vista Drive entrance to Disney Properties. Instead, take Exit 67 off I-4 West from Orlando to bypass the Disney Springs traffic. This is true even if Disney Springs is your destination, as its most available parking garage is at the end closest to Exit 67.

Taking a right off Exit 67 leads to Typhoon Lagoon and Hotel Plaza Boulevard, where several non-Disney hotels are located. Take a left to go to Hollywood Studios or the BoardWalk.

48. At peak periods, or when you see a long line at the monorail station, it may be faster to take the Ferry or the Resort monorail, as many people choose to wait in the Express monorail lines.
49. Avoid the lower floors at Disney Springs parking garages. Disney Springs has large multi-story parking structures, which fill up fast during peak times. There is an electronic sign outside of each garage entrance that indicates how many parking spaces are available on each floor. These signs aren't always completely accurate, but they give an idea of which floors have a lot of availability.

Once you reach a floor, a sign at the end of each row indicates how many spots are available in that particular row. Looking down the row, a green light above a spot (usually) means that spot is available. Don't park on the first floor! It is always the busiest for parking and traffic, and there is no direct access to Disney Springs from the first floor.

Only the second floor has direct access (except for the garage across the street from Disney Springs, which has the walking bridge on the third floor). Every other floor requires an elevator or escalator ride to the second floor to get into Disney Springs. If there is a lot of availability on the second floor (usually only during non-peak hours), that's the best parking location.

However, if there is a long line to get into the garages and availability is filling up, bypass the lower floors entirely. Go directly to the top parking level, which nearly always has a lot of available spaces.

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50. Orlando rush hour can create long delays on Interstate 4, which runs from Disney to many of the other Orlando attractions. To avoid traffic, take the back roads. Head to State Road (SR) 535 (just follow Hotel Plaza Boulevard from Disney Springs until you reach SR 535).

To reach Universal Orlando, turn right onto SR 535 and take a left on Palm Parkway. This eventually turns into Turkey Lake Road and takes you straight to Universal Orlando.

To reach Sea World and International Drive, turn right onto SR 535 and take a left on Palm Parkway. Take a right onto Central Florida Parkway. Sea World is on the corner of Central Florida Parkway and International Drive (a major tourist area of Orlando).

51. When entering a queue with multiple lanes, take the left side if it's not obvious which line is longest. Most people automatically go right, often leaving the left lanes with shorter waits.
52. If you're renting a car, remember to request a toll pass. (Get the Visitor Toll Pass app first if you plan to rent a vehicle at the Orlando International Airport. If you're renting from another location or didn't get the app, most car rental companies have a toll pass option you can buy.) Having a pass will save you a lot of time and hassle while navigating Florida's highways. There are a lot of toll roads!
53. While it will save your feet, it is not always quicker to take the parking tram to a park after parking your vehicle.
- It is always quicker to walk if you park in a disabled (free for anyone with a valid placard) or priority space (which costs an extra fee).
- For all other spots, if you just missed the tram and aren't sure whether to wait for the next one, here's a quick guide:
- At the Transportation and Ticket Center (Magic Kingdom Parking), you are better off walking if you parked in the following sections: Jafar, Aladdin, Woody, and Zurg. Hook and Peter Pan take about the same time for walking or the tram.

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- At Epcot, you are better off walking if you parked in the following sections: Journey, Amaze, and Imagine. Discover and Create take about the same time for walking or the tram.
- At Hollywood Studios, you are better off walking from all but the farthest areas of the parking lot.
- At Animal Kingdom, you are better off walking if you parked in the following sections: Unicorn, Peacock, Dinosaur, Giraffe, and the front-half of Butterfly.

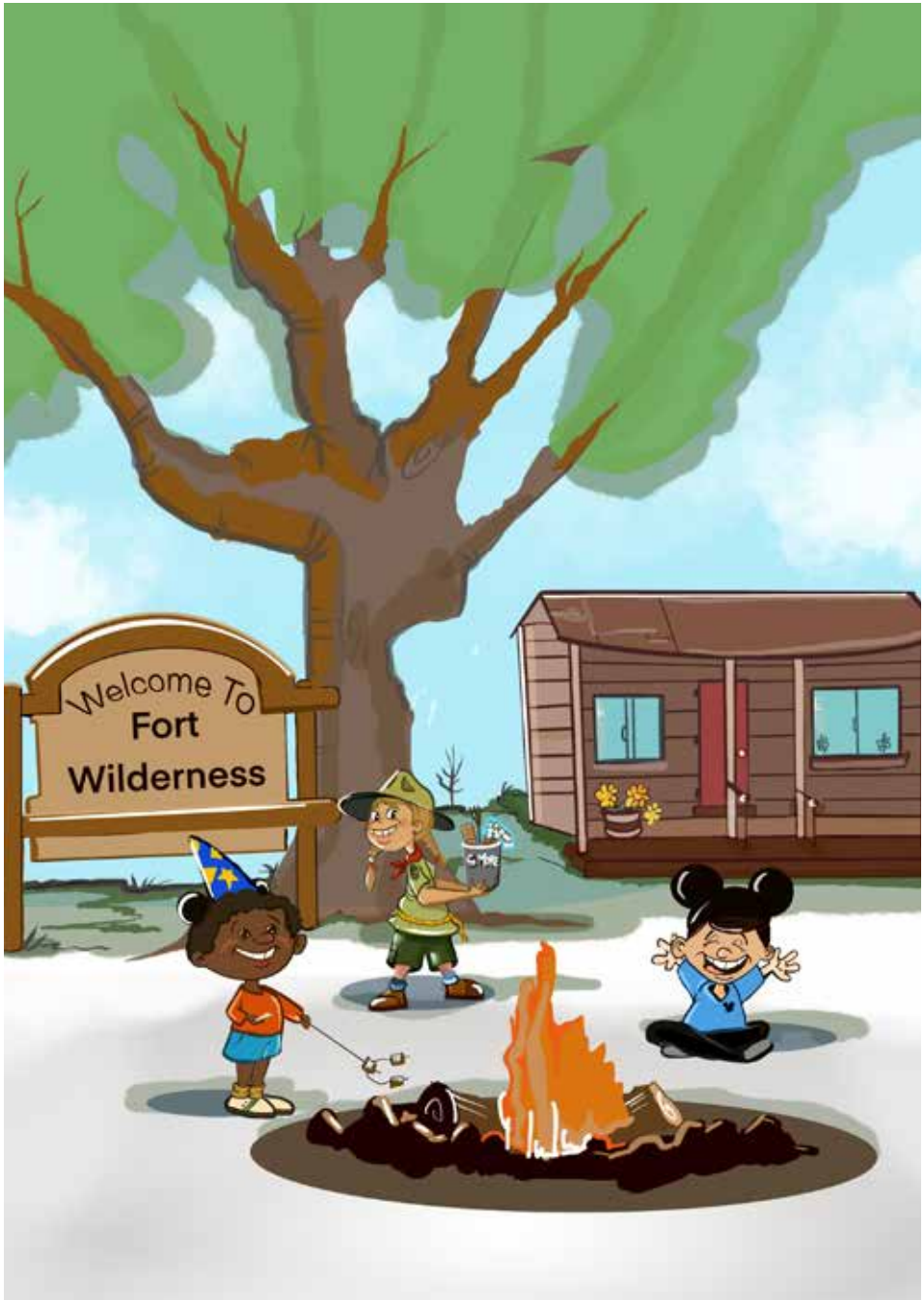
54. If you plan to drive anywhere around Orlando or Florida, you are likely to encounter toll roads. Florida offers a great tool for visitors renting a vehicle at the airport. (It's currently limited to use only for those renting a car at that location.)

Before your trip, download the Visitor Toll Pass app. Use it to sign up for a free temporary toll pass that works on all Florida toll roads.

Once you arrive at the airport, you can pick up your reserved pass from the vending machine located in Terminal A, Level 1. Just hang the pass from your rearview mirror and relax with the knowledge that you can bypass toll booths, as your credit card will automatically be charged.

When you're heading home, simply return the pass in one of the designated airport dropboxes. (If you fail to return the pass, there is a \$10 fee.)

# Lodging



1. Kitchenette does not mean the same thing as a full kitchen in hotel terms. A kitchenette typically includes a sink, microwave, mini-refrigerator, and coffee maker. Don't expect to be able to prepare and cook complete meals in a room with a kitchenette. A full kitchen typically has a full-sized refrigerator, stove, oven, and dishwasher, as well as cookware and dishes.
2. Guests of Shades of Green, Disney's Swan & Dolphin Hotels, and the Disney Springs Resort Area Hotels benefit from Disney's Early Theme Park Entry just like those staying at any of the other Disney Hotels. If you are going to the parks during any peak period, this is a benefit that you will want to use.
3. If you have an insect infestation and plan to cancel your hotel reservation because of it, take lots of pictures of the room and insects. This gives you proof to provide to your credit card company in case the hotel tries to charge you cancellation fees.
4. Caribbean Beach is so big, it takes a long time to walk to the main pool area from some of the rooms. It can also take a long time to catch a bus to the parks if you're on the outer edges of the resort. Reserve a room close to the pirate ship pool to make sure you're close to the resort's dining and transportation options.
5. Of the three Magic Kingdom monorail hotels (Contemporary, Polynesian, and Grand Floridian), Disney's Polynesian Resort has the most convenient transportation options.

This is because you can take a very short walk to the Transportation and Ticket Center from the Polynesian and take the direct monorail to Epcot or get a bus directly to any other hotel on Disney property.

6. If you haven't stayed in hotels much, there are a few room requests that can help to improve your experience:
  - Ask to be on the top floor. Many hotels have thin walls and floors, allowing you to hear other guests above and next to you. While there's no way to keep from having next door neighbors, a top floor room will at least keep you from hearing footsteps above as you try to sleep. (Plus, the view is usually nicer.)

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- Ask to be away from the elevators and ice machine to reduce noise levels and foot traffic near your hotel room door. (Keep in mind, this request will make your room less convenient to these amenities.)
- Ask to face away from the road to reduce road noise.
- Ask to face away from the pool to reduce pool noise.
- Ask for a west-facing room if you don't wish to be woken up by the morning sun.

7. Early Theme Park Entry is a wonderful benefit if you're a Disney hotel guest, particularly in the early morning hours when you can walk on to almost any ride without a wait.

This perk is a bit different than in years past. While resort guests used to get one- to two-hour early or late entry into a specific park each day, it is now 30 minutes of early entry into any park of your choosing.

8. Disney's Value Resorts aren't known for their peace and quiet. They're the most popular resorts for families with young and rambunctious kids with features designed to allow children to run and play.

If you're noise sensitive and want to stay at a Value Resort, request a quiet, out-of-the-way room. The quietest Value Resort rooms are at All-Star Music (west facing rooms in Buildings 5 and 6 and northwest facing rooms in Building 4) and All-Star Sports (west facing rooms in Building 3 and north facing rooms in Building 2).

9. Disney does NOT assign you a specific room until you actually check in, so it's useless to ask for a specific room number at the time of your reservation. Rather, you should identify the area and view you want.

For instance, at a Value Resort, request a room that does not open up to the pool (Pool areas are always noisier until about 11 PM.) or an open courtyard. Also request that the windows not look onto a parking lot. What you should end up with, if available, is a room on a side path that faces the bushes.

## Lodging

10. The quietest Moderate Resort rooms are at Caribbean Beach (lake facing rooms in Buildings 35 and 38 of Trinidad South), Port Orleans Riverside (east facing rooms in Buildings 26 and 28 of Alligator Bayou and west facing rooms in the north wings of Acadian House), and Port Orleans French Quarter (water facing rooms in Building 1 and water facing rooms in the north wings of Buildings 6 and 7).
11. The quietest Deluxe Resort rooms are at Beach Club (east facing rooms in the east buildings), BoardWalk Inn (courtyard facing rooms east of the main lobby), and Wilderness Lodge (northwest facing rooms in the northern wing).
12. The quietest Deluxe Villas resort rooms are at Bay Lake Tower (any room), Beach Club Villas (north-northwest facing rooms in southern wings), Treehouse Villas (any room not directly on the water), and Wilderness Lodge Villas (east facing water-view rooms in southern building).
13. You are allowed full access to Disney hotel amenities on the days of check-in and check-out, even if you don't have access to your room. Pack your swim wear in your carry-on bags. You can change clothes in the bathroom and head straight for the pool. Moderate and above resorts have towels by the pool, but you'll need to ask for towels at the front desk if you're staying at a Value Resort.
14. Get to your hotel before check-in time on your first day. Disney hotels and many area hotels will allow you to complete the paperwork early and will store your bags until your room is ready, allowing you to enjoy the remainder of the day exploring. As an added bonus, Disney hotels also allow guests complete access to amenities, including the pools, while waiting to check-in.
15. If you are staying at a Disney Resort and there is a specific hotel room view or location you want, the only way to guarantee the view or location is to pay for that category when you book. However, Cast Members will try to accommodate special requests if there is availability. The first step is to make the request with your online reservation when you pre-fill your check-in information. You can also call Disney Reservations at 407-560-2428 to ask them to note the special request on your reservation.

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Your specific room is not assigned until the day of check-in. General requests are more likely to be honored than specific requests. For instance, a request for a room with a pool view near transportation is easier to get than a request for Room 10 in Building 8.

About ten days before you trip, call the hotel directly and verify that your special request is still on your reservation. (Special requests don't always make it through the system to the hotel.)

On the day of arrival, speak to the front desk directly during check-in and reiterate your request. Now is the time to get more specific, but be polite. Remember, those who paid for an upgraded category get priority, so the Cast Member may not be able to accommodate you.

16. Book a hotel with self-service laundry machines if your vacation is more than four days. Just ask your front desk if you can purchase some quarters and laundry detergent. Many national chain hotels offer coin-operated machines. All Disney hotels also have them available for guest use. They come in handy when your clothes get sweaty after a day at the parks!
17. Before checking into a hotel with which you are unfamiliar, take a few minutes to walk around and survey the property. Figure out where everything is located, including the shuttle pick-up location, pool, and any other amenities.

Look for room/building numbers that are near the amenities you want or that are in a quieter area of the hotel property.

When you check in, you'll be in a better position to request a room in a location where you will be most happy during your stay.

18. Don't use your debit card or everyday credit card for hotel incidentals.

When you provide your credit card to the hotel upon check-in, the hotel places a hold amount on the card in case they need to charge you for room service, parking, resort fees, etc. This hold amount can be extreme, up to \$500, reducing the amount of available credit you have on your card by that amount.

## Lodging

Verify the amount of the hold with your hotel upon check-in, along with their policy for releasing the hold. (They usually release it within 48 hours of check-out, but that means you won't have use of that amount for your entire vacation.)

19. Not all Disney resorts are convenient to the parks. For instance, the Animal Kingdom and ESPN resorts are located in out of the way places on-property. While it's quick to reach the Animal Kingdom Park from those hotels, it takes a long time to reach anywhere else (and can cost a fortune if you use a taxi or Uber).

Staying at a Disney resort on the monorail line is the easiest and quickest option for transportation to both the Magic Kingdom and Epcot. Overall, Epcot resorts are most central to all the parks and offer a variety of transportation options.

Check to see which transportation options are available at your hotel if you're staying on-property. Of the Disney resort transportation options, boats and buses tend to take the longest time to reach a destination. The Skyliner is relatively convenient, but it generally takes more time than the monorail.

20. During the Christmas season, campers at Disney's Fort Wilderness Campground go all out with their decorations. There's no charge to go there and walk around to look at the fun lights. You may even catch a contest for best decorated golf cart! If you don't feel like walking around the property, you can pay a fee to take a horse-drawn wagon or carriage around the campsites. It's such great fun!
21. Bypass the long wait at your Disney hotel front desk with online check-in. Download the My Disney Experience app to your smartphone and use it to complete the check-in process within 24 hours of your arrival. There's no need to go to the hotel at all, until your room is ready, and the app will notify you when that time comes.

The app also turns your phone into your room key, giving you access as soon as you receive notice. If you purchased MagicBands and linked them to your account, they also act as your resort room key, allowing you to skip the front desk entirely!

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22. Disney's BoardWalk Inn, Yacht Club, Beach Club, and Walt Disney World Swan & Dolphin Resorts are the most central of the on-property hotels. They offer great conveniences, including boat transportation, Skyliner transportation, and walking paths to both Epcot and Hollywood Studios, in addition to bus transportation for the other parks and Disney Springs.
23. The Contemporary Resort and Grand Floridian Resort & Spa are the most convenient hotels to the Magic Kingdom, as you can access a walkway from each, rather than wait for the bus or monorail.
24. Of the three Magic Kingdom Monorail Resorts, the Contemporary is the first stop after leaving Magic Kingdom. This means guests of the Contemporary are more likely to get a seat on the monorail first thing in the morning, as the monorail fills up on its way around the hotels.

This also means guests of the Contemporary are the first to reach their destination late in the evening. The Transportation and Ticket Center is the second stop, making the Resort Monorail convenient for guests parking there. The third stop is the Polynesian, with the final stop at Grand Floridian.

25. Some great resources for inexpensive vacation rentals in Orlando are Airbnb ([airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com)) and Sky Auction ([skyauction.com](https://www.skyauction.com)). You may find large rooms with full kitchens for a fraction of what you would pay for a smaller hotel.
26. You can often get great deals on rooms at the non-Disney hotels on Disney property, which are sometimes even cheaper than Disney's value resorts. They offer many of the benefits of the Disney resorts (though not all).

Staying at the Swan and Dolphin, for instance, will get you free parking at the theme parks, Early Theme Park Entry benefits, and complimentary delivery of Disney merchandise purchases directly to your room.

## Lodging

27. One cost-saving perk the Disney Springs-area hotels have that even Disney hotels don't offer is a coupon booklet for Disney Springs shopping. Don't expect huge discounts, but you might get 10% off your bill at Rainforest Café and other meal options.
28. Non-Disney hotels around the Disney Springs area often provide great savings with most of the conveniences of a Disney hotel. There are two ways to get the best deals at one of these properties:
  - 1) Go to [www.disneyspringshotels.com/special-offers](http://www.disneyspringshotels.com/special-offers) to see what specials are currently advertised, and
  - 2) Sign up for the loyalty program (usually free on the hotel's website) for each hotel that interests you several months ahead of your trip to get special members-only offers sent directly to your email.
29. Disney Vacation Club properties are some of the best hotel rooms on-property. Many of these rooms boast multiple bedrooms with full kitchens. While it may not make financial sense for you to purchase points in this club, there are still options to rent these rooms. Disney offers rentals of these properties under the Deluxe Villas Category.

However, you can save quite a bit of money by renting points from a Disney Vacation Club member. Check out the following websites for specific terms and availability: David's Vacation Club Rentals ([www.dvcrequest.com](http://www.dvcrequest.com)) and DVC Rental Store (<https://dvcrentalstore.com>).
30. Most Disney hotels have a limit of four guests per room, and the price of a suite or Deluxe Villa that holds more may be out of your budget. In this instance, it may make sense to get an off-property vacation rental. There are several of them located in the Disney area, which includes Lake Buena Vista, Kissimmee, and Davenport.

Airbnb and VRBO are often the best resources for these larger rentals, although a Google Search for vacation villas or vacation home around Walt Disney World usually pulls up some great places.

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31. Stay at Walt Disney World Swan or Dolphin for less. These hotels are in one of the most convenient locations on Disney property. Though not technically Disney Resorts, they offer many of the same perks, such as Early Theme Park Entry. The best part is you can often find discounts to stay there, making them comparable in price to a Disney Moderate Resort.

Check the Special Offers page on [www.swandolphin.com](http://www.swandolphin.com) for current discounts. If you are a Florida Resident, current or former US Military, nurse, teacher, or a member of AAA, call the hotels directly at 800-227-1500 to find out what special rates they can provide.

32. If you need to cancel a hotel reservation at the last minute, avoid the cancellation penalty by changing the reservation date to a later date. Once the reservation is moved out far enough, you can cancel without a fee. (Check the cancellation policy with your specific hotel to see the specific length of time you need to move the reservation to avoid this penalty.)

33. If you want a home-away-from-home experience with resort amenities at a location that is very convenient to Walt Disney World and doesn't cost an arm and a leg, two of our favorite properties are Polynesian Isles by Diamond Resorts and Blue Heron Beach Resort. Both are located within five minutes of Walt Disney World property and have full-size apartments with kitchens.

To get the best deals on these properties, don't book direct! The best prices are usually found on Traveluro, Agoda, or Snaptravel.

34. Consider staying at a Value Resort for most of your vacation, then at a Deluxe property for the one or two days you don't plan to spend at the park. This can actually be cheaper than staying at a Moderate Resort for your entire trip, and you get to enjoy the best amenities Disney has to offer!
35. If you're ready for an outdoor adventure with all the Disney fun, try camping at Fort Wilderness. It's the cheapest way to stay on-property, and you can choose from tent sites or RV pads. (Cabins are also available for rent, but they're priced in the Moderate Resort range.)

## Lodging

If you choose to camp in a tent, try to plan it for fall or winter, when the humidity is lower and there's less chance of rain. (There are heavy rains nearly daily from mid-June through August.)

You truly feel like you're in the wilderness, but you get great amenities, including swimming pools and on-property restaurants, a special Chip 'n' Dale campfire sing-a-long each evening, and boat transportation to Magic Kingdom.

If you plan to rent a camping spot, especially an RV pad, during the holidays, do it months in advance. Campers return to Fort Wilderness year after year and reserve their spots as soon as they're available, so spaces are limited.

36. Some of the Disney hotels have sprawling properties that require a lot of walking to get to the hub, dining, or pool areas from rooms on the outer edges of the properties. These properties include Port Orleans, Saratoga Springs, Old Key West, Caribbean Beach, and Coronado Springs. Before checking in, request a room near the pool or main hall.

You can make special requests online as part of your booking reservation (if you booked directly with Disney). If you didn't book direct, you can call the hotel with your reservation number and ask them to put the request into the system. Check back with the hotel a couple of weeks before your trip to make sure the special request is still on your reservation.

You may not get a room in a preferred location if you didn't pay for the upgrade when you booked, but you may get a room that's still relatively close to the main area.

Here are some suggested non-preferred buildings you can request if they're not already full:

- For Port Orleans French Quarter, request Building 3 or 4.
- For Port Orleans Riverside, request the Magnolia Building.
- For Old Key West, request Buildings 11, 12, 13, or 14.
- For Caribbean Beach, request the Martinique or Trinidad North Buildings.

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- For Coronado Springs, request the Casitas 1 or Cabanas 9B Buildings.

If you end up with a room that's far away from the main areas of the hotel, ask the front desk for a map with the nearest Disney bus stop to your room and its schedule. The larger hotel properties have buses that run regularly and will take you directly to the main hub of the hotel.

37. If you choose to stay off-property, pay attention to how you will get to the parks. Most “free” shuttle buses don't even pick you up until the parks are already opening, and then most of them only travel to the Ticket and Transportation Center. This means you must transfer to yet another bus to make it to your park of choice each day!

In fact, the vast majority of Disney-area hotels charge a “resort fee” of \$15 or more (up to \$40 per night!) to cover the cost of this mode of transportation. So, you'll be paying for it in addition to your hotel rates. Check the fine print when comparing final prices.

38. All of Disney's resorts are unique and fun, but there is one that we think is absolutely the best for families with pre-teen children: Disney's Art of Animation Resort. Except for The Little Mermaid rooms, every room is a family-sized suite with kitchenette.

Each section is uniquely themed, including an incredible Cars Movie area and Lion King area, complete with fun play areas. Add to that a swimming pool with underwater music, and you have a complete children's fantasy land.

Part of the Disney success is our ability to create a believable world of dreams that appeals to all age groups. The kind of entertainment we create is meant to appeal to every member of the family.

- Walt Disney

# Dining



1. The most expensive Disney restaurant, Victoria & Albert's, is considered premier among dining locations throughout all of Florida. The restaurant has a minimum age (10 years old) and required dress code.
2. If guests complain about poor quality or lackluster food, Disney staff will bend over backwards to make things right. NEVER accept poor quality food. You are paying premium prices, so if something is cold, dried-out, or doesn't meet your taste, be polite, but let a server or manager know.

Even at a counter-service restaurant, they will re-make your meal to ensure it is fresh. This is especially important when eating at locations that pre-make the food they serve, such as Tangerine Café in the Morocco Pavilion (Epcot).
3. A favorite destination for locals is Beaches & Cream, an old-fashioned ice cream parlor at Disney's Beach Club Resort. Capacity is extremely limited, so reservations are highly recommended, but where else can you eat a kitchen sink dessert and choose songs from a free juke box that plays classic music from the 1950s and 1960s?
4. Don't limit yourself to eating only at restaurants within the parks. On days when you are not at a park, have fun and explore as many of the Disney properties as you can. Many of Disney's best restaurants are found at their resort hotels, not at the parks.

