

Disney Vacation Planning for Canadian Guests: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Amy Wear, PassPorter Guest Contributor

While Canadians love Disney vacations just as much as Americans, there are some important differences to note before heading south of the border to Mickey's home in Orlando.

Pricing is in U.S. dollars. Let's just get this one over with first. When you are researching the costs of a Disney vacation and trying to decide on accommodations, tickets, and dining packages, it's important to note that packages from Walt Disney Travel Company are sold in U.S. dollars.

□ Keep in mind that only the \$200 U.S. deposit is due at the time of booking. The remaining balance for 2016 vacations is not due until 30 days prior to travel. Keep an eye on which way the dollar is heading and consider paying the balance in full early or wait to see if the dollar will improve. Yes, we would all like to rub the Genie's lamp and see when our dollar will recover!

□ No Disney Visa (or savings account) for you! As much as we'd love to take advantage of vacation offers exclusive to Disney Visa card holders, Canadians are not eligible for Disney Visa cards unless they also have a residence in the United States.

We also can't set up Disney Vacation Savings Accounts; however, anyone in Canada is free to set up their own tax-free savings account. You can set up automatic deductions to go right into your vacation savings before you have a chance to spend it. Then you are free to take the money out at any time to pay for your vacation.

□ You can't buy Disney gift cards in Canada. If you want to stock up on Disney gift cards or give one to a family member, you'll need to drive across the border and buy one or have one shipped to the border from www.disneystore.com. You can buy gift cards at almost any store once you are on Disney property or even pop into one of the Disney stores after you land at Orlando International Airport.

□ Another way to give a Disney vacation gift is to pay for a special experience that requires full payment at the time of booking, such as a dessert party or special tour. If all else fails, American cash is always a popular gift!

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☐ Flights are more costly. Even though airfare is priced in Canadian dollars when you fly from a Canadian airport, the cost is often two to three times that of flying from a U.S. airport. When driving across the border to fly from a U.S. airport is feasible, a family of four or more can potentially save \$1000-2000.

☐ Be sure to compare all the costs, including Canadian versus U.S. currency, extra hotel nights, gas, extra meals on the road, and additional time off work. If you are traveling during the winter months, weigh the savings of driving to a U.S. airport over the peace of mind of flying from home.

☐ Air miles can be a wonderful way to still fly from home for a reasonable price. Just be aware of any additional costs and restrictions to using them. Many of these rewards cards have black-out periods, including for the entire month of March.

☐ MagicBands and Luggage Tags aren't mailed to us. While you can customize your magicbands in the My Disney Experience App, these are not mailed to your home like they are to Americans. Instead, they will be waiting for you at check-in. Until recently, Disney still mailed luggage tags to Canadians. These are now coordinated with your magicband colours and will also be waiting for you at check-in -- not exactly convenient if you were hoping to use the luggage tags for your trip!

☐ Disney's Magical Express. Canadians are eligible to use Disney's complimentary coach bus from Orlando International Airport to their Disney resort. You'll see Americans simply scanning their Magicbands to confirm their Magical Express reservations. Not to worry, though. You will receive confirmation papers in your Disney documents that you present as verification of your reservation. If your documents are delayed or you book your trip last-minute, Disney cast members can still verify your reservation.

☐ You will also receive yellow stickers to have Disney retrieve your luggage for you and deliver it to your room approximately 3-4 hours after you land in Orlando. There can be delays in luggage delivery, however, so those flying in later in the day from the Western provinces may want to retrieve their own bags, rather than stay up past midnight waiting for them to arrive.

☐ Before you book that 7am Air Canada flight back to Toronto, bear in mind that your Magical Express pick-up time for a flight back to Canada will be approximately 4 hours before your flight, rather than the standard 3 hours for domestic flights.

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□Resort Airline Check-in. Most domestic airlines at the Disney resorts offer airline check-in near the front lobby. You can have your boarding passes printed and hand over your luggage right there, making it easy to just get on the Magical Express back to the airport and head straight to security.

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□Your luggage is sent on to the airport and will be waiting for you -- in theory- when you land at your final destination. If you are flying back to Canada, however, you must bring your luggage with you through the Orlando airport and through security.

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□Canada Customs. If you fly from an American airport, you will clear customs by simply driving across the border. On your return, there are no customs forms to fill out on the plane or long lines to go through at the airport when you land.

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□If you are flying from Orlando back to Canada, you must retrieve your luggage and clear through customs when you arrive back in Canada. If you have a connecting flight, you still must go through customs with your luggage first. Always ensure you have at least 90 minutes on a stopover when you will be required to go through customs.

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□Stay tuned for Part 2 of this series, where we will discuss some of the best and worst times for Canadians to travel to Walt Disney World.

About The Author: Amy Wear is a work at home mom, travel agent, writer, and registered occupational therapist. She lives in New Brunswick, Canada, and specializes in planning magical vacations for people of all abilities at Click The Mouse. You can find her online at <http://www.clickthemouse.ca/amy-w.html>

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