

Five Tips, Four Parks, One Day - The Walt Disney World Grand Slam: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Erin Weil, PassPorter Guest Contributor

While visiting Walt Disney World Resort during the Disney Princess Half Marathon weekend this past February, I had the unique opportunity to try the **infamous "Four Parks in One Day" Challenge**.

After running the half marathon with a friend, I had an extra park day planned before flying out on Tuesday morning, while she had booked her flight home the day after the race. Being solo for the day, I wanted to stay busy, see as much as possible, and do something that I couldn't do when traveling with my young kids. I had heard of people trying to see all four parks in one day, so I decided to give it a try. Here are my top five tips for making the day a fun and memorable experience.

1. DON'T attempt the "Four Parks in One Day" Challenge if this is your first visit to Walt Disney World or if you have small children that tire easily. It is a fun, but tiring, challenge, and, in my opinion, is best for adult couples, friends, solo travelers or those with older children. As I mentioned, I was solo for the day, and I have been to Walt Disney World many times over the past few years because we have family in Florida and visit often. I have been on most of the rides and was looking for a new and different way to enjoy the parks.

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 □2. Have a GENERAL PLAN for the order in which you want to visit the parks and the attractions that you would like to see, but don't create a minute by minute itinerary. I knew that I wanted to end the day with Illuminations: Reflections of Earth at Epcot, and I worked my way back from there. The order that I chose was: Disney's Animal Kingdom Park, Magic Kingdom, Disney's Hollywood Studios and then Epcot and chose to focus on classic rides and shows for the most part, without worrying about hitting all of the headliners that typically have long waits.

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 □3. Book your Fast Pass Plus (FP+) reservations for the mid-morning to early afternoon time frame at the most crowded park that day. I started my day at Disney's Animal Kingdom Park, and I did not use any fast passes while there. I went directly back to Kilimanjaro Safaris at rope drop and had a less than a 10 minute wait, and then was able to experience Festival of the Lion King, Expedition Everest (single rider line), the Maharajah Jungle Trek and Finding Nemo -- The Musical before heading to Magic Kingdom where I used my first FP+ of the day at the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad. I actually ONLY ended up using

that one FP+ because I didn't want to do a lot of headliner attractions and didn't need them, but if you prefer the coasters and thrill rides, then I recommend making your reservations for the Magic Kingdom and Disney's Hollywood Studios attractions.

4. Purchase the Express Transportation Option to travel between parks. I cannot stress this tip enough. Walt Disney World Resort just started offering special busses that travel between backstage areas of their four theme parks for a fee of \$19 for a single day ticket or \$29 for up to seven consecutive days, and using this option will save you so much time! This option is perfect for the "Four Parks in One Day" Challenge! The Check-In Locations are: Magic Kingdom park: near the exit of Buzz Lightyear's Space Ranger Spin, Epcot: the east side of Spaceship Earth, Disney's Hollywood Studios: the courtyard in front of Rock 'n' Roller Coaster Starring Aerosmith and Disney's Animal Kingdom park: near the entrance to Dawa Bar.

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 □5. Add shows and air conditioned breaks into your day to conserve your energy. I focused my day on seeing shows such as the Festival of the Lion King, Finding Nemo: The Musical, Mickey's Philharmagic and "For the First Time in Forever: A Frozen Singalong" in order to rest my legs (I had just run a Half Marathon!) and to stay cool. This helped immensely with my energy level, and I also sat down to wait for the Festival of Fantasy parade at the Magic Kingdom with a cold iced coffee from Starbucks and some Pot Roast Mac and Cheese from Friar's Nook. While you probably don't want to spend the amount of time required for a meal at a Table Service restaurant, it is still important to periodically get out of the sun, and it is always fun to sample all of the amazing snacks that Walt Disney World has to offer.

□ Here are the parks and attractions that I visited on my amazing day:

□ Disney's Animal Kingdom Park: Kilimanjaro Safaris, Maharaja Jungle Trek, Festival of the Lion King, Expedition Everest and Finding Nemo: The Musical

□ Magic Kingdom Park: Tomorrowland Transit Authority PeopleMover, Walt Disney's Carousel of Progress, Big Thunder Mountain Railroad, Mickey's Philharmagic and the Festival of Fantasy Parade

□ Disney's Hollywood Studios: For the First Time in Forever: A Frozen Singalong, Walt Disney: One Man's Dream and Characterpalooza (I accidentally ran into this just as it was starting because it is located where the Express Bus drops off passengers)

□ Epcot: Soarin' Around the World, Gran Fiesta Tour and Illuminations:

Reflections of Earth. I also had a delicious dinner at the La Cantina de San Angel while waiting for Illuminations.

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□While everyone's "Four Parks in One Day" Challenge may look a little different and be focused on varying attractions or shows, I hope that my tips help you have a fun and memorable day!

About The Author: Erin is a finance professional and mom of two living in Central New Jersey who visits Walt Disney World a couple of times a year, but wishes it was more often! She is an avid runner and tries to participate in runDisney race weekends whenever possible and plans to run in the 2018 Dopey Challenge. Her favorite resort is Disney's Boardwalk Resort, and the "can't miss" attraction for her is Walt Disney's Carousel of Progress in the Magic Kingdom.

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