For instance, Boatwright's Dining Hall at Port Orleans Riverside offers excellent Southern fare, and even the quick service restaurants at both Port Orleans hotels are popular meal destinations for locals (thanks in part to the yummy beignets at Port Orleans French Quarter).
5. For Kosher counter-service meals, you can go to Cosmic Ray's at the Magic Kingdom, Pizzafari at the Animal Kingdom, ABC Commissary at Hollywood Studios, and Liberty Inn at Epcot.
6. There are few restaurants near Disney (or any of the Orlando theme parks) that offer particularly great cuisine, since most cater to tourists rather than repeat-business diners. We recommend eating at national chains when dining off Disney property to get the

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same standardized quality and experience available at any of their restaurants.

7. The most popular food types at buffets tend to have a great deal of turnover, meaning it is constantly being replenished to meet demand. If the place is packed, it is a good sign that the food turnover is keeping things fresh. If the place is virtually empty, beware that food could be stale.

Even so, if you can sit near the buffet line, you will be able to see what is being brought out fresh. Just keep in mind that restaurant staff usually puts the older leftover items on the top of the stack, so dig slightly lower to where the food is piping hot and fresh.

8. One of the most elegant experiences at Disney is dining at Victoria & Albert's, located at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort and Spa. For over two decades, this restaurant has received the highest dining awards, including AAA Five Diamond designation and Forbes Travel Guide's Five-Star Award.
9. Request a cup for dripping ice cream. During the hot hours of the day, nothing is better than a cold ice cream cone. However, it will start melting in moments! Ask the server to put the cone upside down in a cup. If you bought a popsicle or ice cream bar, run into your nearest counter service restaurant and ask for a small plate. You can cut a slit into the plate to place the popsicle stick, and the plate will catch the drips for you.
10. Dole Whips aren't just at Magic Kingdom anymore. There are several places to get the delicious pineapple ice cream. For the refreshing treat, order some at Tamu Tamu Refreshments in the Animal Kingdom or the Pineapple Lanai at Disney's Polynesian Resort.

You may even find the treat at select BoardWalk or Disney Springs locations at times. Epcot also carries variations of the fan favorite on occasion during special events.

11. There are a few lounges on Disney property that are child-friendly, in case you want to go out and about with the kids. One great option is River Roost at Disney's Port Orleans Riverside, where Yehaa Bob Jackson puts on a hilarious musical show. The Lava

## Dining

Lounge at Rainforest Cafe is another popular spot, as is Trader Sam's Grog Grotto (though it switches to adults-only after 8 p.m.).

12. There's a Starbucks at each Disney park, and two at Disney Springs. You can use the app to pre-order and redeem Starbucks rewards at the two Disney Springs locations, but not at the parks. Fortunately, you can still earn stars on your purchases at the parks!
13. Disney Dining Plan Snack credits work at Starbucks locations on Disney property. Go hog wild and order a large drink with all the options you want. It still counts as a single credit!
14. There are some iconic Disney World food options that each visitor absolutely must try. The most famous is Dole Whip (found at Magic Kingdom and a few other locations), which is a tasty pineapple ice cream that's worth the price of a Disney vacation (though it won't cost you that much).

Other ice cream favorites are the Mickey ice cream bars (found everywhere) and the Kitchen Sink, which includes every flavor of ice cream and topping available at Beaches & Cream Soda Shop (Beach Club Resort).

Remember the Grey Stuff from *Beauty and the Beast*? You can get a Grey Stuff cupcake at Be Our Guest in Magic Kingdom. Head to Gaston's Tavern for massive cinnamon rolls big enough for two (though you won't want to share)! Turkey legs (found at all the parks) are so well-loved, you can find them on t-shirts!

Mickey waffles (served at breakfast buffets) and Tonga Toast (Polynesian Resort) are breakfast favorites for kids and adults. For something to warm you on the inside, try the cheddar cheese soup and pretzel roll at Le Cellier (Epcot). They're sure to keep you coming back for more!

15. Many counter-service restaurants have a hidden menu. To find it, bring up Mobile Ordering in the My Disney Experience app and click on Order Food. Find the restaurant and click to Order Food again. This pulls up a complete menu for the restaurant, including allergy-friendly items and those available for other special dietary needs.

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If you're already at the restaurant and don't want to use the app, just ask the Cast Member if there are any additional or secret menu items when ordering.

16. There's nothing better than cold ice cream when the temperatures begin to soar, up until it melts and drips all over you! During the hottest parts of the day, ice cream begins to melt almost instantly. Before you buy your tasty cone, ask for a cup and spoon to put it into. If they have a Styrofoam coffee cup (or if you happened to bring your own insulated mug), all the better. The cup's insulation will keep the ice cream from melting as quickly.
17. If you don't have reservations for a restaurant, look to see if it has a lounge. Most serve small plates, while some offer the full menu for the restaurant.

While many of the Disney Springs lounges are adults-only, the lounges at most Disney-operated restaurants allow children to sit in them and dine. Take a look at the other patrons before taking your kids into a lounge, though, to make sure the environment is kid-friendly.

18. While there are many Disney restaurants rated highly for their themes, not many are known for excellent food. If you want meals consistently rated as better-than-average by guests, try the following:
  - Pecos Bill Tall Tale Inn (Frontierland), Liberty Tree Tavern (Liberty Square), or Jungle Navigation Co. Ltd. Skipper Canteen (Adventureland) in Magic Kingdom;
  - Teppan Edo (Japan), Via Napoli Ristorante e Pizzeria (Italy), Rose & Crown Dining Room (United Kingdom), Garden Grill Restaurant (The Land), and Les Halles Boulangerie– Pâtisserie (France) in Epcot;
  - Yak & Yeti Restaurant (Asia), Tusker House Restaurant (Africa), and Satu'li Canteen (Pandora) in Animal Kingdom; and
  - Docking Bay 7 Food and Cargo (Galaxy's Edge), 50' s Prime Time Café (Echo Lake), and Woody's Lunchbox (Toy Story Land) in Hollywood Studios.

## Dining

19. If you're in need of some quiet time away from children, be aware that virtually all Disney restaurants are filled with them. Late-evening dining means fewer kids, but those that are there tend to be tired and fussy, meaning they make extra noise.  
Don't be shy about requesting a table away from small children. If the restaurant isn't packed, the Cast Members will try to accommodate you.
20. If you like popcorn, purchase a souvenir popcorn bucket on your first day. You can get cheap refills throughout the remainder of your vacation. (Plus, you get to take a great souvenir home with you!)
21. If you order alcohol with your Instacart/grocery delivery order, you must be at the hotel to receive and sign for it. They won't leave it with the front desk.
22. If you don't know exactly where you want to eat, make reservations an hour or so apart at different restaurants. As the day approaches and you have firmed up your plans, you can cancel whichever reservations you don't need. (Double check any cancellation policies; most require you to cancel with at least 24 hours' notice to avoid penalties!)
23. If you plan to be at any park on the actual day of Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, or Christmas, get dining reservations early. You can get them as much as 60 days in advance (plus the length of stay - up to 70 days in advance for on-property guests). Certain places, such as the Liberty Tree Tavern in the Magic Kingdom, fill up immediately.  
However, Disney always keeps a certain number of seats available for walk-ins, so if you find yourself in a park without reservations, go to Guest Relations first thing in the morning to ask if you can get into the restaurant of your choice. You may need to wait until the restaurant you want to eat at actually opens for the day and immediately get your name on the list.
24. Gratuities for good service are expected at standard table-service restaurants, and a gratuity of 18% is automatically added to your bill if your dining party has six people or more. The same 18% tip is added at Disney buffets.

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Reservations are required for all dinner shows and at Cinderella's Royal Table, and they should be made well in advance. Gratuities for good service are expected at dinner shows and Cinderella's Royal Table. Like other Disney table service restaurants, an 18% gratuity is added to your bill when your dining party has six people or more.

25. We generally recommend snacking your way through the day and only eating a full table-service meal as a late lunch on the days you're visiting a park. Try for a reservation around 3 p.m., especially if you're eating at a buffet restaurant.

It will cost you a little more than breakfast, but you will miss the heavy dining rush and the hottest part of the day, coming back rejuvenated for the evening. As with late breakfast buffets, a late lunch reservation at a buffet restaurant means you will also get dinner offerings for no additional cost if you linger long enough over your meal.

26. For holidays, special dining experiences (such as dinner shows), and premium restaurants (particularly Cinderella's Royal Table, Be Our Guest, Le Cellier, and Victoria and Albert's restaurants), be ready at 5:45 a.m. Eastern Time 60 days (+ the length of stay for on-property guests) in advance to make sure you get a table at a time that works for your party.
27. If you were unable to schedule a dining reservation prior to your visit, go online at 6 a.m. the morning of to take advantage of last-minute cancellations from the previous day. Between 2:30 and 4:30 p.m., or any time on cold and rainy days, speak to the host at the restaurant of your choice in-person. People often cancel reservations in the afternoon and during inclement weather, but only the restaurant host is authorized to fill those empty spaces.

## Dining

28. Food prices at the parks can be higher on holidays when surcharges are added and many restaurants modify their menus to celebrate the special day. (Dining Plan members have a different surcharge during holidays/peak times.)
29. Don't let food allergies bring you down. Disney World has excellent options for anybody with special food needs, at counter service and table service restaurants. Just speak to the Cast Member taking your order to find out what is available.

Disney can also cater to dietary requests at special events with enough notice. Even trick-or-treating at Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party is allergy-friendly. Ask for a special trick-or-treat bag that identifies you have food allergies. As you go through the trick-or-treat line, the Cast Member will give you a token that you can redeem later for special treats or little toys.

30. When traveling in a group of six or more people, you can often get better dining reservations and times by eating in smaller groups. Most restaurants on-property have set tables, each with a specific number of available seats in the reservation system.

There are very few tables that accommodate larger groups, and the system doesn't allow for tables to be put together. Larger parties are often more difficult to handle for servers, as well, which is reflected in mandatory gratuities for tables with six or more.

If you can't find reservations for the group on a specific date, check to see available options for a party of four or two, then go from there.

31. Celebrate your special occasion with a cake! Whether it's a birthday, anniversary, or any other event, Disney can arrange to have a cake waiting for you in your room or at a restaurant. Just call 407-827-2253 48 hours in advance to make arrangements.

If you don't have time to plan something in advance, there are some great bakeries on-property. Amorette's Patisserie in Disney Springs makes delicious, artistic creations that include Disney-inspired cakes. Also in Disney Springs, Sprinkles sells divine cupcakes. You can even buy one directly from their cupcake ATM!

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For those with special dietary needs, head to Erin McKenna's Baker in Disney Springs. They offer delicious baked goods using gluten-free and/or vegan ingredients.

32. Have the pickiest eater in your group make the dining plans to avoid massive frustrations later. You can check out the menu for each on-property restaurant at <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/dining/>. Have anyone who might make a fuss look over the selections at each restaurant before making reservations.

If you arrive at a table-service restaurant and can't find something that meets the dietary needs of someone in your party, ask the server if the chef can whip up something special. Often times, they can!

33. If you must do a character breakfast, either plan it at a hotel on a day you won't spend at a park, or schedule the latest breakfast reservation you can in the park. This will give you time to catch the attractions early in the morning when crowds are at their lowest levels, and then have your meal as the parks start to get busy. An added bonus if you linger over your meal is that you may get some of the lunch offerings that get laid out without having to pay the additional cost!
34. If you don't have a car and need some things from the grocery store, many offer same-day delivery service. Some options include [Instacart.com](https://www.instacart.com/) or [PrimeNow.Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/prime-now/) (free for Amazon Prime members) to have deliveries made directly to your hotel.

Before placing your order, contact the front desk to find out the delivery process and how the order needs to be addressed.

Here is Disney World's policy for accepting grocery deliveries at its hotels:

<https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/guest-services/mail-services/>

35. There is often extreme competition for reservations at popular restaurants and dining experiences, such as Be Our Guest, Cinderella's Royal Table, Liberty Tree Tavern (especially on Thanksgiving and Christmas), Chef Mickey's, Le Cellier, Space 220, etc. Disney hotels and Good Neighbor hotels offer their guests

## Dining

60-day advanced dining reservations plus the length of stay (up to 10 days). Compare this to staying off-property, where you can only book 60 days out. This is a big advantage.

In other words, you can book all your dining reservations for every day of your entire stay starting 60 days prior to the first day of your vacation. Off-property guests can only book a single day at a time at the 60-day mark. Those guests must log in each successive day to get reservations.

Start booking the important attractions as far out as the length of your stay will allow (the final day of your stay) and work your way backwards to maximize opportunities for the best dining times.

Leading up to 5:45 a.m. (when the daily reservations open), keep refreshing the page to make sure you see available times the second they open for the day. (Reservations for special dining events and packages open at 7 a.m.)

Once those have been booked, you can search for times available earlier in your stay (or even book the same attraction multiple days of your vacation). Most people do the opposite, starting at the 60-day mark, then working their way later into the vacation, increasing competition for the headliner attractions 60 days out. (Some of those fill up within minutes of 7 am each day.) You don't want to limit flexibility by competing.

36. Use the Dining Plan to budget food costs. If you're on a strict budget or are the type of person who doesn't like surprise bills at the end of a vacation, the Dining Plan may be a good option for you.

If you do get this ticket option, be sure to use it for all of your food purchases. It's the only way to make the cost of it worthwhile (unless you book your vacation during a free Dining Plan promotion).

37. There are multiple Dining Plan options you can purchase as an upgrade to your vacation package, which takes care of the cost of meals and snacks at more than 150 locations on Disney property. Choose the one that best fits your family's budget and needs. For light eaters, or those who don't like to spend time at a restaurant,

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choose a Quick-Service Dining Plan, which includes credits for two counter-service meals each day.

If you're interested in a more relaxed vacation and plan to eat at table-service restaurants regularly, the Deluxe Dining Plan adds one table-service meal per day. You can also combine table-service credits for a Signature Dining experience.

There are other options in-between. Review the list of included restaurants to be sure your must-do locations are on it. Go to <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/dining/> and select the Dining Plans Accepted dropdown menu. From there, select the Dining Plan type to see which restaurants allow you to use credits there.

Be realistic about your needs and how your family likes to travel. People rarely use all of the Deluxe Dining Plan credits, so be sure it's worth the expense.

38. When you book Disney's Dining Plan with your reservation, each person on the reservation must get the same type of Dining Plan, and you must book for your entire length-of-stay.

If only a portion of your group will use the Deluxe Dining Plan options, or if you will only use credits on a few days of your trip, get the more basic plan.

Alternatively, if you're booking multiple rooms for your vacation, book separate reservations for those who want the Quick-Service Dining Plan versus those who want the Deluxe Dining Plan.

39. Dining Plan credits must be redeemed by the person to whom they're assigned. They're automatically added to each person's park pass or MagicBand. To use a credit, simply tell the restaurant server or cashier that you're redeeming a credit and present your pass.

Always review your receipt after using a credit to track how many credits are remaining on your plan.

40. The standard Disney Dining Plan is the most popular option and a good compromise between the Quick-Service and Deluxe Dining Plans. With it, you get two snacks (or non-alcoholic drinks), one counter-service, one table-service meal per day, plus a refillable mug to use for unlimited soft drinks, coffee, and cocoa at any Disney hotel.

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Your meal credits include one beverage, which can be alcoholic if you're over 21 years old.

41. While you get a specific number of Dining Plan credits for each day of your stay, you don't have to use all of your credits on the day allotted.

For instance, if you're staying for seven nights and have the standard Disney Dining Plan, you will be given a total of seven Quick-Service and seven Table-Service credits on your account. You can choose to use only Quick-Service credits on park days, then redeem Table-Service credits on off-days.

42. The Disney Dining Plan Plus option is similar to the standard Dining Plan with a little added flexibility. Rather than being limited to one Quick-Service and one Table-Service credit each day, guests can choose to eat at counter-service or table-service restaurants with their two daily credits.

To get the most value out of this plan, we recommend using all your credits for table-service meals.

43. Getting the Dining Plan doesn't give you an advantage to reserving popular restaurants. Dining Plan guests must make reservations through the same system that all other guests use, so you may have difficulty obtaining reservations for popular locations, especially during peak periods.
44. If your Dining Plan includes Table-Service credits, save them up to use at Signature Restaurants or special dining experiences, like Cinderella's Royal Table. These special meals require two or three Table-Service credits. Share a couple of entrées with family members or use Snack credits in place of meals early on to save up for that special experience.
45. Gratuities are not included with the Disney Dining Plan, unless specifically noted when you make reservations (such as with Cinderella's Royal Table). Don't forget to budget in gratuities for table-service meals. Approximately 15 to 20% of the meal price is considered a standard tip.

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46. Make it a quick meal with Mobile Ordering on the My Disney Experience app. Most counter service restaurants in the parks have the Mobile Order option. While waiting in line at a ride, select the restaurant and click “Order Now” to spend the time placing your order through the app.

Don’t worry, your food won’t get cold. The restaurant doesn’t begin preparing it, until you click the “I’m Here, Prepare My Order” button on the app. When you get a short distance from the restaurant, click the button. Your food should be ready shortly after you arrive. Once the app notifies you that it’s ready, bypass the line and head straight to the Mobile Order window to pick it up.

47. If you arrive at a counter service restaurant only to find a long line to order food, check the My Disney Experience app to see if the restaurant offers Mobile Ordering.

You can “jump to the front of the line” by placing your order through the app, then click on the “I’m Here, Prepare My Order” button immediately, find a table, and relax while your order is prepared. Once the app notifies you that your meal is ready, head straight to the Mobile Order window to pick it up.

48. Children 11 and under with a Dining Plan are required to order off the kid’s menu when using meal credits. The only exception to this is if the restaurant doesn’t have a children’s menu, at which time they can order from the adult entrée menu.

49. Enjoy Epcot festival foods with Disney Dining Plan credits. Epcot hosts multiple festivals each year that include food booths with small plate items from around the world. You can use Snack credits from the Disney Dining Plan for these tastings. (For the best value, order items that are \$7 or more.)

If you’d like to use your Quick Service credits, instead, you can order multiple small plates from a single kiosk for one credit. Have each member of your party order from separate kiosks, so you can mix and match!

50. If you are going to eat a Character breakfast inside a park, try to get reservations as early as possible in the day. If you can get a reservation before the park opening time, you will be able to enjoy

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being one of the first into the park as well (admission still required) through a special line at turnstiles.

Alternatively, enjoying a Character lunch or dinner allows you to visit the park early in the morning to enjoy the shorter queues, and you will have a relaxing meal during the hottest and busiest times of the day.

51. Avoid peak dining times at Disney Character Meals to get more interaction with the characters. The last hour offered at breakfast or lunch is often much slower, freeing up the characters to provide your family with a little extra attention.
52. If you're on a gluten-free diet, check with the counter service restaurant for available options. Most restaurants have a gluten-free entrée, even if it's not on the menu.
53. Most Disney restaurants have a vegan option on the menu. Just ask if you don't see one. If you go to a counter service restaurant that serves hamburgers, simply request a veggie patty on your burger. Most restaurants can accommodate.
54. Whatever your special dietary need, Disney will try to help out. For common needs, such as vegetarian or gluten-free options, most Disney restaurants have meal options readily available.  
  
If your dietary needs are a little less common, though, such as kosher, halal, or multiple allergies, contact Disney at least 14 days prior to your trip via email ([Special.Diets@DisneyWorld.com](mailto:Special.Diets@DisneyWorld.com)) to discuss what options are available and arrange for special meals.
55. Check the menu for items with the Disney Mickey Check next to them. These are healthier options that meet Disney's nutritional guidelines. For an allergy-friendly snack option, ask for Snacks with Character.
56. Buffet restaurants at Disney that serve both lunch and dinner typically allow their last lunch reservations just after 3 p.m. If you get one of these late lunch reservations and linger a bit over your meal, you will see the more expensive dinner items put out within the hour. You will be able to eat off the full dinner menu for the price of lunch!

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57. Lunch is a better option than dinner for dining in parks. Eating a big lunch during the hot daytime hours is much more cost-effective than waiting until dinner time. Not only will a late lunch get you out of the heat, you will be free later in the day when everyone else is heading to a sit-down meal.
58. Kid's meals also offer a great option for adults. Kid's meals at Disney World counter-service restaurants include a small entrée, two sides, and a beverage, all for less than a regular adult entrée. They are technically for children ages three to nine, but Cast Members don't ask if you're ordering for yourself or a child at a counter-service restaurant.

Also, people who have had stomach surgery often order from the kid's menu at table-service restaurants. Just let your server know you have a medical need for reduced portions.
59. Appetizers make great reduced-size options for dining. Order a few to share among the table, and everybody can enjoy a variety without paying full price. Certain restaurants, such as Rainforest Café and T-Rex (at Disney Springs), have excellent appetizer platters that easily provide enough food for two people and a child - while leaving a little room for dessert - at a much lower cost than two entrees. Staff members are used to people sharing appetizers and will gladly bring an extra serving dish and utensils.
60. Some of the best on-property dining values include Earl of Sandwich in Disney Springs (sandwiches from \$6.99), Les Halles Boulangerie Patisserie in Epcot's France Pavilion (quiche and dessert for about \$10), and Sommerfest in Epcot's Germany Pavilion (sausage plates for about \$10).
61. Head to Disney Springs for an early evening meal and drinks. Many of the restaurants there offer Happy Hour specials (usually from around 5 p.m. To 7 p.m.). Just check with the lounges at popular restaurants, such as Planet Hollywood and STK Lounge, to see if they have light bites offered. By going during these hours, you save money, miss the biggest dinner rush, and will be ready to head back for some late evening fun in the parks.

## Dining

62. For people with smaller appetites, kids meals offer great savings at Disney counter service locations. Kids meals include a small entree, a side, and a small drink, all for much less than an adult entree!
63. Order à la carte if you don't want an entire meal. Many counter service restaurants list only full meals on their menus, which include an entrée and a side (such as a burger with fries). If you only want the burger, request burger only. Similarly, if you only want a side order, you can also order that, even if it's not listed on the menu. (You will only be charged for the item you order, not the entire meal.) You can also request a plain hamburger without all the special toppings, such as cheese and bacon, for a reduced price.
64. Check Open Table ([www.opentable.com](http://www.opentable.com)) for Disney dining reservations. Some Disney World restaurants can be found there, and Open Table doesn't charge a cancellation fee if you have to cancel at the last minute.
65. If you need to cancel a dining reservation at the last minute, avoid the cancellation penalty by changing the reservation date to a later date. Once the reservation is moved out, you can cancel without a fee.
66. If you need to change a dining reservation on the day of, go to any Guest Relations on Disney property. They can help you modify it without a cancellation fee. Keep in mind, if you were scheduled for a popular restaurant, you may not be able to get another reservation for it!
67. If anyone in your party loves a food challenge, Disney World has some giant-portion options for you. Here are a few favorites to try:
  - Shula's Steakhouse's 48-ounce porterhouse steak;
  - Beaches & Cream's Kitchen Sink dessert, a massive sundae designed for four to share, which includes 8 scoops of ice cream and every single topping in the soda shop;
  - The BOATHOUSE's S'mores Baked Alaska dessert, which may be impossible for a single person to finish;
  - Rainforest Café's Awesome Appetizer Adventure, a tower of appetizers that can be upgraded with ribs;

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- T-Rex's Supersaurus Sampler, which is similar to the one at Rainforest Café; and
- Whispering Canyon's The Carnivore skillet meal, an all-you-care-to-eat meal for the most ravenous meat-eaters!

With the exception of The Carnivore, any of the above options can be shared by multiple people. It's a great way to relax and share stories of the day's events, while saving on the typical per-meal price.

68. Let's face it, it's difficult to get the most out of Dining Plan credits. Either you don't want to spend the time stopping for a meal, or you eat so much during the day, the thought of another big meal is just too much! Rather than use your Quick-Service credit for an entire meal, use it for three smaller snacks.

You will have to get all three snacks at the same time, so choose something you can eat right away and a couple of items (like chips) that you can eat later. Alternatively, you can split the three snacks with your family to make it a light meal, then have someone else do the same when everyone starts to get hungry again later!

69. When greeting your wait staff, don't forget to tell them if you are celebrating a special occasion, such as a birthday. Most sit down restaurants provide a free birthday dessert, while some of the Disney Signature restaurants provide free desserts for special occasions like anniversaries or honeymoons. Wear your free birthday or anniversary button (available at all Guest Relations offices), and you may find some counter-service restaurants also offer up a free dessert!

70. Certain table-service restaurants have a counter-service equivalent, with some of the same dishes for less money! For instance, you can get the same fish & chips from Yorkshire County Fish Shop that is served at Rose & Crown Pub in Epcot. Get your Tonga Toast from Captain Cook's, rather than Kona Café at the Polynesian Village Resort, and enjoy the same Zebra Domes at The Mara that are served at Animal Kingdom Lodge's Boma.

The wildly popular Morimoto Asia has a streetside sushi restaurant named Morimoto Asia Street Food.

## Dining

Take a moment to check the menu of similarly-themed counter-service restaurants before sitting down for a meal at a more expensive restaurant. You may be able to save both time and money!

