



Hassle-Free Walt Disney World Vacation 2010

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Chapter 1: PLANNING YOUR WDW VACATION

A few miles southwest of Orlando, Florida, lies one of the most popular spots on earth, Walt Disney World Resort (WDW). This huge complex (twice the size of Manhattan Island) contains four separate theme parks, more than two dozen hotels, scores of restaurants, a campground, water parks, golf courses, miniature golf courses, two evening entertainment complexes, a shopping and daytime entertainment district, and a sports complex.

Whew! WDW is magical and a wonderful place to visit, but it's also complicated and often crowded as well. The unprepared visitor can easily be overwhelmed and left with less than magical memories of long lines, heat and sunburn, exhaustion, expensive food, crying kids, and frazzled nerves.

Don't let that happen to you! With proper planning, any WDW visit can be fun from beginning to end.

This book is dedicated to giving you the insider tips, practical advice, and customized flexible touring plans you need to have one of the best vacations of your life. So take a quick breath and jump right in. .

Basic Rules for Touring

1. Don't try to do everything. Each theme park, with the possible exception of Disney's Animal Kingdom, is too large to experience fully in one day. If you come to WDW intending to experience every attraction, you'll probably be disappointed. Furthermore, you'll quickly reach sensory overload, that point during the day when the kids are crying and you're no longer having fun.
2. Get to the park early, and take a break in the afternoon either back at your hotel for a rest or swim - or in the park itself (see touring plans). This approach will provide the most time-efficient method for visiting the more popular attractions and let you recharge during the afternoon break. Furthermore, you'll prevent sensory overload and avoid the worst of the afternoon heat. If you decide to sleep in, just pick up the appropriate touring plan later in the morning (a few steps before lunchtime) and try to catch the more popular attractions with FASTPASS (see Good Things to Know About, above), during the parades, and/or in the hour before closing.
3. If you go later? . . . If you're visiting WDW to play golf or attend a conference, go to the parks after your morning recreation and follow the afternoon and evening portions of the appropriate touring plan(s). To avoid the longest lines, try to experience the more popular attractions during parades or in the hour before the park closes. Also, use the FASTPASS or singles line options when available (see above) to minimize your waits for some popular attractions.
4. Don't wait in long lines. A long wait is more than 15 to 20 minutes. Current attraction wait times are posted on park Tip Boards (sometimes inaccurate) and in front of most attractions (usually accurate), or you can ask the Disney attendant. Waiting in queues can be exhausting, especially for children. As you follow the touring plans, the lines may become unbearably long later in the morning or early afternoon. At this point, you have several alternatives: You can use the FASTPASS and singles line options; you can skip down the touring plan to less congested attractions, or you can leave the park you're in and switch to another (if your

ticket allows), in essence combining touring plans for different parks on the same day. Just pick up the next park's touring plan at an appropriate point. The act of switching parks will also provide a break of sorts, by offering you a change of scenery.

5. Relax! You'll encounter many hyperkinetic vacationers in the theme parks, running to and fro, dragging crying kids behind them, jostling for position before parades and character greetings. Some of these folks don't get to WDW very often and are trying to pack too much into too short a time. Are these people really having fun? Avoid them if you can and seek quieter surroundings.

6. Avoid sunburn, dehydration, and exhaustion. If you start losing steam, seek a rest area (consult the list of rest areas for each park in the appropriate chapters), take some refreshment in a cool place, or leave the park for your hotel. Drink frequently, even if you or your kids don't feel thirsty. Bring or rent a stroller for kids six and under.

Note: The larger double strollers are more difficult to maneuver around the parks (especially when the parks are crowded).

7. Don't tote bulky purchases around with you. All the shops in the theme parks will send bulky and heavy purchases to a package pickup area near the park exit at no extra charge. If you're staying on property, they'll deliver them right to your door, again at no charge.

8. Bring small snacks, such as gum or mints, into the parks in your shoulder bag or fanny pack. They come in handy between meals.

9. Use the touring plans. Convince your family, before you enter the parks, of the benefits of following the plans you'll find in the upcoming chapters. They will minimize waiting while offering maximum opportunities for experiencing the best of WDW. They should also prevent time-consuming and sometimes emotional arguments and discussions about what everyone wants to do next.

Convince your kids that they will meet plenty of Disney characters during their visit, so hopefully they won't stop in their tracks every time they spot one. On the other hand, if your child seems desparate at times and the line for the character isn't too long, go ahead and queue up. If there's a specific character you want to find, ask at any Guest Relations.

Strategies: The touring plans take busy periods into account and suggest strategies for dealing with them whether you are staying on property or off. One strategy is to arrive early, visit until the park becomes too crowded for comfort, and then switch to another, less crowded park if your ticket allows. Another is to give yourself a time out by taking a rest break in the park itself. Either way, later in the day your time is best spent enjoying the least crowded attractions (see Attractions with Minimal Waits (Usually) in Chapters Two to Five).

Tip: On really crowded days, plan to visit Epcot. It is large enough and offers enough shows to accommodate crowds enjoyably even when Walt Disney World is packed.

Note: Some children do better if they visit Magic Kingdom last. If they experience it first, they may not enjoy the other parks quite as much because they may expect all of WDW to be just like the MK.

10. Keep your camera readily available. Consult the park Guidemaps for picture spot locations that you may come upon as you follow the touring plans. Be alert for the many special picture moments that will inevitably happen.

Note: See Bringing the Magic Home, below, for photo-taking tips.

11. If you get around WDW by car (recommended), write down your parking location on a piece of paper that you keep with you. Or take a digital photo of your car's row number and section. Do this every time you park your car, even at the hotels.

12. Be ready for surprises. Attractions are periodically updated, changed, or closed for refurbishment. Times, schedules, shows, and parades vary continually. Furthermore, attractions occasionally break down, and inclement weather may cause cancellation of parades or temporary closing of certain rides. If you paid for any special show that was cancelled or shortened because of bad weather, always ask at Guest Relations for a ticket refund or a voucher for a future show.

Note: This book is current as we go to press, but don't be dismayed if you encounter a few surprises during your vacation. Even the Guidemap you pick up at the park entrance occasionally has erroneous information. Ask a cast member (Disney employee) if you have questions. .

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