

Visiting Walt Disney World After Bariatric Surgery: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Lynley Hopps, PassPorter Guest Contributor

In 2015, my husband and I were extremely fortunate to be able to undergo gastric sleeve surgery, which has completely changed our lives. We've lost a combined 285+ lb, are no longer on medications, and now have the energy to do crazy things like runDisney races!

Not only did bariatric surgery change our lives -- it changed the way we do Disney!

Disclaimer: I am not a doctor, so none of the following should substitute for qualified medical advice. Please consult your surgeon or nutritionist for advice on your specific needs as a bariatric patient.

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□ Before You Leave

□ Disney does not have any specific accommodations for bariatric patients, but when making our Advance Dining Reservations (ADRs), I noted on each one that we had special dining needs. This gave us an opening to discuss different options with our servers, who were only too happy to help. It also helped us to review the menus on allears.net when deciding where to make our ADRs (keep in mind that at 180+ days out, menus may change, so check back as your trip nears). We have never done the Dining Plan, but if you're considering it, do the math to determine if it's worth the money with your reduced food capacity.

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□ Table Service

□ Buffets are pretty much a waste of money now, so we've avoided them since surgery, though if an a la carte menu is available, that could provide some options. At non-buffet table service restaurants, we found (unsurprisingly!) that the wait staff was more than happy to accommodate our dining needs. Consider having an appetizer, soup, salad, etc. for your meal (it's cheaper, too!), or share a meal with a friend. At Citricos, my husband was going to order the scallop appetizer for his entree (contained 6 scallops, which would probably be too much), but our server suggested the scallop "enhancement" that could accompany an entree. It contained four scallops and was perfect! And when we snagged a prime 9:10 reservation at California Grill on my birthday, we dined on a selection of appetizers before watching Wishes from the balcony.

Counter Service

☐ Now that there's a festival pretty much all year at Walt Disney World, the food booth options are the perfect size for tiny tummies! We were lucky enough to be at Disney's California Adventure in November and experienced the Festival of Holidays, and the smoked duck and veggie spring roll (him) and the brisket potato croquette with horseradish cream (me) were just right. Eateries that have grab-and-go areas (like Sunshine Seasons at Epcot or the hotel food courts) usually have healthy options - yogurt, fruit and veggie packs, cheese sticks. We saved the apple slices from our meal at La Brea Bakery at Downtown Disney in Anaheim, and, paired with some peanut butter we'd brought, they were the perfect pre-race breakfast! Also, consider bringing your own food -- protein bars, nuts, etc. -- to save some time and money. And don't be afraid to order off the kids' menu if something strikes your fancy!

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☐ Snacking

☐ At either counter service or table service restaurants, it's easy enough to get some lean protein and veggies, but the lure of Mickey Bars and Dole Whips is strong. I try to pick one special treat each day, something I can't get at home. On our most recent trip to Disneyland, I savored every bite of my Mickey beignet! And at Hollywood Studios, the carrot cake cookie is a must -- though now it lasts me much longer!

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☐ Drinking

☐ "Sip, sip, sip!" is the mantra for most bariatric patients, and it's so important at Disney, especially with the heat and humidity. It's easy to forget to drink your water, so carry your own water bottle (I like the ones with the built-in filters) or get a free cup of water from any counter service restaurant. If you're standing in line, be sipping! I adore Crystal Light, so I always have a few packets in my pocket.

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☐ For many bariatric patients, alcohol is a big no-no, at least for the first year. But if you really want a drink (and have okayed it with your surgeon), make good decisions. As delicious as the Grand Marnier slushy is (my favorite, thanks to Sara and Jennifer!), it may not be the best choice. A small glass of wine at Tutto Gusto in Epcot might be a better option.

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☐ Don't Fret about Waste

☐ It's easy to feel like you're wasting money or food when you don't finish your meal, but your health and comfort are more important. If you order a regular entree, don't feel bad about leaving most of it on your plate. Our server at Le Cellier was concerned that we hadn't enjoyed our meal, but we were quick to reassure her that we would've eaten more if it were physically possible! And it didn't stop her from bringing us a Chocolate Moose to celebrate my birthday (he was almost too cute to

eat)!

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□The Bottom Line

□All the rules that apply at home still apply at Disney -- focus on your protein (we take protein bars to keep our numbers up), drink lots of water, keep the sugar and carbs to a minimum, and listen to your body! Nobody wants to get sick at Disney. Find the balance between staying the course and enjoying yourself, and focus on the non-food fun -- like fitting comfortably in the ride vehicles! And, hey -- at least you know you'll be getting your exercise in!

About The Author: Lynley lives in Columbus, GA (a short six-hour drive from Walt Disney World!), with her Disney-loving husband, Bennett, and daughter, Eryn (5). Having just returned from the Superheroes Half-Marathon Weekend at Disneyland, she is looking forward to their next Disney trip for the Princess Half Marathon in February 2017.

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