71. For a one-time \$25 membership fee, sign up for the Landry's Select Club (<https://www.landrysselect.com/>). You get your money back in the form of a \$25 credit, which is immediately loaded to your rewards account to use at any Landry's restaurant.

Membership gets you priority seating over others waiting in line, plus you get a free birthday reward, shopping discounts, and earn points and rewards when you eat at any Landry's restaurant, including Yak & Yeti in Disney's Animal Kingdom, Rainforest Café and T-Rex!

72. Order food that is easy to store and take with you. If you can't finish everything on your plate, eat only the food that's not portable. Put the rest in a Ziploc bag and take it to go. For instance, if you order a burger with fries, eat the burger and take the fries. You can snack as you wait for rides without wasting the food.
73. If you've got several must-do restaurants, maximize the time spent by using your web browser to make reservations, rather than the app. With the web browser, you can open up each restaurant selection on a different tab and click to "Make Reservations."

Make your selection for your top priority in the first tab and submit. While waiting for available times to come up in that tab, use another tab to search for another selection, and so on.

74. Save your snacks from little robbers. Whether you're eating some fries, a turkey leg, or some salty popcorn, birds and squirrels are around to eat anything left unattended. Some critters are even bold enough to snatch the goodies right out of your hands!

Keep a close eye on anything you're eating and your surroundings. If birds or squirrels seem to be inching closer, shoo them away gently.

If you want to save some snacks for later and leave them in a stroller or bag, seal the goodies in Ziploc bags, preferably two bags to keep the scent from reaching sensitive squirrel noses!

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75. If you're okay with a late meal, get the most of your day by waiting to eat in a theme park restaurant until near closing time. Most table-service restaurants continue to serve after closing time, so you can enjoy a leisurely meal without worrying about rushing back to the rides.

Keep in mind that many restaurants stop accepting new diners 30 minutes or more prior to closing time, so it's important to find out the latest time available at the location you want and make a reservation for that time.

76. One of the most popular dining choices for kids (and adults!) is the Rainforest Café. It's not just a restaurant, but a whole dining experience, complete with Audio-Animatronic animals and the occasional indoor rain storm!

If you can't get a reservation, the wait to get in at Disney Springs can be astronomical. Head to the other location on Disney property, at Disney's Animal Kingdom! The wait is nearly always less, and since the restaurant is outside of the park's entrance, you don't need a park ticket to dine there.

77. Make your own Mickey-shaped waffles at home! [Shopdisney.com](https://shopdisney.com) offers a waffle maker with the iconic breakfast option. To get that Disney parks flavor, look for Carbon's Golden Malted Pancake & Waffle Flour (sold online). It's the same brand used at the parks!

I am in no sense of the word a great artist, not even a great animator; I have always had men working for me whose skills were greater than my own. I am an idea man.

- Walt Disney

# Traveling with Small Children



1. A long bus ride between parks can be an excellent way to sneak an air-conditioned nap for little ones. There's no requirement that you disembark at any stop, so you can stay on the bus until the tots are refreshed!
2. Rely on Disney's strollers at your own peril. They are made with hard plastic shells that are not comfortable for children. If you must use these, bring along an extra blanket or two for your child to sit or lay on.

Instead, bring a stroller from home or purchase an inexpensive (umbrella) stroller from a discount retailer after you arrive. If you don't want to take it home, you can easily leave it behind at a park or any resort. If you want a nicer model, very comfortable ones are available for rent from private companies.

3. Most Disney lounges allow children inside. This is not necessarily a good environment for the little ones, as people can and do drink heavily. Consider hiring a babysitter for the evening, or leave your children at Camp Dolphin (a day care center at Walt Disney World's Dolphin Hotel) if you plan to experience Disney's nightlife.
4. Be forewarned, all Disney strollers are identical. They issue a nametag to put on the back of the stroller, but it's very common for families to walk away with the wrong stroller. Even if you bring your own stroller, this mistake can happen.

Make sure you put something bright and obvious on your stroller (rented or otherwise) to make sure someone doesn't accidentally take it. Otherwise, you'll find yourself trudging all the way to the front of the park to pick up a new stroller.

To avoid having a stroller stolen from you, lock the wheels with a bike lock. (You can't attach the lock to a gate or post, but you are allowed to lock the wheels.) Fortunately, if your personal stroller is taken, Disney will find a way to replace it -- though don't expect anything fancy. Head directly to Guest Relations if this happens to you!

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Don't presume your stroller is missing if you don't see it right away, though. Disney Cast Members often rearrange strollers while guests are on rides. Always check with a nearby Cast Member to help you look for your stroller first if it isn't where you left it.

5. There is an advantage to waiting in line if you have a child who is too timid to go on a ride. While you never want to force a child to go on a ride that he finds too scary, sign up for rider switch at the queue entrance and let the attendant know you want to accompany your party through the queue. This gets your child close to the action and provides a chance to see other children his/her own age braving the ride.

You can strike up conversation with those other children to show your own child there is nothing to worry about. Often times, your child might decide that it is not so scary and hopefully will decide to try the ride, after all!

6. When traveling with young children, work your way up to the Magic Kingdom. The other parks can be a huge letdown if your child experiences the magic of Disney World's flagship park first.

We recommend Animal Kingdom on Day 1, Hollywood Studios on Day 2, Epcot on Day 3, and Magic Kingdom on Day 4.

The third day is when most families start experiencing exhaustion. While Epcot is not as exciting as Animal Kingdom or Hollywood Studios, it offers a slower, more relaxed option for the third day and still has enough activities to keep children entertained.

7. If your child is barely tall enough for some rides, hit those attractions early in the day. As the hours wear on, children tend to stoop, and the spine compresses a bit. This can cause them to miss out on the height requirement if you wait too long in the day!

Put those big kid rides high up on the priority list, and save the kiddie rides for later to avoid potential meltdowns.

8. While Baby Care Centers and Disney buses and monorails make some of the best nap spots for kids, you can find out-of-the-way spots inside the parks that allow you to people watch during nap time.

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Tomorrowland Transit Authority PeopleMover and the Magic Kingdom Train in the Magic Kingdom are excellent options, as you can continue to ride as long as you need without exiting.

Many of the Epcot World Showcase pavilions have relatively quiet garden areas, including United Kingdom, France, and China.

Duck into the tribute film shown in the back of the Walt Disney: One Man's Dream attraction in Hollywood Studios. While there is background noise, it is generally quiet and soothing.

At the Animal Kingdom, head to the animal viewing locations for some peace and quiet. These include the Discovery Island Trails, Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail, and Maharajah Jungle Trek.

9. Often times preschoolers find one or two favorite rides and want to keep experiencing them. If it happens, just enjoy the experience with them. Attention spans tend to be short, so after you take a break, you can redirect your child to a different ride.
10. The family rules for behavior at home may be different than the rules on vacation. For instance, kids won't have regular chores during a trip, and you will be introducing crowd/queue etiquette to them. They will also see other kids whose parents don't enforce good behavior, making your children more likely to try to follow suit.

Sit down with your kids and discuss travel rules and consequences before your trip. A promised reward for good behavior that will be delivered at the end of the trip is a great incentive to keep attitudes in check.

Give your kids a single warning at the first hint of bad behavior. Remember, the new environment is going to be a bit confusing, so a single reinforcement may be a necessary reminder of your earlier conversation.

After the first warning, it's important to follow through with disciplinary action. This is especially important early in the vacation to reinforce good behavior and avoid escalating bad behavior (that may carry on after the trip is over).

If you promised an end-of-trip reward that wasn't earned, you may still decide to give something smaller if your child made an honest effort to follow the rules. The constant distractions and inevitable

exhaustion can make even the best-behaved kid act out at times! Of course, if there's a complete disregard of authority, don't reward that behavior!

11. When a melt-down starts (and it inevitably will if you're traveling with a young child), stay calm. Getting upset will lead to an escalation of your child's tantrum. While you might not appreciate a tantrum, your child is trying to communicate a problem with you. Ignoring it or trying to simply "shut it down" can lead to a far worse melt-down.

Pull your child to the side, away from the crowd, noise, and stimulation. Tell your kid to take some calming breaths, then calmly ask him or her to explain the problem, "using your words."

While your little one may not even know the problem, use non-verbal cues to help him/her verbalize it. If you see your little girl rubbing her eyes, she probably needs a nap. If your son is whining about a refused treat, he's probably hungry and needs a snack immediately.

Adults can get caught up in the excitement and forget how taxing the additional activity and stimulation is for children. Be patient and try not to get angry with your little one. Yelling will only escalate the problem. Vacationing is a learning experience, and you may need to modify your plans to meet your child's needs.

However, if the tantrums become common-place, this likely means your child has learned that acting out is the best way to get what he/she wants. Don't reinforce the behavior. If your child is hungry, offer a healthy snack. The junk snacks and souvenirs at the parks should be reserved as rewards for good behavior. Using them as a means to pacify the child can actually increase bad behavior.

Don't be afraid to split up the family and take a child who is acting out back to the hotel room for a time-out. (Make sure you trade off on the parent responsible for doing this to keep things fair and avoid resentments.) It's important that children understand there are consequences for bad behavior, and the rest of your children shouldn't have to suffer because one kid is acting out.

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12. Involve your children in choosing and packing their own personal boxes of snacks and juices. Freezing the juice boxes will keep everything else cool in the sweltering heat, and giving your child ownership of choosing and packing treats will make it easier to steer your child toward the snack box and away from the expensive snack stands at Disney.
13. Let your children wear swimsuits under their clothes at the parks. Both the Magic Kingdom and Animal Kingdom have water rides designed to get you wet. Epcot has a nice water feature on the main path between Future World and World Showcase where children enjoy playing in the cool water on a warm day. The swimsuit is designed to dry much quicker than regular clothes. On cooler days, pack an extra pair of underwear, so your child can put on a completely dry outfit after playing in the water.
14. Make sure there is at least one person aged 14 or older per younger child (7 and under) in the group. Disney requires this to go on certain rides, such as Barnstormer!
15. Bring an umbrella stroller for younger children if they still fit in one, even if they're past using them at home. Those tiny legs have to work twice as hard to keep up to adult legs, and you may find yourself carrying a heavy child around if you don't have the stroller. Strollers have a lot of great benefits. They make great make-shift beds for nap time, plus they provide a great place to hang all your bags, rather than carry them around all day.

If you want some great karma, look for a struggling family without a stroller when your trip is ending and offer to give the umbrella stroller to them. You can feel good knowing you've done something to help another family, and hopefully they'll pay it forward.
16. Organize daily outfits for small children when packing. You can place pre-determined outfits into Ziploc bags to help little ones quickly and easily choose and outfit and get dressed each day. Bring one of these pre-packed outfits to the parks each day in case the kids get messy or wet on a ride and need a quick change.
17. Kids love balloons, but animals don't! If you buy a balloon at one of the parks, don't try to take it to the Animal Kingdom. They are dangerous for animals and never sold there or allowed in the park.

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If you try bringing one, you will be forced to deflate and dispose of it before entering the park (unless you can take it back to a car). What a sad experience! Make sure you leave it back in the hotel, safe and sound.

18. Umbrella strollers are wonderful for the parks. They're lightweight, cheap to buy, they hold a ton of your stuff, and provide a place for the little one to rest. The only problem is they get off-balance easily, often toppling over with all of your souvenirs, drinks, and backpacks.

Add some ankle weights just above the front wheels to create a counter balance. They work great to keep everything upright!

19. If you decide to rent a Disney stroller, rather than your own, bring some binder clips and a couple of towels from your hotel. The hard plastic of the stroller is hard and heats up quickly in the sun.

Place the towel to provide some much-needed padding and insulation to make the ride more comfortable. Use the clips to drape the additional towel over the hood of the stroller (but don't completely cover your child!) to create some shade when the sun is beating down too hard.

20. Bring spare binkies for your baby. It's easy for your baby to drop a favorite pacifier in the hustle and bustle of the crowds. Don't risk a crying child.

Hang a pencil holder from the handle of your stroller and place a few extras in it. That will make it quick and easy to replace the lost or dirty binky before the crying begins!

21. Getting separated from your child is no fun, but there are clever ways to leave your phone number with your kid in case it happens:

- Write your number in an inconspicuous place using a permanent marker or temporary tattoo pen (available on Amazon), then seal it against sweat with liquid bandage; Sew your contact info on the inside of your child's shirt collar;
- Attach a luggage tag with your contact info to your child's belt loop;

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- Place your contact info on a pouch and hang it from your child's neck with a lanyard; or
- Pick up a free "I'm Celebrating" button from Guest Relations, write your number on the back, and hang it on your child's shirt.

Let your kid know to speak to a Cast Member if you get separated and where you placed the phone number. The Cast Member will gladly contact you and wait with your child until you're reunited!

22. Go through training drills with your young children, so everyone knows what to do if you get separated.

Have your kid wait in place for a couple of minutes the moment they realize you're not with them. If you don't return to the spot quickly, teach your kids to speak to a Cast Member and ask them to call you.

Show your children how to identify a Cast Member. Tell them to go to the nearest store or attraction and have them look for anyone wearing a Disney nametag. Show them pictures of what to look for. (Just do a quick Google search for Disney Cast Member name badges!)

Explain exactly where you'll place your phone number (written on their arm, etc.).

Have your child practice by pretending another family member is a Cast Member, until you're sure he/she understands what to do!

23. If you've budgeted for a single souvenir for your child, the many options available can make choosing just one really difficult! Let your kid know that you're waiting until the end of the trip to make the purchase.

Take photos of each item that your child really likes, along with the store you found it in. When the trip is almost over, go through the photo options with your kid to pick the absolute best one!

24. Kids often lose MagicBands. They get sweaty and uncomfortable in the heat, even for adults. It's common for children to rub and pull at them, causing them to fall off. Don't remove the sizing

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strip, until you've tested whether or not your kid will be tolerant to wearing the bracelet.

Have your child wear the MagicBand the first evening of your trip, when you're at your hotel. Have them take a dip in the pool with the bracelet on to see if moisture will create discomfort. Keep an eye out to see if it's going to be a problem once you get to the parks and everyone starts sweating.

One option is to purchase a Magic Keeper. You can pop the center button that contains the chip out of the MagicBand and place it into a Magic Keeper that can be clipped to a backpack or hung from a lanyard. Of course, you can also choose to wear your child's MagicBand, along with your own.

25. While your bright luggage tags and balloons work well to identify your stroller or ECV during the day, they can be hard to spot at night. Hang inexpensive glow bracelets from the handle. Better yet, look for stick-on, blinking lights that will brighten up the night and make your stroller or ECV impossible to miss!
26. Attach a bicycle headlight to the front of your stroller to light the way at night. Some areas in the parks get very dark, making it easy to bump into things and people. A \$20 light is a great addition, which will also make it easy for the whole family to spot you and stay together.
27. Take your toddler or baby for the most magical first haircut experience in the world. Harmony Barber Shop on Main Street in the Magic Kingdom has a "My First Haircut" package designed just for the occasion.

They also offer reasonably-priced haircuts for adults and children. The best part is you get a sprinkling of pixy dust in your hair to finish off your new look!

If your child doesn't need a haircut, stop in anyway and request a sprinkling of pixie dust. They will happily oblige.

While they accept walk-ins on slower days, you should definitely get an appointment at <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/shops/magic-kingdom/harmony-barber-shop/>.

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If you're really lucky, the Main Street Barbershop Quartet may stop in to serenade you!

28. It's Tough to be a Bug! has a couple of intense moments that can be especially frightening for younger children. If your young one is a bit timid, keep an eye on the ceiling and shield his/her eyes as soon as creepy crawlies begin their descent.

To keep from experiencing a "sting" to back, have your child sit forward, away from the seat back. Finally, put a thick coat or blanket on the seat beneath your kid to avoid a special, surprise ending to the show.

29. While there are several restaurants at Disney that appeal to children, there are many special events that are designed specifically for the little ones. Options include two different tea parties at Grand Floridian and pirate cruises originating from the Contemporary Resort, which offer desserts and refreshments.
30. Even though Expedition Everest and Tower of Terror seem scary, most kids really love them. They also get a thrill plunging down Tiana's Bayou Adventure and Kali River Rapids, but they may need a little nudge to convince them to try these rides. Point out smiling and laughing children leaving the rides to show your kid there's nothing to worry about.
31. Of the two Disney water parks, most kids like Blizzard Beach the best. It has conveyor belts for the inner tubes, so kids don't have to carry them up the stairs to get on the water slides.
32. When using Rider Switch (Child Swap), consider how to entertain the child(ren) who is not able to go on the attraction. Bring some form of entertainment, such as a movie player or book; try to go on a little kid ride, if you have time; or if the child is stroller-aged, go during the child's natural nap time.
33. If a child is too small for a ride, try not to mention that the ride even exists! Even if your bigger kids are going on the ride, it's best to break up as a group and take the smaller ones elsewhere to avoid a jealous meltdown.
34. It's Tough to be a Bug!, Mickey's PhilharMagic, and Muppet Vision 3D are fan favorites, but the 4D effects can be startling the

first time you experience them. If you're concerned about a child's reaction to a sudden burst of air or spray of mist, use your finger to cover the small holes in the seat back just in front of him/her.

35. Every child reacts to rides differently. Some are fearless, racing to be first in line for every roller coaster. Others are certain that each ride poses untold risks, forcing parents to cajole and force them into each experience.

How you introduce your youngster to attractions can help determine those reactions. Start slow, with slow-moving, outdoor attractions that can easily be viewed from the queue. Excellent starter attractions are Tomorrowland Speedway in Magic Kingdom, Kilimanjaro Safaris in Animal Kingdom, and Alien Swirling Saucers in Hollywood Studios.

Next, try a well-lit and mild indoor attraction, such as Toy Story Mania! in Hollywood Studios, Frozen Ever After in Epcot, or Enchanted Tales with Belle in Magic Kingdom.

Once your child seems excited for more adventure, move onto dark rides and thrill rides, such as mild roller coasters (Barnstormer in Magic Kingdom and Slinky Dog Dash in Hollywood Studios).

36. There are two attractions in Disney World which allow your child to become part of the fun.

Enchanted Tales with Belle in the Magic Kingdom allows children to play a role in Belle's retelling of her love story with Beast. The best part of this experience is that kids get to volunteer for the type of role they want, whether it's a speaking role that will make them the center of attention or a non-speaking role as a prop that will simply allow them to quietly be part of the fun. Even shy kids love this attraction.

The other great attraction is Turtle Talk with Crush in Epcot. Children are invited to sit close to the surfing turtle, and he allows questions from the crowd! Help your child prepare a question or two about turtles, surfing, or the Great Barrier Reef if he/she wants to be part of the action.

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Monsters, Inc. Laugh Floor also offers opportunities for interaction. However, guests are randomly chosen from the audience, so there's no guarantee that you or your little one will make it on the screen.

37. Not all Disney restaurants are kid-friendly. While most restaurants have children's menus, certain signature restaurants do not. Some even have age limitations where only children over 10 are permitted. Check the restaurant's information at <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/dining/> before booking if you plan to bring your children.
38. There's a secret playground in Disney Springs that's great fun for the little ones! T-Rex restaurant has the Paleo Zone playground, located just off their gift shop. In it, kids can use the provided kid-friendly tools to dig for "fossils" with tools in the sandy play area. This is an especially great option if you're waiting to be seated in the dining room, as wait times without a reservation can be very long.
39. Dining with a young child can be difficult to manage. Counter-service restaurants have high chairs to make things easier. There's usually a stack of them against a wall, and you can grab one to bring to your table.  
You can keep your baby in the stroller if that works better for you, but only at counter-service restaurants.  
At table-service restaurants, request an infant seat to transfer your infant into or a high chair for your older baby or toddler.  
If it's just you and your child, ask any Cast Member to assist with the high chair or food tray. They will gladly help you out!
40. Prepare a dining kit for babies or toddlers in advance. Add a clean bib, toddler fork and spoon, a collapsible bowl, tray liners, hand wipes, and some crackers to a large Ziploc bag each morning. You can prepare your child for dining while waiting on the server, and your little one will have something to snack on to avoid a hungry tantrum.  
When your server arrives, ask to have your child's meal brought out first to give you a chance to feed him/her before your food arrives.

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41. Try not to eat late meals with younger children. They will be fussy and often times fall asleep in the restaurant if you try to eat past 7:30 or 8 p.m. Go for an early dinner (4:30 or 5pm) if you have little ones, then provide a snack around 7:30 to refuel. This will keep the kids' energy levels up and mood swings to a minimum!
42. Kid friendly snacks that travel well to the parks: freeze Uncrustables sandwiches and Gogurts the night before. Bring small cans of Pringles chips; snack-sized bags of nuts; dehydrated fruits; and grapes for healthy snacking on the go.
43. If you have smaller children, you can schedule a Genie+ Lightning Lane reservation on an age-appropriate attraction for the younger kids at the same time you schedule a reservation on a different ride for the remainder of the group.

Depending on the attraction, at least one person 14 years or older must go with the younger kids. (Some attractions require one adult or older kid per young child.) Change up which older kid or adult splits off with the younger kids, so the same person doesn't always end up stuck on the kiddie rides, while everyone else experiences the thrills.

44. Epcot is great for children! On the surface, Epcot doesn't appear to have much for smaller kids. A closer look will show you that most of the rides have no height limitations, and the park is so full of interactive features, your child may never want to leave!

The catch is that you need to search for the items that keep younger children entertained. Otherwise, the park experience tends to be very boring for them.

Each country pavilion in World Showcase has a Kidcot spot, where kids can color and play. There is an exciting DuckTales game in the Play Disney Parks app that kids can only play in World Showcase.

The massive aquarium in The Seas pavilion can keep both adults and children entertained for hours. Plus, Epcot has some of the best character meet-and-greets at Disney World, from princesses in each land to unique characters, like Baymax!

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45. Younger kids want to visit the Magic Kingdom over any other park. It has the most rides and was made specifically for kids to enjoy with their entire family!
46. Bringing a preschooler to the park means planning for little legs! Fantasyland should be your early priority at the Magic Kingdom. If you can, get Lightning Lane reservations for the popular attractions your little one is tall enough to experience, particularly those that tend to have very slow lines. They include Enchanted Tales with Belle, Peter Pan's Flight, and Tomorrowland Speedway. Plan for a show after your first two hours in the park to give your child a chance to rest.  
Have a mid-afternoon lunch, followed by nap time to make sure everyone is reinvigorated and ready to go for the evening.
47. Take your little one to the Castle Couture shop in Fantasyland and ask the Cast Member there to sprinkle your child with pixie dust. Watch the magic, as they perform a little ceremony and give your kid a sprinkling of the magic in her hair.  
There's a cute photography studio in the back of the shop where you can get a photo of your pixified child. If there's a rope blocking access to it, just check with a Cast Member. Often times, they will open it up for you!
48. Volunteers Wanted! Enchanted Tales with Belle is a great, interactive experience for younger children. After being introduced to Madame Wardrobe and her assistant, kids (and a couple of parents!) are asked to join in the fun and help Belle act out her story.
49. Younger children are often frightened by the noise and intensity of fireworks. Consider an alternative viewing location, such as the beach at Polynesian Resort for Magic Kingdom fireworks or The BoardWalk for Epcot fireworks, as you can enjoy the fireworks there without the loud bangs.
50. When traveling with a stroller, assign one person to stroller setup and folding. Let's face it, some of the modern strollers are complicated. Having a designated person in charge of all things strollers will vastly increase efficiencies when it comes to folding

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them to get onto trams, trains, etc., as well as unfolding them for your child to use. Your family will be able to move much quicker, making them and others waiting for you to board the trams very grateful!

51. Designate a single person to be in charge of parking the stroller at each attraction and going in search of it again after the ride. The rest of the family can enter the queue and save a place in line, while the designated person finds a good place to park it.

Always check with a Cast Member to find out where the stroller will be when you exit. Strollers are often moved to a designated parking area that's closer to the attraction's exit location.

As you leave the attraction, send the same person to go find the stroller. It's much quicker for a single person to get through the crowd, as everyone with small children heads to stroller parking at once.

52. Not all areas in Disney are stroller-friendly. You must park them prior to entering most attraction queues, and they are not allowed in most indoor pavilions at Epcot.

Strollers also make navigating certain areas very difficult. For instance, trying to work your way through the crowd with a stroller during an evening fireworks show is nearly impossible. Some lands, such as Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge and Pandora have narrow, windy, and uneven pathways, making it very difficult to push your child through them.

If your child is too young to walk through these areas, invest in a strap-on baby carrier to make life easier for you. Switch off the person responsible for carrying your young one a few times each day to avoid back aches and exhaustion.

53. You can write your phone number on your small child's arm in case you get separated. Cover it with liquid bandage to make sure sweat doesn't melt the number away throughout the day.

Be careful not to write the number where it's too obvious, though. You don't want creepy strangers able to contact your child later, and fashion-sensitive children won't want their outfits ruined by hastily scrawled writing on their arms!

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- 54. Use towels to create a makeshift crib. Roll them up and place them on the bed around the sleeping infant or toddler to prevent him/her from rolling off the bed.
- 55. There is nothing worse than reaching for your child only to discover the little one has wandered off in a crowd! Keep track of your younger kids with a GPS tracking chip. Place the tracker inside a shoe or on a lanyard hung around your child's neck (under the shirt).

You can purchase a highly rated tracker, such as the Amcrest GPS GL300 GPS Tracker, from Amazon for about \$40. The peace of mind of facilitating a quick reunion is priceless!

- 56. Don't skip nap time! Even if your child is a past the age when they normally take an afternoon nap, an exhausting day at the park creates the need for a break. Try to head back to your hotel by 2 or 3 p.m. to avoid the dreaded Disney meltdown. This event usually happens between 3 and 4 p.m. each day, as exhausted children begin to cry and act out from all the activity and overstimulation. If your hotel is too far away to take a break, consider hopping on any available Disney transportation, such as a bus to a resort, and stay on it while the little one gets some rest.
- 57. If your child has a disability that requires the use of a stroller, make your first stop Guest Relations to request a "Stroller Used as Wheelchair" tag.

This is a red tag you attach to the stroller that allows you to keep your child in a stroller in areas that don't allow them, such as most attraction queues and many of the Epcot pavilions.

The tags are obvious, so the Cast Member will simply waive you through without the need to explain yourself at each attraction.

- 58. Include your children, especially younger kids, in your pre-Disney training walks. They may seem to have unlimited energy, but kids are accustomed to regular seated breaks. The vast walking paths at Disney will prove trying if you don't build their endurance, along with yours.

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59. It's important to protect babies and toddlers from direct sunlight. However, stroller coverings can create a danger if they reduce airflow. Babies may develop SIDS from the insulating heat and lack of airflow, even with a light blanket.
- Clear plastic covers over the stroller are the worst option, as they create a greenhouse effect and increase the heat factor.
- Use a canopy or umbrella, along with a sunblocking mesh cover on your child's stroller. Add a fan and keep it directed towards your child's feet on its lightest setting. (Pointing the fan at your child's face can lead to discomfort.)
60. When you enter your first theme park with your young child, take a few minutes to familiarize your kid with Cast Members in case you get separated. Street sweepers are everywhere, dressed in white pants and shirt with a Disney name tag and Mickey Mouse logo on their shirts. These Cast Members carry walkie talkies, making them very efficient at helping children reunite with their parents.
- Show your child how to look for other Cast Members, as well, including queue attendants at each attraction and sales staff in the stores.
- Have your child repeat back instructions on what he/she should do if you (their parents) get lost!
61. If you have need of stroller, ask the Bell Services desk at your Disney hotel to find out if any strollers were left behind by previous guests. If they know of an abandoned stroller, you may get one to use for free.
62. "Stroller Express" services may be available during peak times. This allows you to pre-pay for a stroller rental and bypass lines.
63. You may want to leave the park for a short break during the day. To save yourself the hassle of returning and re-renting a stroller (at no cost with your receipt), park your stroller in a location convenient to the park entrance. You can easily pick it up when you return!
64. Those fingerprint scanners at park entry can be challenging for small children. Not only must they remember which finger they scanned the first time (Was it the thumb or index finger? Which

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hand was it on?!), but they also need to keep the finger completely still for the scan.

To speed up the process (and keep Disney from having your child's fingerprint on file), you can choose to use the fingerprint of an adult in your party instead. Just remember, whichever adult you choose must enter the park with that child each day.

65. Finding your stroller amid hundreds that look just like it can be a chore. Make your stroller stand out and easy to spot with a bright tag. While you may see strollers with balloons and ribbons strung all over them, luggage tags tend to work best. Find a large, colorful one to place high on the handle. You can add your name and phone number to keep others from mistakenly taking it.

# Safety, Health & Wellbeing



Oswald the Lucky Rabbit was created by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks in 1927 for Universal Pictures.

1. If you are in a pool when a thunderstorm starts, get out immediately. If you see lightning, find shelter. People get hit by lightning more often than you would think in Florida.
2. One of the most common theft complaints in the parks is of blankets. Temperatures can drop quickly at night in Florida. Unscrupulous and unprepared parents seem to have no compunction about stealing another child's blanket if their own child is cold. Keep your blankets and sweaters inside a bag or backpack when not using them, so they're not easy targets for thieves.
3. Parental Warning! Don't send your children (even mature, older children) to the water parks without adult supervision. That's not just because even the best behaved children have a tendency to get a little wild in that environment.  
  
The sad reality is water parks (and swimming pools) everywhere can be breeding grounds for sexual predators. Even though Disney has the strictest guidelines and a system in place to reduce the ability of these individuals to get into the parks, incidents occur. They most always happen to tweens and teens who are out of their parent's view.  
  
Another risk is the wave pools where predators can easily get within reach of young swimmers. Beware of environments where it is easy to "accidentally" brush up against somebody.
4. Remember to drink lots of water and don't forget to apply sunscreen often each day, every day. It's especially easy to forget when you're playing in the water, and you're more likely to get a nasty sunburn at a pool. Ouch!
5. For visitors who don't feel comfortable having their fingerprints scanned at each park entrance, you can request to avoid this process. You must present photo identification with your park pass each time you enter a park if you choose to avoid the biometric scanner. Be aware, this process takes extra time, as the Cast Member calls a supervisor to verify your identification.

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6. Take a water break once an hour. Heat exhaustion and dehydration are among the top reasons for tourist hospitalization in Florida. Don't wait until you're thirsty, and take sips, not gulps, of water. This should keep you from feeling ill. The humid Florida weather takes a toll on the body. By the time you start feeling thirst, your body is already dehydrated.
7. Monitor your body. If you feel dizzy or faint, either go to the First Aid Center or sit down and ask a Cast Member to send for first aid. You may be having a dangerous reaction to the heat or extra exertion. Medical professionals are on-hand at each park to check your vitals and give you advice.

If you have medication that needs to stay refrigerated, such as insulin, you can keep it in a cooler at the First Aid Center. Other services/items you can pick up from the First Aid Center include: temperature checks (thermometer forehead strips); aspirin; first aid cream; contact lens cleaning solution; small sewing kits (to fix buttons, etc.); and EpiPens (for emergency use only).

Even if you just have a small scrape or blister from those new walking shoes, you can get a free bandage from the First Aid Center...and they won't charge you a penny!

8. Wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen of at least 30 SPF, and reapply regularly throughout the day. Don't forget that your face, ears, and even the top of your head also need sunscreen. Even if you don't tend to burn, the sun's rays cause damage to the skin. Banana Boat makes a Hair & Scalp Defense spray specifically to spray on your head. Of course, a hat with a wide brim or sunblocking umbrella also work well to protect your head!
9. Many tourists experience painful constipation due to the change in eating and routine. If left untreated, this can lead to an expensive and time-consuming trip to urgent care. Here are a few tips to keep regular during your stay:
  - Take fiber supplements with a full bottle of water 30 minutes prior to each meal. Theme park food is typically low on fiber and roughage and high on cheese and sugars, which bind you up;

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- Take regular bathroom breaks. If you have smaller children who are uncomfortable with using public restrooms, take advantage of family restrooms throughout the parks. These are individual, locking restrooms that provide much more privacy than the regular toilets. Above all, don't rush someone - give them time to take care of business!;
  - Bring flushable wipes. Many people avoid going "number 2" in public restrooms, because they can't clean themselves properly with the scratchy toilet paper provided. You can pick up a travel size pack of flushable wipes at any Target or Walmart, which will leave your family feeling fresh and clean after using the toilet;
  - Drink more water than you're used to, taking a water break at least once per hour. Dehydration can lead to constipation. Your body will need much more water than you drink regularly due to the heat and additional exertion of a day at the park; and
  - Bring a mild, natural laxative in your personal First Aid kit. Use it at the first sign of trouble to help move things along and keep the issue from turning into a major ordeal later.
10. The excessive walking at the parks and the airplane flight can cause swelling of the feet and legs. If you have issues with swelling, blood clots, or varicose veins, wear compression hose during your flight and each day at the parks. If you don't want the expense of compression socks, buy a pair of control top panty hose. They provide light compression, as well.
11. Smoking and vaping are not allowed inside the parks for the health and comfort of other guests. The designated areas are outside of the entrances, on the way to the parking lots.
- Smokers may be tempted to sneak a puff inside the parks. Don't do this! You are likely to get caught and may even end up in an argument with security, which can lead to eviction from the park. What a way to ruin your trip!
- Here are a few tips to keep your habit from getting the better of your day:

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- Have a last minute smoke/vape before entering the parks in the morning. Your family can run ahead and get into an attraction queue;
  - Wear a nicotine patch during the day;
  - Bring suckers, so you have something to lift to your mouth regularly; and
  - Take smoke breaks outside of the parks, while your family saves your place in long lines. You have to wait anyway, so you might as well use that time wisely. Just make sure you get back in time to get on the attraction!
12. If you forget the sunblock and end up with a sunburn, there are a few items that can help. A bottle of alcohol-free aloe vera will provide a nice, cooling sensation to the burn. Just be careful to let it dry completely before replacing your clothes, or they will stick.
- For more intense burns, pick up some Alocane burn gel at any drug store. It has aloe vera in it, along with a pain reliever. (If you happen to have a tube of Preparation-H on-hand, that also works well to relieve the pain and swelling from sunburns.)
13. Bring Pepto Bismol tablets to combat upset stomach from all the junk food you'll be eating. If you feel sick, drink a Sprite and plenty of water. Crackers, pretzels, and starchy foods, such as potatoes, sometimes help. Black licorice and ginger candy or tea can also help soothe an upset stomach.
14. The large companion/family restrooms are the best option for people in a wheelchair (or those who can't park a scooter and walk the distance to a stall). These individual, locking restrooms are found throughout the parks. They are larger than the handicap stalls inside of the regular restrooms, allowing people in a wheeled device to maneuver easily.
15. The changing tables in Disney restrooms are not designed for changing diapers of disabled adults. Head to the First Aid Center for that. They will provide you with a private room to take care of cleaning and caring for your family member.
16. Bring your Fitbit to the parks. You can expect to get 20,000 to 30,000 steps per day. That's a lot of walking!

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17. Don't give up your exercise routine. If your daily routine just includes walking, you will get plenty of that during your vacation. However, cardio and weight options are limited at the parks, and a sudden change in your normal activity levels can leave you feeling out of sorts.

Fortunately, each Disney hotel provides a great jogging path to keep the daily routine going, and the Deluxe Resorts have incredible gyms. The two Fort Wilderness Resorts are connected with a 2.5 mile path that can be used for jogging, biking, or just an enjoyable stroll through the wooded environment.

Many resorts also have exercise classes or fun options, such as a morning beignet run at Port Orleans French Quarter, which ends with the tasty New Orleans dessert.

18. Before you go to bed the first evening of your vacation, check the hotel room's alarm clock to make sure no pre-existing alarm is set. There's nothing worse than waking up at 3 a.m., because the last guests had to make an early flight!
19. Stay safe in your hotel room by doing the following:
- Use the deadbolt when inside your room;
  - Check for ID prior to opening the door to anyone;
  - Use the room safe for any valuables and important documents (such as passports) in your room;
  - Never leave money out, unless it is intended as a gratuity for housekeeping.
20. Hotel Scam Alert! Never provide personal or credit card information if you receive a call from someone claiming to work for your hotel. There is a common scam where a caller poses as your hotel front desk and claims your card is giving an error. They claim the card information must have been entered incorrectly, and they request you repeat your credit card information.

Hotels actually verify your card information and put a hold amount on it prior to issuing keys. If you receive one of these calls, simply tell them you will handle the issue in person. Hang up immediately

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and go to your front desk to let them know you received the scam phone call, so they can warn other guests.

21. Watch out for unlicensed taxi cabs in Orlando. While Disney ensures only licensed cabs pick up at the parks, there are many unlicensed providers around town. If you don't see rates, along with a license number, clearly posted on the vehicle door, don't get in!

Don't let the driver touch your luggage, until you're sure he's legitimate. These drivers often put your luggage in the trunk of the vehicle, then hold it for ransom until you agree to the ride.

These unscrupulous people often scam unwitting tourists by charging far more than market rate, insisting on more pay than initially agreed upon, and/or taking the long route to your destination to get more money.

22. When using Uber or Lyft, verify the license plate number and identity of the driver before getting in the vehicle. A picture of the driver and description of the vehicle with its license plate number is shown in the app. Make sure they match. Getting into the wrong vehicle can result in robbery or worse!

23. Many guests experience an uncomfortable condition known as the "Disney Rash" during their vacation. The condition is so common, WebMD has a page dedicated to it, defining the condition as, "a kind of blood vessel inflammation called vasculitis that affects the lower parts of the legs after you perform strenuous exercise or activity for a long time, especially in warm weather."

Many experts believe the condition is related to sunlight exposure. It's characterized by itching, swelling, a burning sensation, and red or purple spots on the legs.

To prevent or treat your own Disney rash, we recommend you do the following:

- Keep your legs covered, using pants and socks, rather than shorts;
- Use compression hose;
- Wear moisture-wicking socks and/or leggings;  
Regularly massage your legs;

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- Elevate your feet;
  - Soak your feet and legs in cool water filled with Epsom salts; Keep hydrated; and
  - Avoid salty foods.
24. If your vehicle breaks down, get out of the car and walk to a place of safety, such as a sidewalk, before calling for help. If the breakdown occurs on highway, get on other side of safety barrier immediately. Never stand next to a highway if there's no sidewalk, as drivers may not see you on the side of the road.
25. Chafing is a big issue for visitors. Sundresses are cute, but the intense heat and humidity can cause a lot of sweat between the thighs. Wear moisture wicking shorts or underwear that extend down past your thighs (also useful under regular shorts or pants). Tennis skirts or athletic dresses have built-in shorts underneath, and many styles have pockets.
- Alternatively, you can use anti-perspirant on your thighs. However, the shorts underneath are more useful on rides, such as Flight of Passage, where you must straddle the vehicle. Many visitors recommend Body Glide, which is an anti-chafing balm.
26. If someone in your family is prone to ear/sinus issues or is suffering from a head cold, a trip on an airplane can be a painful experience due to altitude changes. Additionally, you may find the shifting air pressure and change from outdoor Florida heat to indoor air conditioning to be extremely uncomfortable.
- Use specially designed earplugs, such as EarPlanes, to regulate the pressure and provide for a much more comfortable trip. They even make smaller ones for children!
27. Don't use a USB charging station at the airport. Scammers sometimes put USB stations at the airports (or other public locations) that have malware designed to steal your data. If you need to charge your phone, plug it directly into an electrical outlet.
28. Discuss medications with your doctor before traveling to Florida. Certain medications may have a different effect in the hot sun or when you're more active. For instance, the blood pressure medicine

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you normally take may need to be modified to keep from having dangerously low or high blood pressure in the heat.

29. Your feet go through a lot of wear and tear each day. Test different walking shoes prior to your trip. Once you find the perfect pair, get a second pair to change into on particularly sweaty days. (Bring extra socks to change into at the park if you won't be able to get back to your hotel room to change your shoes.)

Break in both pairs of shoes (and prepare your feet) by walking at least five miles a day for five to seven days per pair. Use anti-perspirant (or the Body Glide we suggested for anti-chafing) on your feet each morning before putting on your shoes.

At the end of each day, alternate running cool water and hot water over your feet a few times. Then, fill the bathtub with cool water and soak your feet for a few minutes. For added relief, add Epsom salt to the water (available in the health section of any drug store, dollar store, Walmart, etc.).

30. Start training for your Disney vacation about a month in advance to avoid soreness and exhaustion at the parks. Beginning four weeks prior to the trip, gradually increase your daily walking with the goal of walking at least five miles a day for about 10 of the 14 days prior to your trip.

Increase your daily intake of water gradually during this time, until you are drinking at least eight ounces of water per waking hour. (At the park, we suggest taking a water break every hour to stay hydrated, but your kidneys need time to adjust to the increased intake.)

Beginning two weeks prior to the trip, get your body on a regular sleep and bathroom schedule. Set timers to prepare your body for sleep at the same time each evening. About an hour prior to bed each evening, shut off electronic devices (no screen time!). Enjoy a soothing warm drink, such as chamomile tea, warm milk, or hot cocoa. Eat a banana. Bananas have sleep-inducing nutrients and are a healthy way to stave off late-night hunger pangs.

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Use an alarm to wake up at the same time each morning (the same time you plan to wake up on your vacation). Once your body is used to the early-morning schedule, it will be a breeze to wake early and get ready to visit the parks each morning.

If you have children who take naps, get them accustomed to sleeping with background noise. Play music or run the vacuum at nap time to prepare them for nap time in the parks. If your child is having difficulty falling to sleep with the sound, start with a low volume that gradually increases each day.

Eat meals at approximately the same time each day to get your body on a regular bathroom schedule, then stick to your schedule while on vacation. Your body will thank you!

31. Bring a low-sugar electrolyte powder to boost energy during the day. Many companies sell single-serving packs of electrolyte powders, with or without caffeine. The electrolytes will replenish much-needed nutrients that you sweat out during a long day at the park.
32. Bring swimming ear plugs for the pools and water parks. These plugs keep water out to help avoid swimmer's ear (water trapped in the ear) or ear infections if you or your children are prone to them.  
If a little water gets trapped in your ears, try holding your nose and blowing hard with your mouth closed to help your ears "pop." If that doesn't work, you can purchase a treatment for swimmer's ear at the drug store.
33. Use Ziploc bags as impromptu gloves. There are germs all over the place at Disney. If you find yourself needing to pick something off of the filthy ground, etc., put your hand inside of one of the Ziploc bags you packed first. You can even put your hotel remote control inside one of these bags to keep from touching it.
34. Wear cotton or moisture wicking underwear. If you are prone to feminine issues, such as yeast infections, the humidity is likely to create a problem for you. Bring yeast infection meds and use at the first sign. Bring a change of underwear each day. When you start to sweat, change into them.

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35. Electric scooters (ECVs) require training. Take 20-30 minutes to train on your ECV before trying to work your way through Disney crowds. Learn what causes it to lurch forward, how to back up, how to stop quickly, and how to take tight turns (required to make it through queues).

Know your limits. If your eyesight or reflexes are worse in the evenings, opt for a wheelchair at those times. People are often injured at the parks by inexperienced or tired people navigating through crowds on an ECV.

36. More sunburns happen at the water parks than anywhere else on Disney property. The intense sunshine reflects off the water, giving you more exposure. Plus, sunblock wears off quicker when you're in the water. Apply at least one full ounce of sunscreen to your entire body before you leave for the water park, and reapply at least once an hour to prevent a painful burn.
37. Don't forget to take a water break once an hour at the water parks. You may not feel thirsty while splashing in the cool water, making it easy to become dangerously dehydrated. Restrooms are plentiful and convenient throughout the parks in case you need them from the increased water output, but you'll likely sweat most of the extra water out having fun!
38. Water parks are a ton of fun, but there are some common pitfalls to avoid:
- The wave pool at Typhoon Lagoon sends waves crashing down over your head. For weaker swimmers or smaller children, this can lead to a painful hit on the bottom of the textured concrete pool. To enjoy the waves without the pain, sit about waist deep at the edge of the pool. Once the waves reach there, they have lost some of their velocity, but you can still enjoy the pleasure of the cool water splashing your entire body;
  - The wave pool at Blizzard Beach has a constant, rocking motion. People who are prone to motion sickness should avoid sitting on an inner tube in the pool, as that will only increase the discomfort;

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- Avoid the extreme body slides if you have back issues. Even guests without back problems complain about the landing of certain slides, such as Summit Plummet at Blizzard Beach. Instead, look for those water slides that use inner tubes or rafts. The tubes create a softer landing;
- Bring a wide brimmed hat, sunglasses, and lots of sunblock. There is very little shade at the water parks, and the sun reflecting off of the water makes it seem more intense;
- Wear water shoes, rather than sandals. The pavement is HOT! Water shoes are convenient, as you can wear them on the water slides. If you wear sandals, you must find a place to leave them before entering the queue and go find them again after getting off the water slide;
- Bring a cooler with lots of water and snacks. Unlike the theme parks, guests are encouraged to bring coolers to the water parks as long as they're no larger than 24" long x 15" wide x 18" high. Don't put loose ice in there, though. That's a Disney no-no. Instead, use the ice packs you can purchase at any store. It's easy to become dehydrated and hungry when playing in the water all day. Be sure to stop for water breaks between rides;
- Bring your own towels and a change of clothes. Towels are available for rental if you forget yours, but it's less hassle if you have your own. A change in clothes will feel amazing at the end of the day, so you aren't forced to wear soggy swimsuits all the way back to your hotel;
- Shower as soon as you can after playing in the water. The chlorine in the water is rough on skin and hair. If you plan on going to dinner or shopping directly after the water park, bring a travel-sized shampoo and body wash to clean the chlorine before changing into clean clothes. Otherwise, shower as soon as you get back to your hotel;
- Bring eye drops and water goggles. Chlorine can cause a lot of eye irritation, leaving everyone, especially the little ones, uncomfortable;

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- Bring alcohol-free aloe vera gel and after sun lotion. The aloe vera gel will feel nice and soothing if you get a sunburn. The after sun lotion will help to rehydrate your skin after the chlorine leaves it feeling dry and flaky; and
- Both water parks have man-made beaches, and sand gets everywhere! Bring some body powder to dust on your skin (or dried hair), and the sand will easily fall off.

39. It doesn't happen often, but occasionally thieves target expensive strollers at the parks. If you have one, consider purchasing a GPS chip you can attach to it and track the stroller if it goes missing. You can purchase a highly rated tracker, such as the Amcrest GPS GL300 GPS Tracker, from Amazon for about \$40. Place it somewhere inconspicuous.

Try gluing the tracker under the seat with some Gorilla Glue to keep it hidden. If your stroller disappears, you'll have no trouble finding it again (or helping Disney security identify the thief)!

40. If your family wants to split up and tour separately, make sure each group has at least one person with a cell phone. Look for family locator apps and download the one that best meets your needs. You can use the app to keep track of your teenage kids, which is especially important if you let them travel back to hotel without an adult.

Some cell phone providers include a family locator app as part of their service, so check to see if your provider includes one.

Make sure everybody's phone is on with wi-fi and location services enabled for the apps to work properly.

41. If someone in your party needs a wheelchair or ECV rental, it's far better to rent one from an outside source, rather than Disney. Disney requires you to turn in your rental as you exit the park each evening, while you can use rentals from outside vendors throughout your stay.
42. If you are prone to motion sickness, take motion sickness medicine before heading to the park each morning. Bonine and Dramamine both offer less-drowsy options, so make sure those are the ones you choose!

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If you prefer a more natural remedy, pick up a motion sickness patch or (acupressure) band to wear on your wrist from any drug store. The patches use herbs to control nausea, while the bands provide relief through acupressure. Both are purported to be safe to use with alcohol, while the medicine is not recommended for use when drinking.

Pack a bag of pretzels or crackers to bring with you. Eat a few before going on a ride to keep the liquids from sloshing around your stomach. Keep eating them after the ride if you feel a bit ill.

While on the ride, choose a single focal point in the distance and try to keep your eyes on it. That typically helps the feeling. If you start getting dizzy or sick on a simulated ride, close your eyes immediately and keep them closed until it's over.

43. If you or someone with you starts feeling sick on any ride, focus on something on the horizon (off in the distance). On the Magic Kingdom's Mad Tea Party ride, be sure to stop spinning the wheel.
44. Most babies prefer a quiet, peaceful place to nurse. To help nursing mothers escape the crowds and overstimulating environment of the theme parks, Disney offers a free Baby Center in each park (near the First Aid Centers).

Baby Centers have dark, quiet rooms that offer peace and privacy for mom and her baby to breastfeed, bottle feed, pump milk, or just take a nap. In fact, you can also take your toddler there for nap time.

The Orlando International Airport (MCO) also offers these types of rooms, called Mamava Nursing Suites. If you have not gone through security yet, there is one on Level 2 of the airport. Once you've gone through security, there are several suites (near the hub of Airsides 1 and 3; near Gate 111 of Airside 2; and near the women's restroom of Airside 4).

45. Epcot is known for its alcoholic beverage options. If you plan to drink, make transportation plans to get safely back to your hotel before heading to the park. Keep in mind that the heat can cause alcohol to affect people differently.

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Do NOT drink even one alcoholic beverage if you are going to drive. Police are vigilant and know that tourists will pay the fine rather than absorb the cost of traveling back to the area to stand trial. You can be charged for DUI (driving under the influence) if your blood alcohol level is 0.08% or more. Don't ruin your vacation (and possibly your life) by drinking and driving!

46. Check the wind direction at Epcot before choosing your fireworks viewing location. Since you're really close to the fireworks at this park, it's very important to make sure the wind is blowing away from you. Smoke, sparks, and hot ashes travel along the wind, which can cause everything from coughing to eye irritation and even injury.
47. If you like to run, every Disney resort has an outdoor running track that will show you a map and tell you how far you can run. Just look for the signs that say "New Balance Running Trail." This can be a fun and healthy way to explore your resort.
48. Orlando humidity can be miserable for visitors, and it may create a musty odor in your hotel room. To combat this, turn the air conditioning to a low temperature to help remove moisture from the air. Attach the instant coffee packet provided in your hotel room to the air conditioning vent with a clip for a makeshift room freshener.
49. Don't bring your luggage into your hotel room, until you have performed a room check! What is a room check? Even nice hotels can experience insect issues, the worst of which is bed bugs. The little critters can work their way into your luggage and follow you home, so it's important to make sure none are in your room before you bring your bags in to it. The first place to look is under the bed covers, near the head of each bed. (Lift the sheet and check under it.) Bed bugs are tiny, but visible to the naked eye, so look closely. While performing this check, take a look at the sheets and bedding to make sure everything is clean. If there's a problem with the cleanliness of your linens, the best option is to call the front desk and have clean ones brought to your room.

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Once the beds are checked, turn the air conditioner on to make sure it is functional. Following that, ensure the water faucets, refrigerator, microwave are working, if your room has those.

Finally, check the bathroom, windowsills, and any closets to make sure they are clean and pest free.

Take photos of any issues you find to act as proof in case you feel the need to cancel your reservation, and the hotel doesn't want to give you a refund. Your credit card company will need the photos if you need to file a dispute with them.

50. If there's a gap at the bottom of your hotel room door, roll up a towel and cover it to reduce excess noise and/or light coming through.
51. Place a towel on the bottom of your bathtub before showering or bathing to give the slippery surface some texture to prevent falls.
52. Disney hotel guests with skin allergies or sensitivities can request linens laundered in allergy-friendly detergent. To do so, contact the hotel directly at least 48 hours in advance to have the special request noted on your reservation.

Most other hotel chains can also honor this special request.

Verify directly with the hotel before booking to be sure you won't experience any issues.

53. No matter how good your hotel's blackout curtains are, the bright Orlando sun nearly always peeks through. Light sensitive people should request west-facing rooms to keep from waking up to the morning light.

Bring binder clips to overlap the curtains and improve their light blocking capabilities. If that's not good enough, you can bring travel blackout curtains (available through Amazon) that attach to your windows with suction cups.

54. Use a noise machine or noise app to block out unwanted sounds at night. Sleepa is a free app you can put on your phone that allows you to customize sounds with white, pink, or brown noise, as well as city or nature sounds. It works wonders to drown out noise from people walking by your hotel window at night.

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55. Don't ruin your trip with a costly speeding ticket. Just because you're on vacation doesn't mean you get to take a break from traffic laws, even on Disney property. The Orange County Sheriff's Department patrols Disney property. While they aren't putting out speed traps (which Disney would not allow!), they do pull over speeders and reckless drivers.

Also, drive defensively. Unaware tourists and Cast Members speeding to make their shifts on time can make for dangerous road conditions!

56. It's not just kids who usually need an afternoon break. Somewhere around 4 or 5 p.m., most adults feel the exhaustion and irritability creeping over them. There are some great places to take a quiet break.

From the Magic Kingdom, take the monorail or leisurely boat ride to a nearby hotel and enjoy a drink in one of the lounges found at each.

At Epcot, head to Tutto Gust Wine Cellar in Italy. It's a hidden gem just for adults with a large selection of wines and small plates.

From Hollywood Studios (or Epcot), take a relaxing Skyliner gondola or boat ride to a nearby hotel and enjoy a drink in one of the lounges found at each.

From Animal Kingdom, take a quick bus ride to Animal Kingdom Lodge, where you can relax and watch the animals roam the property. Once you've had a bit of a rest, you can head back to the parks refreshed and ready to keep going.

57. Find a quiet place. Pooh isn't the only one who needs the occasional "thoughtful spot." Disney is overstimulating to a lot of folks, especially those with cognitive disabilities. Fortunately, Disney has a few places where you can duck away from the craziness.

Head here for to download Disney World's Guide for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities for a complete list of locations to take a break: <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/guest-services/cognitive-disabilities-services/>.

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While at a park, just ask the nearest Cast Member to guide you to a quiet location to get away from the noise for a couple of minutes. Alternatively, head to the First Aid Center and ask for a quiet room, where you will be provided with a private place to collect yourself.

58. Sometimes you just need to take a quiet moment to yourself, which can seem impossible in a Disney park. There are options, though. In Magic Kingdom, go to the train station in Storybook Circus. Just next to it is a rarely used pathway that leads to Tomorrowland. Tom Sawyer Island also offers a nice sanctuary from the madness.

While at Epcot, a walk through Canada can make you feel like you've left the parks completely. If you really need some adult time, Tutto Gusto Wine Cellar is hidden at the back of the Italy pavilion. Find a chair by the fireplace and order a glass of wine to make the world melt away.

Animal Kingdom is full of trails that make you feel like you're alone in the wilderness. Explore the trails around the Tree of Life. Most people pass right by them. The walkway from Pandora to Africa is also seldom used, giving you a serene walk along the water.

Look to the far left of the Indiana Jones attraction in Hollywood Studios. There's a small area to the side where you can find a little peace (unless the show is going on). If you step outside the park entrance, there's a walking path that leads to Disney's BoardWalk and Epcot. The path runs along the water and is often deserted.

59. Have your children practice the buddy system. Children are easily distracted with all of the sights and sounds at Disney, and you can lose a kid in a busy Disney crowd quicker than you can say, "Mickey Mouse!" Have older kids (or adults) hold hands with younger siblings at all times.
60. There's a lot of information on how to travel with a child, but what if you're visiting Disney while you're still pregnant? There are a lot of important considerations for an expecting mother:

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- Some rides may not be safe for pregnant women. Check ride restrictions with Guest Relations, on the park map, or online at [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com) by searching for Accessibility Advisories. These advisories are also posted in the queue of each attraction.
- The excessive heat and walking can create health issues you wouldn't normally experience, such as swelling, heat stroke, and blood pressure fluctuations. Take more breaks than you otherwise would, and head straight for the First Aid Station in each park if you feel off.
- You are going to need frequent bathroom breaks. Check the park map when you enter each property to get an idea of where each toilet is. (There are no restrooms in Magic Kingdom's Liberty Square!)
- The park is full of intense odors, and you're going to be more sensitive to them. Bring a personal fan to help blow unwanted scents away from your nose.
- Many pregnant women experience motion sickness. Bring crackers or pretzels to munch on throughout the day and help calm your stomach.
- You need to eat and drink more often than others. Bring lots of snacks and fluids to keep your energy levels up and the baby happy!

61. Ear plugs are a must on Disney vacations. Purchase ones in a smaller size to use on your children when listening to live music, fireworks, or when it's time for a nap at the parks.

If you end up with noisy hotel neighbors, ear plugs can provide your whole family with much-needed rest.

They also work wonders to help keep pressure changes from affecting young ears in an airplane!

62. Each entrance to Disney property has a large banner across the highway with Mickey and Minnie on either end to greet guests. Many visitors are tempted to stop their vehicles to take pictures when seeing these welcoming entrances.

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Do not pull off the side of the road or stop your car to take pictures. It's unsafe and you will get ticketed if seen by authorities.

If you really want this photo, go to the SR 535 and Buena Vista Drive entrance, where you can park at one of the nearby businesses. (It's also an easy walk from Disney Springs.) Use the traffic lights at the intersection to walk across to the entrance for a safer method of capturing your photographs.

# Meeting Characters



1. Keep an eye out for rare characters that aren't on the meet-and-greet schedule. For instance, Fairy Godmother may make an appearance near Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique at Cinderella's Castle.
2. If you are staying at a Disney Resort, ask your front desk about which characters are scheduled at the parks during your stay. Go over the list with your children to prioritize your schedule.
3. After hours events often have rare characters you can't meet at any other time. While those events require special admission, special characters may also be found during regular park hours at especially festive times of the year. Ask a Cast Member to see if anyone unusual is on-hand during your visit.
4. If you want to get a character autograph, you must bring your own autograph book and pen. The character will sign autographs if you or your child simply hold the autograph book up where it can be clearly seen.

The vision of fur characters is very limited, so holding the book directly in front of their face when asking them for their autographs will facilitate this process.

Also keep in mind that fur characters have a harder time than most simply trying to hold onto those pens, so try to find a pen that's at least as thick as a marker.

5. During peak periods (and when it is quite hot) there are usually two or three Cast Members who are trading off a character role, and they will be back at work very shortly. So when they say that Minnie is going to be back in five minutes after she powders her nose, that is exactly what they mean, and a very fresh Minnie will be returning.
6. While helpful most of the time, relying on Character greeting information from any Cast Member may lead to confusion and frustration.

Cast Members have special guides that are not available to guests. If they do not reach for it and do not seem completely certain of their answer, double check what they tell you. Guest Relations is the best place to get current character information.

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7. A Disney Cast Member who worked as a Character created a great website ([kennythepirate.com](http://kennythepirate.com)) with a lot of relevant and interesting information. Updated regularly, “The Master List of Walt Disney World Character Locations” has a complete list of all Characters, even those that are extremely rare and difficult to meet.  
  
Readers who are really interested in the Character side of Disney can discuss Character meet-and-greets. He also offers – for a fee – a Character locator app ([characterlocator.com](http://characterlocator.com)).
8. A Best Time to Meet Mickey: A good time for Character meet-and-greets (not just Mickey!) is when any parade or fireworks show is going on.
9. If you heard about the amazing, talking Mickey, we are sorry to say that Walt Disney World discontinued this feature from the Magic Kingdom meet-and-greet.
10. You can’t meet Lady & The Tramp, but you can get an autograph from the amorous duo. Just head to Tony’s Town Square restaurant in the Magic Kingdom and ask the hostess for their signature. Be sure to mention if you’re celebrating a special occasion. The pooches may include a surprise message for you!
11. Bring your own Sharpie pen for Character autographs. Pens are not provided for you. Fur Characters, which are the ones with full head and body coverings, have a hard time gripping standard pens. They also have a hard time seeing through the costume. Sharpies are perfect for these Characters to grip and be able to see what they’re writing.
12. For an extra-special Character meet-and-greet experience, have your child make personalized drawings or notes for their favorite characters. Give them to the Character Attendant as you wait your turn, so they can present it to the Character. The Characters often spend extra time with the child, and they will appreciate the special keepsake!
13. Get creative with Character autographs. You are not limited to autograph books for these special mementos. Bring a white pillowcase or t-shirt and several colors of permanent markers to have it signed by different Characters. Bring a white photo mat

## Meeting Characters

for signatures, and you can use it for your favorite Disney vacation photo. Bring a Disney coloring book, and ask the Character to sign the page on which you find their photo.

For a simple keepsake to create after the trip, pull the Character's autograph from your autograph book and place it on one side of a photo album page. On the other side, place the photo of your child with that character.

14. Characters have required breaks every 20-30 minutes. These break times protect the Characters from the intense Florida heat, and they don't have the option to stay longer if it's time for their break. Breaks last anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes. Indoor meet-and-greets usually have estimated wait times posted.

Before you get in line for an outdoor meet-and-greet, check with the Character Attendant near the front of the line to find out when the Character is scheduled to go on break, so you can estimate whether it's worth it to wait in line. Expect the Character to spend about 2 to 3 minutes per group in line. Multiply 3 times the number of groups in front of you in line to determine how many minutes it should take for you to reach the front of the queue.

15. One perk to the Disney Chase card is that you also get a free printed photo as you meet Disney characters each day when you visit Epcot and Hollywood Studios. At Epcot, there is a special photo shoot location in the Imagination Pavilion especially for this perk, and a special Star Wars meet-and-greet is in the Star Wars Launch Bay at Hollywood Studios.

As this has become more popular over the past couple of years, the lines have grown, so plan to visit early in the day if you want to take advantage of this awesome bonus.

16. Epcot has three spots to scope out that MAY occasionally have rarely seen characters "in rehearsal":

- 1) International Gateway area near the shops;
- 2) American Adventure near huge gate to the left, when facing the pavilion; or
- 3) World Showplace.

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17. Find unscheduled meet-and-greets with rare Disney Characters. Hollywood Studios sometimes has Character Palooza events, which is a secret meet-and-greet that happens as the Fantasmic! Characters make their way to the show.

While Disney intentionally keeps this off of the schedule, keep an eye out between the hours of 4 and 7 p.m. each day. The event can take place anywhere from the Streets of America to Echo Lake to the Tower of Terror.

Epcot occasionally has in-training Characters near the International Gateway (between the United Kingdom and France pavilions) or on the small pathway to the left of the American Adventure pavilion.

18. Each Disney character has a Character Attendant at the meet-and-greets. These attendants help ensure a smooth interaction for each child.

If your child is afraid or has special needs (such as hearing impaired or discomfort with hugs), let the Character Attendant know ahead of time. The characters have special ways of interacting with these children (some even know sign language), and the advanced notice will make the experience that much better.

You won't believe how well many of the characters communicate without words!

19. It's rare, but unscheduled character meet-and-greets sometimes happen at Disney's Deluxe Resorts. This is especially true during the holidays and unusual events, such as during park closures brought on by extreme weather. Check with the resort concierge to find out if any characters will be dropping by on the day of your visit.
20. If you just want to meet a few characters and aren't that picky, wait until you reach Animal Kingdom. Wait times to meet characters are often less at Animal Kingdom than any other park.
21. If your child just wants to see a character and doesn't really care about meeting him or her, consider going through the exit line to take a quick peek at the character while they are interacting with other children.

## Meeting Characters

If the attendant gives you a hard time, tell them other members of your party are near the front of the line, and you simply want to take a couple of photos.

Don't try to cut in line this way. The queues are carefully monitored, and you won't be successful.

22. Act as enthusiastic as possible during character meet-and-greets to set the example for timid children. The characters will make the encounter magical for them. Let your eager child know it's okay to touch, pat (but not hit!), and hug the characters. They can expect big hugs in return!
23. Help your children prepare special questions for each character meet-and-greet (or character meal). Think of something that relates to the story about the character, since they must remain in character at all times!

Be ready to help your young child answer questions posed by the characters. The longer you can keep the experience fun for children and spectators, and not become awkward for the character, the better. They will remain engaged, and spend more time, with you and your child, making the time extra special. After waiting for the experience, use the time accordingly.

24. You and your child will be ignored and turned away if you try approaching a character out of turn. Make sure your child understands proper line etiquette and about taking turns, or this may cause disappointment when they are rejected.

Even if the attendant wanted to make an exception, cutting in line will not be tolerated by other guests no matter how desperate the child is to see a character. Even trying to do so is tactless and disrespectful to other guests waiting patiently for their chance to meet the character.

25. Children are often nervous or scared when meeting characters for the first time. While Goofy seems harmless to adults, he is one of the tallest characters, towering over children. Prepare your child for what to expect when you are still home. Find an online video of your child's favorite characters greeting other children. Talk about

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how tall the characters are and that the mean-sounding Cruella is really not so evil after all.

26. If you find your children might be nervous about an upcoming meeting, as you're waiting in line to meet a Character, talk about the interaction you see other children having. Use words like "silly" and "sweet" to dispel their fears.

When it is your turn, be patient and allow the Character to coax the child forward, and comment again about "how silly Goofy is" or mention "how sad the child is making Donald." You will often see the Character play along with great effect.

27. As an alternative to expensive Character autograph books, take Disney coloring books to be signed. For an especially fun project, have your children make home-made autograph books using scrapbooks or photo books.

These allow children to get excited long in advance of their trip, and the Characters will appreciate the extra thought.

Warning: Alternate signature pages in coloring books. Marker and pen inks tend to bleed through the pages.

28. If you have a younger or timid child, make the first Character meet-and-greets with face Characters, rather than fur. Face Characters are those without face masks who are able to speak with guests. These Characters include princes and princesses, as well as Tinker Bell, Mary Poppins, and Alice (in Wonderland).

Face Characters tend to be less intimidating for children, since they look and sound very normal. They also have more mobility to get low to the ground, making them seem smaller to kids.

Fur Characters, such as Mickey and Minnie, are much larger than children expect them to be. Some, such as Goofy and Chewbacca, are so tall, they can tower over adults! Combine that with an inability to verbally communicate and difficulty seeing, which makes these Characters' movements somewhat awkward, and you have a recipe for disaster with timid kids.

By meeting a few face Characters first, children can get more comfortable, while you can get an idea of what to expect from your child's reaction.

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29. Villains can be particularly scary for children to meet. Characters, such as Darth Vader and The Queen of Hearts are especially large and intimidating. They're also required to stay in character, meaning they aren't nice and can't help you if your child gets frightened and begins to cry.

Be sure your little one is brave and understands how the character is likely to behave before taking him to one of these meet-and-greets.

30. Keep in mind that the primary attraction for small children at Epcot is meeting Characters, so meet-and-greets tend to have long queues. Lightning Lane reservations are not available for most meet-and-greets there, so plan to wait in each queue about 30 minutes for each Character.

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1. If there is an important ride you haven't been able to get on all day, try within the last hour the park is open. Most posted wait times that late in the day are longer than the actual wait, but check with the attendant to be sure.  
  
If all else fails, get in the ride queue just before the park closes. Disney closes down attraction queues at park closing, but they keep the rides open long enough to get through everybody waiting in line. This is also a fun way to see what a park looks like after closing!
2. Many outdoor roller coasters feel more exciting at night than during the day. Try to go on them early and then right before you go home, after dark, to feel the difference.
3. On fast rides and roller coasters, put long hair into a ponytail to keep it from getting tangled. This is especially important on rides where your hair can get tangled into shoulder harnesses.
4. Look for a special pocket in your ride vehicle on bouncy or fast rides to hold loose items, such as hats and sunglasses. Use these pockets, so you don't lose something valuable. Be sure to retrieve any items on your way out of the ride.
5. If you love fishing, there are some great spots to do so on Disney property (catch and release only!). Rather than spend a lot of money on a fishing tour, rent a fishing pole at Port Orleans Riverside and enjoy a peaceful afternoon on the dock at Ol' Man Island.
6. Ask for the front row on popular roller coasters (not available if you use the single rider line). When you reach the front of the queue on any Disney roller coaster, including Space Mountain, Rock 'n' Roller Coaster, and Slinky Dog Dash, just tell the Cast Member that you would like to wait for the front row. The Cast Member will direct you where to wait, though you will likely have to wait an additional 5 to 10 minutes for the ride.
7. Beat the heat by planning indoor attractions during the hours of noon and 4 p.m. Even if you can't get Genie+ ride reservations during these times, the queues for these rides are usually indoors and air conditioned.

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8. If you wish to be part of the parade, simply wait until it ends. Guests are encouraged to join the processional in a “second line” after the parade’s final banner passes by. Dance along, as other guests join you through the park!
9. Some queues at the theme parks are worth seeing, even if you don’t want to go on the ride. If you would rather stay with your party, while they all wait in line for a ride you don’t plan to go on, feel free to join them. Each attraction has an exit opportunity near the end (called the Chicken Exit on the more extreme rides). Just tell the Cast Member you want to exit, while they board the rest of your party.
10. Don’t be first in line for shows! During seating, guests are asked to go as far toward the end of each row as possible before taking a seat. This means people first in line end up with seats on the edge of the theater.

Since the best seats are in the center of the theater, hang back a bit and enter a row that is already partially filled up. If you try to take a center seat and expect others to go past you in a busy theater, you may end up with a Cast Member politely directing you to get up and move to the end of the row.

11. Which queues are worth the wait? Lightning Lanes bypass interactive and special design features in attraction queues, so there are instances when taking an extra 10 to 20 minutes to wait in the stand-by line is worth it.

One fan favorite interactive queue in Magic Kingdom is Peter Pan’s Flight. The Haunted Mansion, Big Thunder Mountain Railroad, and The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh also have some fun features worth seeing.

The stand-by queue for Test Track in Epcot allows you to create your own digital vehicle. Each of the Star Wars rides in Hollywood Studios has interesting elements, as does Tower of Terror.

In Animal Kingdom, you won’t want to miss the details found in the queues for Expedition Everest and Flight of Passage.

12. Don’t be shy about requesting a specific place to sit for an attraction. Cast Members automatically direct you to the row

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and/or seat that fills the ride vehicle in the most efficient manner. However, if it is the only time you expect to experience that attraction, feel free to ask if you can wait to get the seat you want. For instance, most people prefer front row seats in roller coasters (except Slinky Dog Dash, where the view in the front rows is obstructed).

On Kilimanjaro Safaris in Animal Kingdom, request the back row and make sure your group's photographer is sitting on the left. While you can see animals on both sides of the ride vehicle, the majority are on the left. For an extra thrill on DINOSAUR, sit on the right end of any row.

Try to sit in the center of the row on Avatar Flight of Passage (although there are really no bad seats).

On Epcot's Soarin' Around the World, sitting near the center of the first row provides the most immersive experience. You will see feet dangling above you if you sit in the second or third row, and sitting near the edge of the theater creates a slight distortion in the video.

At Hollywood Studios, Tower of Terror is best from the front row, although single riders enjoy the great view from the center seat of the back row. Known for its theater-style shows, try to grab a seat in the center of the theater for any of the live Hollywood Studios entertainment.

13. Get some adult time at Disney. Sometimes you just need a break from the kids. Leave the little ones with an older child or sitter, and head out for a little fun!

If you're looking for a quiet evening, some great options include the Sanaa Lounge at Disney's Animal Kingdom Resort or the Enchanted Rose Lounge at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort.

For a livelier option, enjoy some live music at Scat Cat's Club in Disney's Port Orleans French Quarter Resort, Rix Sports Bar and Grill at Disney's Coronado Springs, or Jellyrolls (piano bar) at Disney's BoardWalk.

You don't need to be a Disney hotel guest to enjoy these venues, and the hotels usually have free parking for visitors. (Security will

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often let you park for free in the evenings if you explain you're there to visit a lounge, even when the full parking sign is up.)

14. What if it's raining, or your schedule won't allow you to attend a show on an evening that you paid for a special dining and show package? Return to the restaurant you dined at or head to Guest Relations and request a rain check for the performance. You can return to watch the show on a different evening.

15. If you plan to take your family to Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party around Halloween (and we highly recommend that you do!), bring a couple of empty backpacks to store the loot.

Cast Members give out handfuls of candy at each Trick-or-Treating station, far more than any child should try to eat in a single evening.

To avoid a bunch of upset tummies the following day, consolidate the candy into the backpacks and dole the treats out throughout the rest of your vacation.

16. **ROLLER COASTERS**

If you don't know how much you like roller coasters, try The Barnstormer at the Magic Kingdom or Slinky Dog Dash at Hollywood Studios first. They are not scary at all, and they're over very quickly. If you like those, try one that is just a bit more exciting, like Seven Dwarfs Mine Train. If you still love it, you are ready for the more intense coasters, such as Space Mountain, Expedition Everest, and Rock 'n' Roller Coaster!

If you decide to try something even more exciting, see if you can sit in the front car of the coaster. This is the most fun because you don't have anything in front of you. (Sitting in front is also a smoother experience. The cars in the rear of the coaster tend to bang you around.)

If you want to sit in front, just ask the Cast Member when you reach the ride. There is a special place to wait—just a little off to the side—and it usually only adds a couple minutes to your overall wait time.

17. Posted attraction wait times are estimates. Don't rely on them to be exact. They are based on a tracking system that regularly tracks

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a guest through the queue to see how long that person took. If that person took two hours, the new estimated wait time will show 120 minutes.

However, it doesn't take into account how much the queue behind that person changed within that two hour period. Your best bet is to add and subtract 10 to 15 minutes from the posted wait time to give yourself a low and high estimate of how long it will actually take.

Remember, Cast Members intentionally inflate the posted wait times near park closing to discourage guests from jumping in line at the last minute.

18. Lines for attractions can take hours. If you have to wait in a long line, make sure to use the bathroom facilities first. If you have children who can't wait, have one adult take them to use the toilet, while the rest of the party saves the place in line. Unlike most rides, Flight of Passage at the Animal Kingdom has a bathroom in the line queue if you can't wait.

19. There are many rides worth repeating at Walt Disney World, but three are assured to get you a different experience each time.

At Hollywood Studios, the Tower of Terror uses a randomized drop sequence to give you a different thrill no matter how often you ride. Similarly, Star Tours has over 300 show sequences that alter the entire ride.

At Animal Kingdom, try Kilimanjaro Safaris at different times of the day. The animals have varying activity levels, depending on weather and time of day. If you're lucky, you may get an up-close-and-personal experience with one or more of them!

20. There are times when an attraction's stand-by queue is just as quick as its Lightning Lane queue. If that's the case, use the stand-by queue, so you can see any unique features built in for waiting guests. (Lightning Lane queues usually bypass these neat interactive features.) If you love the ride, you can still use your Lightning Lane reservation to experience it a second time!
21. Disney World rides sometimes experience unexpected break downs. If you've been waiting in the queue for a while when a ride shuts down, approach the queue attendant before exiting to request

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a Lightning Lane pass to return later. Disney generally issues passes only to those guests who have been waiting in line for quite a while, so if you just got into line, you may not get one.

The pass can be used to skip the line if the ride opens up again later or to experience one of a few other select attractions in the park.

If you were in the process of using a Lightning Lane reservation for the closed ride, your My Disney Experience app should automatically update to allow you to make a new attraction reservation. If it doesn't update properly, head to Guest Relations for assistance.

22. Buzz Lightyear's Space Ranger Spin and Toy Story Mania! are fun attractions that allow you to compete for a high score. This can be a bit intimidating for younger children and adults who don't play games.

Not to worry, the games on Toy Story Mania! are very simple, allowing virtually anyone to score some points, and just pulling the trigger on the Space Range Spin laser blaster will get you a minimum of 1,300 points!

If your little one doesn't get a very good score, simply avoid pointing out the comparison scoreboards at the end of the rides.

23. Disney's Fort Wilderness Campground is a great place to spend a day off from the parks. Paid activities include fishing, horseback riding, boat rentals, bike riding, and more! You can even visit the horses at their stables for free. End the day with Chip 'n' Dale's Campfire Sing-A-Long and watch the Electrical Water Pageant from the shoreline.
24. Select Disney Resorts, such as Contemporary and Polynesian, currently have a 50th Anniversary Scavenger Hunt available for guests. Check with your hotel concierge to find out if your hotel is participating. If not, take a trip to one of the participating hotels for a fun family game during one of your non-park days!
25. In some cases, festivities take place during the days leading up to New Year's Eve. For example, Magic Kingdom and Epcot usually hold their special New Year's firework events for the three to four days leading up to the night, giving you time to see each show.

## Attractions & Entertainment

26. 13 is your lucky number at Disney World's two spookiest rides: Haunted Mansion and Tower of Terror. When you see the posted wait time of 13 minutes, it really means there's no wait at all. Race to the ride for a rare opportunity to go through the queue at your own pace and see those little things you might have missed when being pushed through with a crowd.
27. If it rains midday on your water park day, return to the park as soon as the rain stops. You will likely have the place to yourself!
28. There are times when the parks are so busy that standby queues for popular rides are two hours or more all day long. If you can't get a Lightning Lane reservation for one of your must-do attractions and the line was too long all day, wait to get into the queue for it five to ten minutes before park closing. The wait time will still be long, but you won't have wasted time standing in line when you could have been enjoying other rides.

Keep in mind, the park will be closed by the time you exit the ride, so you won't be able to linger and shop or get last minute photos on your way out.

29. Near park closing, the posted wait times for attractions are usually much higher than the actual wait. This is to discourage guests from entering queues at the last minute, as Cast Members want to go home when it's closing time.

If there's a last-minute ride you really want to experience, hop into the queue. It will quickly become apparent if there's a long wait, and you can always leave the queue if you decide it's not worth it. Just remember, you have to be in line prior to park closing, or you won't be allowed in!

30. Prepare yourself to be the front of the pack on rides that begin with a pre-show. For instance, when you enter the library in Hollywood Studios' Tower of Terror, head to the door on the far side of the room. When the door opens after the pre-show video, you will be positioned at the front of the group to work your way through the remainder of the queue.

Look for the door on the far side of the pre-show room at each of the following locations:

## Disney Made *Easy*™ Insider Tips & Tricks

1) Tower of Terror

2) Rock 'n' Roller Coaster

3) DINOSAUR

4) Test Track

5) Haunted Mansion (In the stretching room pre-show, the door is hidden under the portrait of the woman with the pink parasol.)

31. You may be tempted to rush to the stand-by queue of a ride that closed earlier in the day for maintenance. Don't do this!

Cast Members will allow all Lightning Lane guests to go on the ride before stand-by guests to get them caught up, so the stand-by queue will often have a much longer wait than normal.

32. How do special event passes work? The pass is linked to your My Disney Experience account and any passes or MagicBands assigned to you.

Upon entry into the park, you will receive a color-coded bracelet to wear throughout the evening. (The wristband's color is specific to your evening to keep guests from reusing them to gain entry to an event on another evening.)

Cast Members check for these bracelets throughout the night, and guests without one are gently funneled out of the park.

33. Jedi Training - Trials of the Temple is held outdoors on an unshaded stage. Children who sign up to participate can choose from available times. Pick a time early in the morning or later in the evening to avoid standing in the intense heat with your child for up to 45 minutes.

To all who come to this happy place:  
Welcome. Disney (World) is your land.  
Here, age relives fond memories of  
the past...and here youth may savor  
the challenge and promise of the fu-  
ture. Disney (World) is dedicated to  
the ideals, the dreams, and the hard  
facts that have created America...with  
the hope that it will be a source of joy  
and inspiration to all the world.

- Walt Disney

# Magic Kingdom



1. Some of the Main Street transportation at Magic Kingdom uses real horses. When the horses need to take a break, you can meet with them as they relax in the Car Barn near the Emporium.
2. You are more likely to be chosen to ride in the Magic Kingdom parade if your entire party is wearing matching, custom vacation t-shirts. Look at Pinterest and Etsy for cute ideas.
3. The Seven Dwarfs Mine Train books up quicker than other rides in Magic Kingdom. If you can't get a reservation for this attraction, plan to race to the ride as soon as the park opens.
4. Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party at Magic Kingdom is one of the rare occasions where adult guests are allowed to dress up as their favorite Disney characters. Any other day, adults (ages 14 and up) who look too much like the official characters get turned away at the gates to avoid confusion. (Disney wouldn't want unauthorized people representing themselves as beloved characters.)
5. One of the special features of Disney Very Merriest After Hours is fake snow falling on Main Street. Guests who haven't paid to stay late can linger around Main Street when the park closes to them (7 p.m.) and experience the snow and holiday lighting.

Be on the lookout for the Mayor of the Magic Kingdom on Main Street during Disney Very Merriest After Hours. Other special guests of the evening typically include The Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella's Wicked Stepmother & Stepsisters, and the iconic Scrooge McDuck!

6. You must have proper identification to get into the Utilidor area, the hidden tunnels that allow Disney Cast Members to navigate the Magic Kingdom unseen by guests. However, tours are available that allow guests to see behind the scenes, including one that has an "underground" excursion. The Backstage Magic tour gives people a chance to go into these tunnels.
7. The second floor behind the Main Street train station is a popular viewing area for fireworks since it has a great, unobstructed view all the way down Main Street, U.S.A. to the castle. It is also a popular location from which to watch parades and the Flag Retreat ceremony (which happens each evening in Town Square).

## Disney Made *Easy*™ Insider Tips & Tricks

8. While you can climb through the Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse in only about 10 to 15 minutes, there are areas where you can step out of the line if you want to pay attention to the design features such as the waterwheel, bedrooms, kitchen, and other areas. If you want to stand aside to take time to soak up all the details, avoid the busiest times, during which many people passing by you might become disruptive.
9. Take a closer look at the Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse. What appears to be an authentic tree is actually constructed with steel, concrete, and stucco. It is supported by a concrete “root system” that spans more than four stories (40 feet) underground. Its 300,000 plastic leaves were each attached by hand!
10. Swiss Family Treehouse is a relaxed and pleasant attraction, but it may be frightening for children or adults who are afraid of heights. Additionally, the tree requires you to climb 116 steps and does not provide alternative methods for guests who have mobility issues. Nor is there a way to easily back out once entered, as you would be opposing on-coming traffic.
11. Tom Sawyer Island is the only Magic Kingdom attraction designed by Walt Disney himself.
12. Seven Dwarfs Mine Train feels more thrilling after dark.
13. If you sit with your kids in the back row of the very last train car at Magic Kingdom, the Conductor just might ask one of the kids to yell “All Aboard!” into the microphone.
14. Take the train around Magic Kingdom for a fun break. During your journey, the conductor tells you fun facts about the park. It’s a good time for the entire family, and you stay in the shade, which is perfect when it gets hot outside!
15. Riders who sit in the front row of the Magic Carpets of Aladdin ride in Magic Kingdom get a lever that raises and lowers the carpet. If you lower it at the right time, water from a “spitting camel” splashes you just a little bit!
16. If you want to take a break, while letting the kids run around, head to Tom Sawyer Island. They can play all they want, while you relax.

## Magic Kingdom

17. Sitting in the front, right side of Tiana's Bayou Adventure's log vehicle tends to get you the wettest, but the first rows always get drenched. Try the left seat, back row if you want to stay slightly drier OR request to sit in the front to get soaked!
18. When entering the queue for the Haunted Mansion, read the five tombstones at the beginning of the graveyard carefully. The messages are actually riddles. Solve each riddle to find out how each person died and who killed whom!
19. There may be 999 happy haunts within the Haunted Mansion, but only 109 of them are Disney-created Audio-Animatronics! The rest are created with other types of special effects.
20. The best time to visit Fantasyland in the Magic Kingdom is first thing in the morning or during the nighttime shows and fireworks (if you've already watched them!).
21. The it's a small world attraction was built long before Walt Disney World. With the help of artist Mary Blair, Imagineers created the ride for the 1964 New York World's Fair. It was so popular, they had to put it in Disneyland and then in the Magic Kingdom when it opened in 1971.
22. Under the Sea ~ Journey of The Little Mermaid ride usually has a pretty short wait later in the evening, so don't waste a Lightning Lane reservation if there are other rides you want to go on. After the ride, visit nearby Ariel's Grotto to meet The Little Mermaid face to face (and get an autograph and photo).
23. Take the Tomorrowland Transit Authority PeopleMover ride when you first get to Tomorrowland to see how this part of the park is laid out. You can get a good idea of where you want to go next. As an added bonus, you can catch a glimpse of Walt Disney's initial, miniature model of Epcot. It was planned as an actual community where people would live and work.
24. When waiting to get on Buzz Lightyear's SpaceRanger Spin, pay attention to hints in the queue to learn how to get a higher score. To get the maximum points, hold the trigger button down the whole time. Aim for smaller and distant targets. They are worth more than larger ones.

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25. Get a free sticker at Buzz Lightyear's SpaceRanger Spin, but only if you can prove you're a Galactic Hero! How can you prove this? Get the highest score available, of course!

If you manage to score 999,999 points on this ride, take a photo of your score on the scoreboard (at the end of the ride). Show it to the Cast Member at the photo desk after you exit the ride, and you'll be awarded the coveted Galactic Hero sticker!

26. Disney's After-Hours parties, such as the Halloween and Christmas events, have incredible atmosphere and shows, but they're not cheap. If you're at the Magic Kingdom on a party day but don't have a ticket, try to be near the back of the park at closing time.

Cast Members usher guests without event passes through the park towards the exit, so you won't be able to stick around. However, you can experience the amazing decorations, special effects, and sounds as you make your way to the exit.

Once on Main Street, hang out near the front of Main Street (in Town Square) for a while to see more of the festivities happening down Main Street and at Cinderella's Castle.

27. If you plan to close out the parks, don't head straight to the exits. Linger behind and enjoy the final moments, while the crowds crush together to reach cars and trams, causing massive delays. Use this time to take care of final photos, shopping, and enjoy some magical moments you may have otherwise missed.

For instance, the Magic Kingdom does a "kiss goodnight" each evening after the park closes. It includes twinkling fairy lights all over Cinderella's Castle, while "When You Wish Upon a Star" plays. At the end of the "kiss," you will hear a special thank you for visiting the park.

28. The best viewing location for Magic Kingdom's nighttime shows is in the castle courtyard. However, you may find yourself too far away to see the entire show when the fireworks begin.

If you're near Adventureland, climb to the top of the Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse for a spectacular view of the fireworks.

## Magic Kingdom

Avoid the area surrounding Peter Pan's Flight, The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh, and Mickey's PhilharMagic if you have any children who may be frightened by loud bangs. Some of the fireworks are shot off just overhead, and the noise can be frightening.

29. If you're one of the lucky few, you may end up on camera at the Monsters, Inc. Laugh Floor in Magic Kingdom. To improve your chances, sit in the first six rows, preferably on the left side of the theater.  
The person controlling the camera often looks for something unique about a person. For instance, a vivid aloha shirt or balding head will get you on camera faster than an all-black outfit.  
If you end up on camera, try to have fun with it. The sillier you act, the more likely the camera will swing back to you again later. Even better, those who get on camera receive a fun sticker letting everyone know they were "that guy!"
30. Honor a veteran each day at Magic Kingdom's Flag Retreat Ceremony. The flag is lowered each day, usually at 5 p.m., while the Star Spangled Banner plays. The best part is that Cast Members choose a veteran to honor at each ceremony.  
Even if you're not American, this ceremony is an important part of the American culture and tradition. There are rules of etiquette to show proper respect for the flag and American military members, past and present.  
If you're American, face the flag and hold your right hand over your heart, while the national anthem plays and the flag is lowered. If you're not American, stand quietly with your hands to your sides.  
If you notice any current military members or veterans in the audience, be sure to thank them for their service!
31. If you're a veteran, you may be eligible to be part of the Flag Retreat Ceremony as the honorary veteran of the day. The best chance to get picked for this honor is to go to Guest Relations first thing in the morning and request to be part of the ceremony. The Cast Member there can check to see if someone has already been chosen.

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If you haven't done this, ask a Cast Member if a veteran has been chosen yet as they're preparing the ceremony. Be sure to wear something showing your pride of service, such as a veteran's hat, so Cast Members can recognize you prior to the start of flag lowering.

32. To get the best, head-on view of the Magic Kingdom parades, try to get a spot in Town Square (the entry point to Main Street). The parade comes straight down Main Street, giving you a full view of the action. Alternatively, try for a spot in front of Liberty Square Market where the parade turns towards Main Street.
33. Make Fantasyland your first and last stop in Magic Kingdom. Families with younger children tend to arrive an hour or two after park opening. As Fantasyland has the most rides for smaller kids, that means the best time to get on rides like Peter Pan's Flight and Barnstormer with little wait are within the first two hours that the park is open each day. The second best time is during and after the evening fireworks, as many of those families head home immediately after the show.
34. "If you can't stand large crowds, the evening fireworks show at Magic Kingdom can become overwhelming. People pack together like sardines.  
If you want to watch the fireworks without the crowds, head to the Dumbo ride in Storybook Circus. Enjoy a clear view of the fireworks with very few people around.  
Unfortunately, doing so means you will miss the projections and lasers, but the fireworks are still incredible!"
35. The morning of your Magic Kingdom visit, get a boarding pass to Tron Lightcycle Run at 7 a.m. Log into the system about 10 minutes early to prepare your boarding group, and continuously hit "refresh" until the system opens. This attraction uses a virtual queue, and spots fill up within minutes of the system opening each morning.
36. Wear a rain poncho to avoid getting too soaked on Tiana's Bayou Adventure. Even if you want the refreshing splash, you can use the poncho (or a plastic bag) to protect your camera and other electronics. Your poncho will also be useful for Walt Disney

## Magic Kingdom

World's only other splash ride, Kali River Rapids in Animal Kingdom.

37. The Mad Tea Party may induce motion-sickness in some people, so be careful and avoid eating immediately prior to taking part in the fun.
38. Don't pay for Disney Very Merriest After Hours just to get your child a holiday picture with Santa. Santa shows up at the Magic Kingdom, Epcot (with Mrs. Claus!), and Disney Springs every day from mid-November to early-January. There's no extra charge to meet Santa and get a picture with your own camera (even at Disney Springs!)
39. Most people with smaller children leave the Magic Kingdom immediately after the evening fireworks show, leaving the park nearly (but not quite) as quiet as the early morning hours of the day. On nights when the Magic Kingdom stays open particularly late (sometimes as late as 3 a.m.), you will see the rest of the families leave by midnight.

If you can, plan for a non-activity day for the following day and close out the park. These are the rare days when you might be able to do the best rides multiple times.

40. Seven Dwarfs Mine Train and Tron Lightcycle Power Run are the most popular attractions at the Magic Kingdom. If you can't obtain a Lightning Lane reservation, get breakfast reservations before the park opens at Crystal Palace (or another Magic Kingdom restaurant) to be one of the first in line at park opening.
41. Perhaps the best place in Magic Kingdom to have a picnic lunch and some quiet time is Tom Sawyer Island. You may have a crowded raft ride to get through, but the island is large and there are rarely large crowds there.

To make it better, there is a nice, covered area with seating and tables to have a relaxing meal.

42. If you get stuck due to a Magic Kingdom parade, there are a few ways to get around it. One of the best options to move around the park is the train. The train stations are located near Tiana's Bayou Adventure in Frontierland, Barnstormer in Storybook Circus, and

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City Hall in Main Street. Hop on at any station for a trip around the park to either of the other stations (or just stay on as long as you like if your kids need a nap).

If you need to cross the parade route, particularly if you need to get to Adventureland from the other side of the parade, look for the Cast Member holding a rope. These Cast Members open up a lane of walking traffic every few minutes. On Main Street, head to Harmony Barbershop. A Cast Member opens a lane of traffic from there to City Hall every few minutes.

The walking alternative is to take the path along the Confectionary side of Main Street to Tomorrowland. From there, you will have access to Fantasyland, the Haunted Mansion, and Frontierland. In Frontierland, use the waterfront boardwalk to traverse between the Haunted Mansion and Big Thunder Mountain Railroad.

43. Magic Kingdom fireworks can be viewed from the hotels across the lagoon, and any music or dialogue from the show is played for hotel guests to hear outside the park. If you plan to leave immediately after fireworks, we recommend you take the monorail to Polynesian Resort before the show and find a place to watch on the beach. You'll also get to see the Electric Water Pageant on the lagoon, and you can easily walk back to the Transportation and Ticket Center from Polynesian without waiting for a packed monorail.
44. If you arrive at a time when the front of the park (Town Square) is busy or there is a crowd waiting for a parade, hop on a train to one of the other two stops and start your tour there.
45. If you are planning to visit on Christmas, make your day extra special by visiting the Magic Kingdom at opening time. (Remember, you must have a park reservation on this day to enter.) Crowds are almost non-existent early in the morning, allowing you to experience all of the best attractions with little wait.

That all changes around 10 a.m. when you can expect huge crowds to enter the parks. Unimaginable waves of guests begin to press in on the park, as it fills to capacity.

If you want to visit the Magic Kingdom on Christmas day, stay at one of the Disney hotels, so you can get Early Theme Park Entry

## **Magic Kingdom**

to the park at 7:30 a.m. Get your rides out of the way and plan to leave when crowds flood in. Eat a Christmas brunch or take a break in your hotel room and enjoy opening your presents!

46. Try to get to the Magic Kingdom entrance 30-45 minutes before park opening. Disney opens the gates a bit early to allow guests to shop on Main Street and view the Opening Ceremony in front of the castle before the rides open. Being there early will ensure you are near the front of the line to gain access to the park as soon as the rope drops. This will give you the best head-start to make sure you do every ride on your list!
47. Ask for some pixie dust for your kids at the Harmony Barber Shop in Magic Kingdom. They'll give them a fresh sprinkling of it over their heads.

# Epcot



1. Disney executives opted to change the name from the original EPCOT acronym to a more proper name, “Epcot Center.” It was later changed to just Epcot.
2. In terms of overall size, Epcot is about twice as large as the Magic Kingdom or Hollywood Studios, although it is still much smaller than the Animal Kingdom.  
  
Physically, Epcot sits within a land area of about 300 acres. The promenade around World Showcase measures a whopping 1.2 miles long, encircling the 40-acre lagoon.
3. Only one of the two totem poles in Epcot’s Canada pavilion is authentic. The real one (carved by a Native American artist) is the more serious and plain totem, while the one created by Disney Imagineers is more cartoon-like and vivid. The authentic totem pole tells a story of the legendary raven from Native American folklore.
4. Stop at Guest Relations in Epcot and request an interesting fact sheet about the countries for an educational tool to engage your kids.
5. Go to Restaurant Marrakesh in Epcot’s Morocco pavilion to see a replica of a letter written by George Washington to the king of Morocco.
6. Take the Epcot monorail to the park for an excellent, overhead view of the park. The train soars over a large portion of Future World, gliding about 20 feet above the walking paths.
7. One great way to turn a trip to Epcot into a fun and educational experience is to download the Google Translate app. Cast Members who work in each land pavilion at Epcot’s World Showcase are actually native to that country.

As you’re heading around World Showcase, use the app to teach you a simple phrase to say hello or to give a Cast Member a special thank you in their native language. It will make their day! You can also use the camera translation feature on the app to read signs throughout each land. Who says learning can’t be fun?

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8. If you visit during the holidays, check Disney's website for the lineup of celebrities and the date each will be reading the nativity story at Epcot's Candlelight Processional. The schedule is not available until the event nears.
9. The Eat to the Beat Concert Series draws a different line-up of bands each year. Each band plays two to three days in a row, and they put on three different 30-minute concerts each evening. Be sure to check Disney's website to find out who will be playing during your visit or visit their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/EpcotFoodandWine](http://www.facebook.com/EpcotFoodandWine).
10. The giant "golf ball" looking structure that houses Spaceship Earth in Epcot is known as a geodesic sphere. Introduced as a pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair in New York City, the original geodesic sphere dome was designed by Thomas C. Howard of Synergetics, Inc. That dome was taken apart, moved, and reassembled where it is currently used as an aviary by the Queens Zoo in Flushing Meadows Corona Park.
11. Spaceship Earth's spherical shape is composed of many triangles that form an "omnitriangulated" surface. This geodesic dome design appealed to an engineer named Buckminster Fuller who championed it (initially as a post WWII home design) because, given its overall weight, it is an inherently stable structure, with extreme relative strength. While never popular for homes, these spheres can be found all over the world in the form of theaters, churches, exhibition halls, and museums.

The design was a good fit for Disney's purposes – in which to conceal an attraction – because of the fact that spheres enclose the greatest volume with the least surface area.
12. You may be surprised to find a high level of corporate branding throughout the Epcot park and its rides, as many of the exhibits and attractions are officially sponsored by major companies.
13. The World Showcase Lagoon sets the stage for the nightly fireworks presentation, Harmonious.

## Epcot

14. Soarin' was revamped in 2016 with updated scenery and enhanced, digital film quality. The changes increased capacity with the addition of another theater, which reduced wait times. Interactive games were also added to the queue, making the wait in the cool air conditioning reasonable pleasant.
15. The spectacular videos and images for Reflections of China in Epcot's China pavilion were captured using nine 35mm cameras that were fitted to a unique pod to create the 360-degree view.
16. Future World at Epcot has smaller crowds in the evening, so return there after 3:00 p.m. to do anything you missed earlier in the day.
17. Try to find a spot to watch Epcot's evening fireworks show on the steps leading to the Canada pavilion. You get a great view.
18. If you like thrill rides, you won't find much at Epcot. Fortunately, Disney is in the process of adding one of the world's longest indoor roller coasters. It will be the first Marvel attraction at Disney World with a cool Guardians of the Galaxy theme!
19. Spaceship Earth doesn't seem very exciting, but it's actually a fan favorite you won't want to miss. Take off your hat and make a silly face when your picture is taken at the beginning of the ride. It will pay off when you see the video later!
20. If you aren't sure which thrill level to ride on Mission: SPACE, choose to join the Green Team. If you don't get sick, try the Orange Team again later. Whatever you do, don't go on the ride immediately after eating!
21. In years past, the few rides in Epcot's World Showcase weren't very busy. However, two of Epcot's most popular rides are now hidden within the pavilions. Norway has Frozen Ever After, while France has Remy's Ratatouille Adventure. Of the two, Lightning Lane reservations are most needed for Remy's Ratatouille Adventure.
22. Most of World Showcase opens at 11 a.m., but the rides in the France and Norway pavilions (including Remy's Ratatouille Adventure and Frozen Ever After) open at the same time as Future World. Run straight for those rides when the park opens if you don't have Lightning Lane reservations.

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23. You can see Epcot's fireworks show really well from England, Canada or Mexico. Look to see what direction the wind is blowing, and choose whichever location will not be downwind to keep smoke and embers from blowing your way.
24. Don't miss the opportunity to see real manatees in Epcot's The Sea with Nemo and Friends and around Florida.  
  
For an incredible experience you will never forget, you can hire a tour guide to take you to swim with manatees in the wild at Crystal River (a few hours from Disney).  
  
Look for a small tour that leaves at dawn for the best experience. You are more likely to get an up-close-and-personal experience with a manatee in the early hours of the morning.
25. Watch out for dangling feet on Soarin' Around the World in Epcot! No, they won't kick you, but they could be in your view and ruin the illusion.  
  
Ask to be seated near the center of the front row, if possible. The front row lifts above the others, so no feet will be in view.  
  
If you don't care about dangling feet, just ask to sit near the center of whatever row you're in. This provides you with the most immersive experience.
26. Get seats in the first few rows of the American Adventure show in Epcot. While the center of the theater is preferable in most shows, there are some great details that are difficult to see farther back in the theater. Look for glowing embers on Mark Twain's cigar, and try to figure out how the Audio-Animatronic Benjamin Franklin walks up those stairs!
27. Many of Epcot's front-of-the-park (formerly Future World) rides are busier in the morning than afternoon, as the crowds flood to World Showcase around lunchtime. Wait until mid-afternoon to go on Spaceship Earth, The Seas with Nemo and Friends, Living with the Land, Journey Into Imagination with Figment, and Mission: Space. You can often ride them with little to no wait.
28. The morning of your Epcot visit, get a boarding pass to Guardians of the Galaxy - Cosmic Rewind at 7 a.m. Log into the system about 10 minutes early to prepare your boarding group, and

## Epcot

continuously hit “refresh” until the system opens. This attraction uses a virtual queue, and spots fill up within minutes of the system opening each morning.

29. There are some great entertainment options in Epcot’s restaurants. For instance, belly dancers entertain families inside Restaurant Marrakesh in Morocco; Germany’s Biergarten restaurant has a live oompah band; and you can meet princesses at Akershus restaurant in Norway.
30. Brand new attractions, such as Tron Lightcycle Run and Guardians of the Galaxy - Cosmic Rewind, often use a virtual queue for the first few months they are open. Check the My Disney Experience App to see if an attraction has a virtual queue available.

To get your party into a virtual queue, you must already have a park reservation for the park in which the attractions reside and sign up for a boarding pass first thing in the morning (7 a.m.) of your visit to that park.

There is no standby option for attractions with a virtual queue. You won’t be able to go on the ride if you don’t get into a boarding group or pay for a Lightning Lane reservation.

Use the My Disney Experience app or website to prepare your boarding party prior to the 7 a.m. opening of the boarding pass system for your desired attraction (any time between 6 a.m. and 6:45 a.m. that morning). As 7 a.m. approaches, use the refresh option of the app or browser to join the queue as soon as it opens.

These virtual queues often fill up within minutes each day.

However, a second chance to sign up happens again at 1 p.m. For a chance to join the virtual queue at that time, you must already be in the park. (Park hoppers who start the day at a different park rarely get into a virtual queue for these attractions, as they are not allowed to enter a new park until 2 p.m. or later.

31. Mission: Space has two experiences, each with different levels of intensity: Green and Orange. We suggest starting as a member of the tame Green Team, which omits the spinning motion, reducing the impact of the ride, to see how you fare with the 3-D effects.

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If you do well on Green Team, come back later to try the Orange Team for a more intense experience. Late evening is the best time to enjoy the Orange Team, as any motion sickness you may experience won't ruin your entire day.

Beware: Once the ride starts, there is no stopping it. Each guest is strapped inside a "space capsule" that has a magnified display of a video screen that looks like a window to space. The ride is not recommended for people with issues regarding claustrophobia.

32. If you didn't get Lightning Lane reservations for a popular attraction in Epcot, such as Frozen Ever After, and the queue is too long to wait, try again just prior to the evening fireworks show. The show begins at park closing time, so it is your last opportunity to get in line. Wait times usually drop by about 20 minutes, as crowds head to the lagoon.
33. Ensure a seat at Epcot's Candlelight Processional by making a dinner and show reservation. Because seating is very limited, many people opt to pay for a dinner and show package that ensures priority seating in the theater. If you want a special Christmas celebration watching a specific celebrity read the nativity, this is a memorable experience.

Note: The Candlelight Processional is included with your Epcot park admission, but seating is very limited.

34. Take a moment to ask the friendly Kidcot Cast Member at the Epcot Japan pavilion to write your child's name in Japanese on a paper fan. This makes an excellent (and free) souvenir that children find very unique, and your little ones will cherish theirs.
35. The International Gateway is the back entrance into Epcot. You enter right in the heart of World Showcase.

This is really convenient if you just want to get dinner or watch the nighttime fireworks show.

It's also the only easy way to get back to your hotel from there if you're staying at the Boardwalk Inn, Beach or Yacht Club.

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36. Enter Epcot through the “back door.” There’s an International Gateway entrance accessible primarily to guests of Disney’s BoardWalk Inn, Beach Club, Yacht Club, and Swan and Dolphin hotels. This entrance usually has a much shorter line at park opening, and it positions guests in World Showcase, closer to Remy’s Ratatouille Adventure and Frozen Ever After than the regular park entrance.

If you get an especially early start, you can take a bus to one of these hotels, then walk to the entrance, or pay for valet parking at one of the hotels. (You can park for free if you have breakfast reservations at a hotel restaurant.)

37. Ask Cast Members in the China, Japan and Morocco pavilions to write your child’s name in their language. It makes an excellent, unique souvenir for kids.

# Hollywood Studios



1. The Chinese Theater in Hollywood Studios is a replica of the one found in Hollywood, California. Opened in 1927 by showman Sid Grauman, about four million tourists flock to the world's most famous Chinese Theater in California each year. Over the years, it has changed its name, though it is still called "Grauman's Chinese Theatre" by most people.

In 1973, it was formally renamed Mann's Chinese Theatre. It went by this moniker until it was officially re-branded TCL Chinese Theatre in January, 2013 (after the Chinese manufacturer TCL paid more than \$5 million for the naming rights to the 85-year old Hollywood establishment).
2. The entire theater courtyard area of Hollywood Studios was once in the shape of a giant Mickey Mouse head as part of the original park design, making it one of the largest Hidden Mickeys anywhere. If you look at a map, you can still see partial remnants of that design. Echo Lake is the right ear, and planters form the shape of Mickey's eyes. However, further construction on the park eliminated part of his silhouette.
3. The front of the Chinese Theater in Hollywood Studios makes a great place for your family to meet if you get separated.
4. Fans love the interactive features of Hollywood Studio's Indiana Jones Stunt Spectacular. A few volunteer members of the audience are selected to go down onto the stage to play parts as "extras" in the production. Wear bright, distinctive clothes and show up early to make yourself more noticeable if you wish to be one of the several who are chosen.
5. The Walt Disney Presents exhibit in Hollywood Studios includes more than 400 Disney artifacts. Highlights include Walt Disney's 2nd-grade school desk and the original Audio-Animatronics Abraham Lincoln figure from the 1964 New York World's Fair.
6. Ask the Cast Member at the entrance to Hollywood Studio's Walt Disney Presents if he has any trivia for you, also known as a "Citizenship Test." If you get the answers right, you'll be invited to sign a very exclusive citizenship book. Everyone wants to become a "Citizen of Walt Disney World!"

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7. Walt Disney Presents often gets busy during inclement weather. If you find yourself pushing through a crowd of people, wait a few minutes for the next film to begin and it should dissipate.
8. If you do brave the Tower of Terror, make sure anything loose is secured. Loose change and snacks (especially popcorn!) often fly around the elevator car.
9. If taking part in Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple is important to your child, send the fastest member of your party to race to the line to sign up for the experience first thing in the morning. It's a very popular experience for kids and space is very limited! Don't despair if you're a little late, though. You can ask to have your child put on a waitlist in case another child drops out.
10. When signing up for Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple, you must choose which show time to attend. Try not to sign up for a mid-afternoon show if it's a hot day. You and your child are going to be outside for about an hour, which can be really uncomfortable. Mid-afternoon is also when Orlando's summer thunderstorms often happen, which can cancel the show. If you can, get a spot in an early morning or evening show, if you plan to stay in the park all day.
11. There's a secret "Chewie Mode" you can unlock on the Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run attraction. Do a web search before your trip to find out how to do this special experience.
12. Show up at least 15 minutes early to Indiana Jones Epic Stunt Spectacular! in Hollywood Studios. They pick volunteers from the audience to participate in the show before it begins.

Wear shirts and hats with vivid colors and patterns to improve your chances of getting noticed and picked out of the crowd. It's not safe for kids to join in, but kids can still raise their hands and point out a parent to get them noticed, so have your children make some noise!
13. Look for the sign outside and to the left of the Indiana Jones Epic Stunt Spectacular! entrance that says, "Do not pull the rope." ("Not" is crossed out, so it looks like it says, "Pull the rope!")

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Pull the rope and listen carefully. At the bottom of a well, an archaeologist is searching for precious artifacts at a dig site. He'll have some choice words for you.

14. The top priority attraction at Hollywood Studios is Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance. If you don't get a Lightning Lane reservation for it, you will find yourself in a mad dash first thing in the morning. The other really popular attractions are Slinky Dog Dash and Rock 'n' Roller Coaster. Head for these rides first thing if you don't have Lightning Lane reservations. They get busy right away.
15. Exits are available just before you reach the ride, after waiting in line for Tower of Terror and Rock 'n' Roller Coaster. These are called "chicken exits," which you can use if you get cold feet and decide to skip the ride at the last minute. Don't worry if you change your mind. Many people do!
16. Don't eat for at least an hour before going on any extreme ride, real or simulated. They can make you get sick. At Hollywood Studios, these are Rock 'n' Roller Coaster, Star Tours, Twilight Zone Tower of Terror and Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run.
17. Many of Hollywood Studios' stage shows begin showing later in the mornings. The times for these shows are often staggered, allowing you just enough time to race to the next one after another show ends. It requires careful planning (and a bit of dedication) to see each show, since their hours are limited.
18. If you sit in the front rows at Hollywood Studios' Fantasmic!, you are likely to get wet! Select seats in the middle of the theater for the best place to see the show.
19. If Fantasmic! is playing twice on the day you visit Hollywood Studios, go to the later show. It's usually much less crowded and easier to find a good seat.
20. Fantasmic! is located in the outdoor theater next to the Tower of Terror. It is right next to a lake, so if you take a boat ride between Hollywood Studios and Epcot at night, you can hear the show going on and see a few of the fireworks.
21. Kids love to go on Toy Story Mania! again and again. If you have children with you, get to the park early and you might be able to

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get on it a couple of times before the line gets too long. If you play it enough, you just might figure out hidden ways to score more points!

22. Hollywood Studios has an incredible evening fireworks show with projections on the Chinese Theater. Find a place to stand and watch the show very early. Look for somewhere in the courtyard in front of the theater, but not too close to the building. The streets fill up quickly for this performance every night.
23. Get shorter folks front row seats on Tower of Terror to avoid the mysteriously missing face. Actually, there's no mystery here. Nearly everyone raises their arms high in the air during the ride, so children are smaller adults in the second and third row are often completely covered up in the ride photo.

Ask to be in position 1 or 2 (which is front row) when being seated. Alternatively, you can request what many argue is the best seat on the ride, the center seat of the back row. With nobody seated in front of its elevated position, it offers a completely unobstructed view of the action!

24. If you want a great view while riding the Tower of Terror and are alone or traveling with more timid people, ask to be seated in the center of the back row. The back row is slightly elevated above the other rows, and there is no seat in front of the center position, giving the lone rider a fantastic view of the park and all the other riders.
25. The front row is usually the best on roller coasters, as it offers the smoothest ride with unobstructed views. However, that's not the case on Slinky Dog Dash. The front row view is blocked by the canine's oversized head, so try to get third row seats or farther back.
26. Be "that guy" at Tower of Terror and Haunted Mansion. Frequent visitors to the parks enjoy adding an extra fright at the end of the pre-shows for each of these attractions. At the point the lights go out, they often let out their own blood-curdling screams to add to the audience terror.

While this usually elicits a few surprised shrieks and chuckles from other guests, gauge the audience first. Don't do it if you see

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children already quaking in fear, as it can lead to a crying child who refuses to continue with the ride.

27. In Star Tours at Hollywood Studios, each boarding party includes a rebel spy. Who is the spy? It's a person randomly chosen each time. There's no way to guarantee you might be chosen, but to increase your chances, try to look rebellious. Don't put on your 3D glasses when everyone else does, keep a stoic expression, avoid eye contact or speaking, etc.
28. If you want to watch both Fantasmic! and Star Wars: A Galactic Spectacular at Hollywood Studios, it requires careful planning. You must go on a day that has two showings of Fantasmic! Get a seat in the first showing, somewhere near the rear right of the theater (close to the exit). As soon as the show ends, race to Hollywood Boulevard.

The best viewing location is near where Hollywood Boulevard turns into the Chinese Theater courtyard. Don't stand too close to the Chinese Theater, as you need a full view of the sides of the theater. Bring a jacket or towel to sit on, while you wait for the show to begin.

29. There are a couple of secret ways to score more points on Toy Story Mania! If you want to beat the socks off everyone else and get the high score, hit the fox on the henhouse in the very first barn scene. This causes hens to appear that are worth a lot of points.

Later, in the green aliens scene, try to work with your ride partner to get rings on all of the aliens at the same time. This causes a robot to appear. Shoot rings into his mouth for really high points!

30. During slow seasons, Fantasmic! does not run every day at Hollywood Studios. Be sure to verify the show is scheduled on the day you plan to visit.
31. If your little one is desperate to take part in Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple, the best option is to get early dining reservations at Hollywood & Vine at a time before park opening. One adult and the Jedi-in-training can head to sign up for the experience just before the park is scheduled to open, while the rest of the party enjoys their meal.

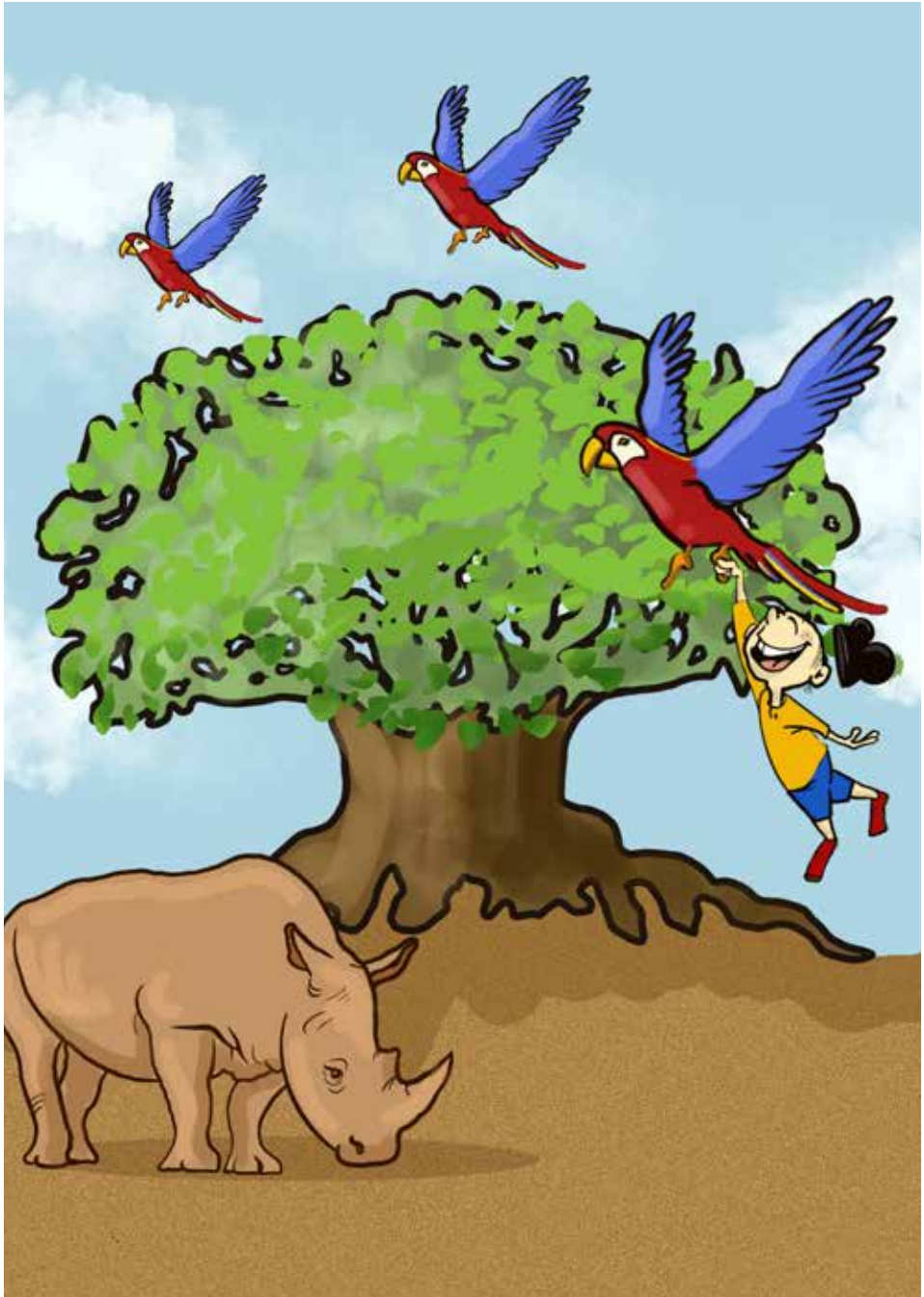
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32. Tower of Terror usually has short wait times while guests are in the early evening Fantasmic! show. The moment the show lets out, guests rush to the Tower of Terror queue.
33. If there are two Fantasmic! shows scheduled on a day, the second is always less crowded. Since the second show also starts at park closing, waiting for it gives you the added benefit of more time to experience other attractions Hollywood Studios has to offer.
34. If you sign up your young Padawan for Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple, prepare him/her for the experience. Facing down a Dark Side villain can be a frightening experience for timid kids.  
  
Try psyching your child with reassurances about the strength of the Jedis and The Force, with a strong reminder that both you and the Jedi trainer will be there to help the entire time!
35. Toy Story Land in Hollywood Studios has very few locations to get out of the rain during Orlando's massive thunderstorms. You have two options: either hop into the indoor queue for Toy Story Mania! or race to Alien Swirling Saucers. Alien Swirling Saucers is covered and becomes a makeshift shelter for guests to stay safe from stray lightning bolts!

To make the dreams of Disney (World) come true took the companied skills and talents of hundreds of artisan's, carpenters, engineers, scientists, and craftsmen. The dreams that they built now become your heritage. It is you who will make Disney(land) truly a magic kingdom and a happy place for the millions of guests who will visit us now and in the future.

- Walt Disney

# Animal Kingdom



1. Natural and authentic flora (vegetation) planted at the Animal Kingdom park comprises over four million plants, ground coverings, shrubs, vines, epiphytes, and grasses from each continent on Earth, except Antarctica.

Over 850 species of trees, 2,000 species of shrubs, and 260 different types of grasses are maintained throughout the park. Around 110 of the tree and shrub species had never before been cultivated in North America before Disney took on the challenge.

2. Take a moment to learn how Disney tries to help the environment and animals found at the Animal Kingdom. The cotton-top tamarin is one of the most endangered primates in the world, and the Disney Conservation Fund has partnered with a conservation group located in Colombia to save them and their habitats.
3. The entire Animal Kingdom Park may close early (by 7 p.m.) during the short winter days.
4. Unseen Animal Barriers. Whether you're traveling through Animal Kingdom's safari, walking through the Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail, or strolling among the other exotic habitats, Disney makes sure that barriers between humans and animals appear non-existent.

The barriers are concealed with realistic-looking features. For example, the bamboo stand separating the gorillas from the guests is actually a set of steel rods placed in concrete. You also see what looks like simple ridges of earth that provide cover for large moats and barriers, keeping animals on one side of the path and you on the other.

5. While walking around the Animal Kingdom, ask a Cast Member near an animal exhibit when that particular animal is most active.
6. Affection Section at the Animal Kingdom is the only animal meet-and-greet (petting zoo) area within any of the parks. It features goats, sheep, donkeys, cows, and pigs. In addition to petting, fur brushes are lying around the enclosure for you to use on the goats. These are popular (for both children and the animals!) and available on a first-come, first-served basis, so you're free to grab any one you see lying around.

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7. A maharaja is a king or prince in India (who ranks higher than a rajah). In the Kingdom of Anandpur (pronounced “ah-NAHN-dah-poor”), Bengal tigers are the royalty who live within the ruins of the maharaja’s palace at the Animal Kingdom.
8. Brochures that describe the wildlife and provide viewing tips are provided near the entrance to the Animal Kingdom’s Maharajah Jungle Trek, and Cast Members are available along the trail to answer questions and provide information.
9. A hike through Maharajah Jungle Trek is a great way to end the day, as the tigers are usually alert and moving about as they wait to be fed about an hour before park closing.
10. Prepare to get thoroughly soaked on Kali River Rapids. No water ride would be complete without a plunge or two down falls, and almost nobody makes it out of the attraction dry. Heed the warnings that are posted on signs everywhere: “The Proprietors of Kali River Rapids Expeditions wish to inform you: You WILL get wet! YOU MAY GET SOAKED!”

The water splashes high at many places around the river, as the tube-raft bounces around eddies and tumultuous currents. This results in some level of soaking for each passenger. While it may be refreshing to some park-goers on a hot day, beware of colder days.

Warning: Children love it ... until they get soaked. Be prepared with a change of clothes or you’ll succumb to having to head back to the hotel or buy a new outfit at a nearby shop.

11. Fun Fact: While Mount Everest can be viewed in the distance from your Expedition Everest train car, the ride actually takes place within the snow-topped peaks of the mythical Forbidden Mountain.
12. The DINOSAUR attraction in Disney’s Animal Kingdom may seem oddly familiar to those who have been on the Indiana Jones ride in Disneyland. That’s because Disney used the exact same track layout and ride design for both attractions! They simply overlaid DINOSAUR with a different theme than its California counterpart.

## Animal Kingdom

13. If you can, visit the Pandora land at Animal Kingdom both during the daytime and nighttime. At night, the land completely changes the way it looks, because the plants light up with bioluminescence. Even the pathway glows!
14. We love getting soaked on Kali River Rapids, but wearing soggy shoes the rest of the day is no fun. Unfortunately, you're not allowed to take your shoes off during the ride, so how can you keep your feet dry? Large Ziploc bags or plastic groceries bags are excellent makeshift shoe covers. Tie them around your feet as soon as you're seated.

Look for the metal bar in front of the seat. Put your feet on it and keep them there for the duration of the ride. The bar will keep your feet elevated above the worst of the splashing. Finally, consider bringing a thin pair of flip flops you can change into just before the ride, and leave your nicer pair of shoes (and maybe even a change of clothes) in a nearby locker.

15. Try to ride Animal Kingdom's Kilimanjaro Safaris first thing in the morning or around sunset. This is when animals tend to be most active, and you are more likely to see them roaming around. On hot days, expect the animals to be resting in the shade when the sun is at its peak, making them more difficult to spot.
16. Rafiki's Planet Watch and the exploration trails at Animal Kingdom usually close 30 to 60 minutes prior to sunset, so if they are on your must-do list, make sure you know when sunset is and verify closing time in advance with Guest Relations. The short winter days, coupled with daylight savings time, can push the closing time for the animal exhibits to 5 p.m. or slightly earlier.
17. Wear a rain poncho to avoid getting too soaked on Kali River Rapids. Even if you want the refreshing splash, you can use the poncho (otherwise, take a plastic bag) to protect your camera and other electronics. The poncho will also be useful for Walt Disney World's only other splash ride, Tiana's Bayou Adventure in Magic Kingdom.

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18. Take a moment to sign your child up for the free Wilderness Explorers program at one of several booths throughout Animal Kingdom. Wilderness Explorers are given their own “scout handbook” in which children collect their stickers. This makes a great souvenir even if they don’t do many of the challenges.
19. If there are no paying guests playing the midway games in Animal Kingdom’s Dinoland USA, you can request to play for free. Most Cast Members will allow you a turn, but you won’t be eligible for a prize.
20. If your children are taking part in the Wilderness Explorers Challenge at Animal Kingdom, be on the lookout for a Wilderness Explorers station in Pandora. There are fun activities that allow kids to earn Pandora badges as they learn about the fictional alien plants that live in the Valley of Mo’ara.
21. If you don’t have a Lightning Lane reservation for Flight of Passage, use the My Disney Experience app to watch the queue wait times throughout the day. You may find the shortest times first thing in the morning and during the nighttime show. However, you can also jump into line just a few minutes before the park closes.

As long as you’re in line before closing time, you can wait as long as it takes to get on the ride. The best part is you won’t have wasted hours waiting in line when you could have been enjoying other attractions!
22. If turnstiles have a really long line at Animal Kingdom, go through the Rainforest Cafe restaurant for a hidden turnstile that visitors can only get to through the restaurant. It usually has little to no wait.
23. To avoid the crush of people rushing to the main attractions at Animal Kingdom, obtain Lightning Lane reservations for Avatar Flight of Passage (the park’s most popular ride) and enjoy other attractions first thing in the day. Alternatively, if you use your Genie+ to schedule other events, join the crowds heading to this favorite for an early morning ride.

## **Animal Kingdom**

24. It's Tough to Be a Bug! at Disney's Animal Kingdom is fun for the whole family, but there are some parts that get intense for younger kids. Advise kids to close their eyes if they get too spooked. The scary part ends quickly. Sit back and straight up against your chair to make sure you don't miss the surprise ending of the show.

# Vacation Memories



1. If you have your camera ready, you may have time to snap a blurry shot of the preview photo of an attraction picture. On purpose, the display system makes it impossible to get a clean photographic copy. However, even if it's not a great snapshot, getting to laugh for a bit about funny and frightened faces (you would not otherwise want around forever, anyway!) is worthwhile. (Disney couldn't expect otherwise.) But if you don't want to buy the official pictures, it's worth trying.
2. Walk-through and Back Story. If you wish to delve into more details about each attraction – including the backstory and walk-through description – you'll want to read our next volume, called *Walking with Walt* (coming soon!).

Not everybody wants to know all the little details in advance.

If you are someone who likes surprises, appreciate that we keep spoilers to a bare minimum in this book. But once you have visited, the details we share in our upcoming volume will help you re-live your experiences and also let you read about what you might have missed.

3. You may see “Attraction Commandos” hurriedly rushing through the park seeking out only the major thrills and excitement. Not all tourists care about absorbing the details Disney designed into the parks. However, the parks are about the atmosphere and details as much as they are about the rides. You will miss much of what the theme parks have to offer if you don't take the time to explore.
4. After your trip, keep all your Disney memorabilia and useful vacation tools in a single location. You may decide to reuse some of the items on future trips, such as autograph books, pressed penny books, MagicBands, etc.
5. Budget to splurge on one special souvenir for your trip. If it's a special occasion, such as a Disney wedding or honeymoon, consider having a personalized memento created to commemorate the occasion. Great options include embroidered Mickey ears, ornaments personalized from one of the on-site artists at Disney's Days of Christmas Store (Disney Springs), caricatures from one of the many on-property artists, hand-engraved glassware or picture frame (Magic Kingdom, Epcot and Disney Springs).

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6. When looking for that special memento, search for limited-time souvenirs. For instance, if you attend a paid after-hours event, look for a hat or t-shirt that has the year and name of the event. These souvenirs tend to hold their value better than a standard shirt or cup. If you take care of it, it may even go up in value!
7. Ask any Disney PhotoPass photographer to take a picture with your camera. While you won't be able to get special Magic Shot features by doing this, you can still get a great picture in front of Disney's most iconic scenery.
8. There's a great Memory Maker perk at Disney Springs. Get a great, studio quality family photo at The PhotoPass Studio there. They have different background options, including virtual layovers for special events and holidays. The final product is included with your Memory Maker package.

Even if you don't have Memory Maker, you can get your photo taken there and choose to purchase it separately or not!

9. Popcorn buckets make great souvenirs. There are some really fun designs, some of which are park specific. Movie night at home will be a great reminder of your trip when you fill up the bucket and sit down with the family.
10. Rather than bring your souvenirs home in Disney's disposable plastic bags, purchase a reusable one. Many Disney merchandise locations have reusable souvenir bags for sale at a very reasonable price. They make great souvenirs and are a great reminder of your trip when you use them to go grocery shopping back home!
11. Pay it forward. Your vacation is over, and you have items you know will never get used again. What should you do with the stroller you bought just for this trip? How about those Mickey Ears that will never again be worn?

Consider donating these lightly-used items to Give Kids the World ([gktw.org](http://gktw.org)). This is a local charity that gives children with life-threatening conditions the chance to visit Walt Disney World with their families.

If you're feeling even more generous, you can send them a monetary donation or set up a donation page directly on their website to

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request donations from family and friends on their behalf. You can make a huge difference to a child in need.

12. Unplanned pictures often make the best memories. Don't wait until the whole family is lined up and posing. Snap the occasional candid shot of each person, so you can look back later and enjoy the authentic smiles and looks of wonder. This is especially true during character meet-and-greets.

The characters often do unexpected and silly things before the PhotoPass photographer begins snapping shots. Take lots of photos of your family's reactions as they approach the characters for the first time and start interacting. Your memories will be that much better when you see them later!

13. What can you do if your PhotoPass pictures disappear? Approximately 10% of those memories don't get properly linked to your account, so if a picture is important, check to make sure it linked properly. To do this, check your My Disney Experience app regularly. If your PhotoPass shot doesn't appear within an hour or two, go back to have it taken again.

Attraction photos are a little trickier. They're supposed to automatically link, but there's a sensor at the bottom of the preview picture as you leave the ride. Touch your MagicBand or park pass to the sensor to manually link the photo.

If your picture never shows up on the preview board, ask a Cast Member at the gift shop to help you locate it. They can manually scroll the photos to find it. If it's lost or someone else in the ride vehicle did something inappropriate, causing it to be removed, the Cast Member may be able to get you back on the ride with little to no wait.

14. Attention social media influencers! Disney was made for Instagram, and there are some famous "Disney Walls" where you must take a pic:

1) The Purple Wall in Magic Kingdom may be the most famous and is considered the original Disney Wall. It is located on the walkway between Tomorrowland Terrace restaurant and Tomorrowland (#PurpleWall).

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- 2) Head to the Coral Reef restaurant in Epcot's Seas pavilion. The famed Toothpaste Wall is just to the left of the restaurant entrance (#ToothpasteWall).
- 3) Next, find Epcot's Bubblegum Wall (named for its bright, raspberry, pink, and blue colors). There are two walls, located at each of Spaceship Earth's exits (#BubblegumWall).
- 4) Another Epcot landmark is the Blueberry Wall with its varying shades of blue, located near the Bubblegum Wall (#BlueberryWall).
- 5) Hollywood Studios boasts the Popsicle Wall. You can find it in the exit of Toy Story Mania! Look for after turning the first corner, just past the Barrel of Monkeys (#PopsicleWall).
- 6) Look for one of a few Moss Walls inside of Animal Kingdom's Pandora. The most popular is located across from Satu'li Canteen's entrance (#MossWall).

There are a few other walls that are starting to gain a following. Look for fun and unique designs where you can take your photos. You may just start a new Disney Wall trend!

15. You've made it home from vacation and are looking through your photos. You discover what could have been a great photo, had something not ruined it. Maybe someone's shirt was untucked or a last-minute photo bomber stepped into view. Whatever the case, there's a great Facebook group that can help.

Disney Photoshop Requests has approximately 75,000 members, many of whom are experts at Photoshop fixes.

Join the group, post the ruined photo, and request the fix you're looking for. That's all it takes. While you may get some joke fixes (always funny), someone in the group usually steps up to create a little Disney Magic for you. You'll be amazed!

16. Start each day with a family photo at the park entrance. It will make a great marker when separating your vacation photos by day, and it may be the only time you get photos of everyone when they're fresh and well-rested.

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In addition, if someone gets separated from the group, you will have a current photo that shows what that person is wearing, so Cast Members know what to look for!

17. Scents often bring back the best memories, and what could be better than bringing the smell of Disney into your home? Head to Marketplace Co-Op in Disney Springs to pick up “Green Clover Aloe” scented candles, essential oils, soaps, and melts that recreate that special Disney odor found in Disney resort lobbies.

Take them home and get out your scented candle whenever you want to close your eyes and pretend you’re back in the magic!

18. Plan some special photography poses throughout the parks for some really great vacation memories.

Have an adult and child mimic the Partner’s Statue pose in front of Cinderella’s Castle. (That’s the statue of Walt holding Mickey’s hand and gesturing in the Castle Courtyard.)

Practice a look of fear if you get lucky enough to meet a villain. If you’re meeting Darth Vader or Kylo Ren, pretend to use the force against them!

Put some Mickey ears on your small child, then have her turn her back to you and face Cinderella’s Castle. Take a photo with her in the foreground and the castle in the background for a great effect.

When meeting a strong character, such as Gaston or Buzz Lightyear, show off your own muscles in a bodybuilder pose.

Don’t forget the special Daddy-Daughter and Mommy-Son photos. If you have multiple generations of family members, make it a point to get someone from each generation into a photo.

If you want more ideas, just head to Instagram and search Disney photos. There are some wonderful, unique ideas out there!

19. There are some great PhotoPass options available, including Zoom Shots and Magic Shots. Zoom Shots are taken from cameras placed in high locations throughout the parks. On the completed product, you see a wide angle view of the park, which then zooms in to show a close-up view of you!

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Magic Shots have fun extras added into the picture later, such as characters dancing around you or even sitting in your open palm!

Check the PhotoPass Map in the My Disney Experience app to see where you can find Zoom Shots, and ask the PhotoPass photographer there for super zoom.

Many PhotoPass photographers have special Magic Shot features they can add in to your photo. Just ask when you stop to get your picture taken!

20. Many locals love to take pictures of vacationing families. You can often spot the locals or frequent Disney visitors, as they generally don't carry cameras and aren't looking around the theme parks in wonder. You can also stop a Disney Cast Member who is not helping another guest to ask to have your picture taken – even as you get on a ride. You don't even need to speak the language to make yourself understood. Simply hold your camera out and point to yourself.

We've never seen anybody refuse to take a picture for a tourist. Don't hesitate to ask someone, whether that person appears to be a local or not, to take a picture of your entire family. In fact, offering to take a picture of another family is a great way to open the door to ask them to reciprocate!

When you request that someone takes your photo, ask to have multiple pictures taken from different angles and change your poses slightly each time. Don't just smile. Try a kiss on the cheek or holding hands in the air. Remember that memory cards have a lot of room, and you will better be able to cherish those amazing memories if you have all the pictures you can take the time to snap.

Importantly, make sure you offer to do the same for others, and ask that partners give a quick smooch to each other when you snap the picture!

21. If you have several members of your family who want to share photos, make sure someone takes the initiative to collect copies of everyone's pictures to compile into a shared DVD, either by the end of your trip or after you return home.

## Vacation Memories

A large party can have hundreds of pictures, but more importantly, there may be hours of video documenting everyone's visit. Gigabytes of video can take a very long time to send over the Internet.

22. Many of the best pictures are taken on fast, bumpy, or wet rides. This makes it difficult – or dangerous – to try to operate a camera while properly bracing yourself. If you try to do so, make sure you have a proper strap and can maintain a firm grip at all times!
23. Bring lens defogger for your camera lens and (sun)glasses. You can pick some up on Amazon or at any eyeglass store. When moving between air-conditioned rooms and the outside heat/humidity, lenses fog up quickly. Using this spray can really help. However, if you have a high-end camera (such as a DSLR), internal lenses can be permanently damaged from fogging up.

To avoid this, keep your camera and lenses as close to the outside temperature as possible. For instance, you can leave them on the balcony of your hotel or outside of the direct sun in the trunk of your car, rather than in the air-conditioned hotel room at night.
24. Get the entire family in the photos. Selfie sticks are banned, making group selfies difficult. Don't despair, there are options to make sure the whole family can get a great shot:
  - Bring a mini tripod for your phone or camera to set it and take a timed photo;
  - Give your camera to a PhotoPass photographer and ask them to take a photo with it;
  - Offer to take a photo of another family, and they will likely reciprocate for you (or just ask a passerby to take the photo); and
  - Buy the MemoryMaker package for unlimited downloads of PhotoPass and attractions photos (and videos).
25. After you get your complimentary Disney pin from Guest Relations, take it to Ye Olde Christmas Shoppe in Disney Springs. For \$3 per word, they will write your name or a short message with their amazing ink and penmanship, creating a personalized souvenir you can cherish for years to come!

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26. You may choose to purchase printed copies of attraction or PhotoPass pictures. Because it takes a while to review and choose prints, and because of all the available printing options, expect long wait times near park closing when families are picking out their photos on the way out of the park.
27. Consider buying Disney's Memory Maker. Disney has professional PhotoPass photographers throughout the parks and specially-timed photos and videos taken on select attractions. Memory Maker gives you unlimited downloads of these pictures and videos, for everyone linked to your Disney account!

Rather than waste time trying to get that perfect photo, Disney has already determined the best shots to get you lasting memories. They even have special Magic Shots that include a fun surprise when you look at your pictures later.

Order Memory Maker at least four days before the first day of your visit to get a discount. If you decide to purchase an annual pass, some passes included this perk at no additional charge. Only one person in your party needs Memory Maker to get pictures and videos of everyone, as long as your entire party is linked to the My Disney Experience account.

28. Don't forget to smile on the rides. Disney takes photos of you on a lot of them! On the rides that take automatic pictures or video, there is a preview area where you can see your photo right after you hop off the ride. Make sure to stop by and see how you looked. They can be really funny sometimes!
29. Get the best attraction photos possible by planning your pose! Just don't do anything inappropriate or offensive in the picture. A Cast Member reviews the shots before putting them on the preview board to weed out anything that doesn't meet Disney standards, such as rude gestures or unsafe actions.

To get the best photos, remove any hats and sunglasses, as they block your face and any fun expressions. Try to hold a huge smile or silly expression, until after you see the camera flash.

Small props are allowed, as long as they're G-Rated and not political in nature. For instance, you may pretend to play chess just

## Vacation Memories

before the drop on Tiana's Bayou Adventure. Hang on tight if you choose to use props, though. People often lose them, and they can't be recovered easily.

On Tiana's Bayou Adventure and Expedition Everest, the camera happens at the peak of the highest drop. On Test Track, it happens just as your vehicle seems to be crashing into a wall. On DINOSAUR, the cameras catch your reaction to a dinosaur attack. On Tower of Terror, the moment your elevator shaft reaches the 13th floor is captured. For Rock 'n' Roller Coaster, your expression as the ride goes from zero to 60 MPH at the start is forever memorialized.

Candid photos with genuine reactions make the best shots if it's your first time on these rides. You can find a list of each attraction camera location here: <https://www.travelingmom.com/memory-maker-cameras-wdw-photopass-attractions/>

30. If you love the coffee you get at Disney World, why not get that same flavor at home? Joffrey's makes the official blend at Disney World, including specialty blends for each of the Deluxe Resorts. You can order the official blend directly at [joffreys.com](http://joffreys.com).

Sign up for the Joffrey's V.I.B. newsletter for a first purchase coupon of 25% off your online order. Enjoy a taste of Disney coffee at home!

31. You can use multiple MagicBands linked to a single MyMagic+ account or get multiple PhotoPass cards, but be sure to register your cards online using the instructions on the card before losing any of them!
32. In addition to the official Disney photos that are added to your PhotoPass account, you are welcome to ask PhotoPass photographers to use your own personal camera to take pictures that you can enjoy right away.

They will gladly help out, and you can be assured that they know how to operate your camera. It is by far the best way to get great shots of your entire family at some of the prime locations these professionals have chosen.

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The system makes a lot of money for Disney, so they aren't stingy. This is a great way to make sure you have photos of the entire family together at the end of your vacation.

33. Remember, Disney's Memory Maker entitles you only to electronic copies of your vacation photos, while you can purchase individual pictures for print from home or at the park. When you get a printed attraction photo at the actual attraction, you also get a unique cardboard photograph frame that represents that ride.
34. Look for signs at Nikon Picture Spots throughout the parks. These are locations with great backdrops for family photos. Eastman Kodak Company was one of the original sponsors when Disneyland opened in 1955. Until late 2013, the Nikon Picture Spots were branded as Kodak Photo Spots. That sponsorship deal ended when Kodak filed for bankruptcy.
35. Get some Disney magic with a Magic Shot. These are photos taken by Disney PhotoPass photographers with a special touch added in later. For instance, the photographer may ask you to look down at your hand in surprise. When you review the photo later, Tinker Bell may be dancing on your palm!

Don't be shy about asking for one of these photos. Most PhotoPass photographers can add something special if you just ask for a Magic Shot. Look for all of the Magic Shot options currently being offered by following @DisneyPhotoPass on Twitter.

36. Capture memories for special occasions with a Capture Your Moment package. Whether you're planning a marriage proposal or just want to get some no-hassle photos to remember your family vacation, you can hire a professional Disney PhotoPass photographer to follow you around for 20 minutes at a time.

If you need more time, simply book multiple slots together. You can easily schedule your photographer on Disney's website here: <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/enchanting-extras-collection/booking-capture-your-moment/>

Prints and downloads of the pictures are not included. Buy the Memory Maker package along with Capture Your Moment for unlimited downloads of the great shots!

## Vacation Memories

37. Even if you don't think you'll want to purchase any of the PhotoPass pictures, it's still a good idea to get a PhotoPass card (or register a MagicBand or MagicMobile account) in case you change your mind later.
38. If you won't be able to go online soon, write down the PhotoPass number in a secondary location or take a photo of it in case you lose the actual card.
39. If you decide to use the PhotoPass service, remember to check [disneyphotopass.com](http://disneyphotopass.com) for the digital photos taken on attractions and taken by PhotoPass photographers in the parks. If you are using a PhotoPass card, rather than your MagicBand to track those photos, be sure to log in immediately and link the card.
40. Disney's Memory Maker package provides a great all-for-one-price option. While the price may seem high, the memories are priceless. You get a lot of bang for your buck, as unlimited downloads of attraction photos and videos, as well as professionally-taken snapshots throughout the park are included. It's also the only way to get special Magic Shots (photographs with a special Disney extra added later).
41. Take advantage of Disney's photography services, called PhotoPass. This service includes professional photographers throughout the parks and in certain restaurants, as well as automated photographs or videos on select attractions.

There's no reason not to have your picture taken. Photographs are linked to your account and available for purchase later, so there is absolutely no high-pressure sales pitch with no obligation to buy. If you decide you love a photo, you can choose to purchase it by itself or buy the Memory Maker package, which allows unlimited downloads of all of your PhotoPass photos for a single price.
42. Get a celebration button at Guest Relations when you enter any park. Just tell them what you're celebrating, and they're sure to have a button to commemorate the occasion (even if it's just celebrating life)! Wearing a button will get you greetings and congratulations throughout the parks. Occasionally, a Cast Member may even pull you aside to give you a special phone call from a Disney character, a free dessert, or even a special FastPass!

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43. If you're planning a special surprise, such as a marriage proposal, contact Guest Relations in advance. They can help you choose the location and make sure there is a PhotoPass photographer there to capture the moment! Of course, don't forget to post the pictures online.
44. One of the most difficult attractions on which to get a good picture is Space Mountain. Why? The camera takes a picture before any roller coaster action starts!

As you start the ride, the vehicle goes through a tunnel with flashing lights (called the Star Tunnel). Your photo is taken as you turn the corner at the end of the tunnel. There are two possible ride tracks, each of which turns in a different direction, so look for the camera on the inside corner as you turn.

Whether you pretend to be sleeping, getting ready to vomit, or fighting off an alien invasion, try to do something fun for this photo opp. Otherwise, most guests just look bored.

45. Pressed pennies are inexpensive, they take up very little room, and they make great souvenirs! Purchase a pressed penny book to hold these treasures. You can add to the book over the years, as you return to the parks.

For the best looking pressed penny, plan ahead. Look for the old-fashioned machines that allow you to press your own penny. (Newer machines have their own, internal pennies that get pressed.)

If you can find an older machine, use pennies made in 1981 or before. These early pennies don't contain zinc, so they leave fewer streaks. If you can't find shiny pennies, you can shine them up by rubbing or brushing them with ketchup.

46. Both Test Track in Epcot and Tomorrowland Speedway in the Magic Kingdom offer personalized souvenir driver's licenses you can purchase for your little one, complete with photo! This makes an excellent memory and tends to be a favorite for young kids. Just check for the photo booth near the exit of each attraction to commemorate your budding racecar driver's first foray into driving.

When they come here, they're coming because of an integrity that we have established over the years. And they drive hundreds of miles. I feel a responsibility to the public.

- Walt Disney

# Guest Relations



1. Cast Members don't get enough compliments! Always take time to recognize great service, as many people only give complaints.  
One of the best ways to offer up some kudos is through the Mobile Cast Compliment form on the My Disney Experience App. (To access the form, simply type "Cast Compliment" in the search field.  
For frequent tweeters, use #castcompliment on Twitter. If you prefer to submit your feedback in person, go to Guest Relations with the name, date, and location of the encounter.  
In any instance, a form goes to the immediate supervisor, and a certificate is given to the Cast Member, which is recorded in their permanent file. (Compliments are called grape sodas!)
2. If you decide to give Cast Member compliments. Make a list of great experiences and go a single time at the end of your vacation to avoid waiting in line multiple times.
3. If you don't have time to get to Guest Relations, share your great Cast Member experience with #CastCompliments on Twitter with @WDWToday. Take a selfie with the Cast Member to include with your great review.
4. Be respectful of other guests and Disney's rules. Nothing will ruin your family's trip faster than an argument that starts because you did something you shouldn't. Disney puts most rules in place for the safety and comfort of all guests.  
If you need to smoke, go to a designated area. Expect to get reprimanded if you don't. If you're standing in line, keep rude comments and noises to yourself. Whatever your political beliefs, don't express them in the parks. Don't cut in line. Don't push people to get through crowds.  
If someone else is breaking the rules or acting in a rude manner, don't stoop to their level. Ask a Cast Member to address the behavior. They are trained to deal with guests without escalating issues.
5. When showing appreciation for a Cast Member, don't forget the unsung heroes. For instance, Character Attendants keep the meet-and-greets organized and communicate with the Characters

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to make the experience magical, but the Characters get all the accolades!

There are also Cast Members who go through the park sweeping up after guests and cleaning restrooms all day, keeping the place pristine for you.

Other than servers, Cast Members are not allowed to take cash tips, but a small wrapped treat or thank you note can make a huge difference to them.

6. Hand written thank you cards are loved by Cast Members. Prepare a few prior to the trip and hand them out when someone goes above and beyond for you. You can make the Cast Member's day!
7. If you want to give a Cast Member a special thank you, such as a small gift, they are required to decline. Never try to give money, unless it is a position that specifically allows gratuities, such as a food server. Anything with cash value must be turned in, or the Cast Member can get fired. (There are cameras everywhere, so they will get caught.) They will not be allowed to keep it.

However, if it's a small non-cash gift and they refuse three times, yet you still insist, they can take it, especially if you say that you will be offended if they do not accept.

Small, business card-sized thank you notes make wonderful thank yous. Cast Members love them and can carry them around easily to brighten up their day when they need it!

Consider making a few of these notes to take with you each day and give someone a smile. Anything homemade they generally get to keep.

If you have time, go to Guest Relations to give the positive review to a supervisor. These comments are the absolute best, as they help to get the Cast Member promoted!

8. Disney Cast Members never want to ruin a guest's day, but sometimes things go wrong. If it's a simple issue, such as a wrong food order or bad quality food, most Cast Members at that location will jump at the chance to help.

## Guest Relations

If there's an issue that hasn't been addressed to your satisfaction or a problem with a particular Cast Member (rude attitude, etc.), elevate it to a supervisor immediately. The quicker you let someone know there's an issue, the sooner they can make it right for you.

Cast Members rarely have much authority, and yelling at them in front of other guests will only make you look like a jerk. Calmly ask to speak to the person's immediate supervisor and wait to address the issue with them. If it's still not addressed properly, go to Guest Relations to see if someone there can help.

While you can always expect great service at Disney World, don't waste your time if you are unhappy just because you weren't allowed to do something considered unsafe in the parks. For instance, if a Cast Member asked you to put out a cigarette or keep your child from climbing on walls, you won't get satisfaction from complaining about it.

9. What can you do if you lost an item on Disney property? If it's the same day you lost it and you're at a park or Disney Springs, head to Guest Relations. Go to your hotel concierge if you're at one of the Disney resorts. Lost items are held in these locations, then transferred to a central Lost & Found location (near the Transportation and Ticket Center) at the end of the day.

If you notice the item is missing the following day or after you get home from vacation, go online to [www.chargerback.com/disneyworld](http://www.chargerback.com/disneyworld) and complete a lost report on the item. Include as many details as possible, including the date and location you believe it was lost (if that's known).

While not every item is recovered, many are, and Disney will stay in contact with you to let you know if your item turns up.

10. If you need to ship items home, such as excess clothes or souvenirs, you have options. If you have a car, drive to a nearby Post Office. (Our favorite is the one in Celebration, as it is often faster and friendlier than the Turkey Lake Road location.) They will provide you with a flat rate box to ship your items, which is almost always cheaper than standard postage rates.

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Use the smallest one your items will all fit into. You may need to use more than one of the large boxes if you went too crazy with your shopping.

If you don't have a car, the front desk of your Disney hotel will accept shipping packages for you. You must pre-pay your postage online and ask the front desk to help print the label. (Some non-Disney hotels will also do this for you.)

For full-service shipping assistance, take a bus with your items to one of the Disney hotels that has a Business Center, such as Disney's Contemporary or Grand Floridian.

If you just need a postage stamp to send a letter or greeting card, you can pick those up from several locations throughout Disney World. Check here to find the location that's most convenient for you:

<https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/guest-services/mail-services/>

11. Some of the best Disney magic happens at the hotel, thanks to your Mousekeepers (Disney's name for housekeepers). These Cast Members go above and beyond to keep things clean and sanitary for you, often putting special touches in your room, such as towels in the shape of special characters.

Remember to bring Thank You notes with envelopes to leave a gratuity for your Mousekeepers, so they know the change you put out is for them. It's best to leave a tip each day, rather than at the end of your trip, as you may have several Mousekeepers helping throughout your stay.

For really great service, don't forget to let the hotel manager know what an awesome job your Mousekeepers did!

12. Disney replaces some lost items for free. If your child drops his ice cream cone, pops his Mickey balloon, or loses his Mickey Ears on a ride, you can usually get a replacement. Just bring your receipt to the original purchase location, and a Cast Member can take care of it before your kid goes into "meltdown mode."

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