

Top 8 Tips For Bringing A Baby to Disneyland For the First Time: A Disneyland Planning Article

by Tara Nestleroad, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Have you ever wondered if your little one is too young to take to Disney? Wonder no more.

This past May, my husband and I took our 9 month old daughter to Disneyland for her very first park visit, and we learned a few tips and tricks along the way that might help in your planning.

1. Whether you are traveling by air or by car, bring plenty of things to keep your little one entertained on the way. New toys are good, as they keep the littles distracted longer than toys they already know. Bring munchies, such as puffs, cheerios, crackers, fruit, etc. Try to get them to suck on something during takeoff, such as a pacifier, bottle, or nursing to help with ear pain due to pressure changes. If traveling by air, dress your baby in layers as planes can be chilly.

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□2. Stay at a hotel close to the parks, so that you can go back to the hotel for an afternoon break and nap. This is very easy to do at Disneyland, as there are a multitude of hotels within a close walk from the park entrance. We stayed at the Quality Inn and Suites and did this every afternoon. As a side note---Quality Inn and Suites is one of the least expensive options of the Good Neighbor hotels (hotels that are off property, but have a relationship with Disneyland). It was a clean, no-frills place to crash and breakfast was included. However, the crib was very old, hard, and institutional looking. I would recommend bringing your own pack 'n play if possible, as well as comforts of home that your baby is used to for sleeping, such as a favorite lovey, white noise machine, etc.

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□3. Children under 3 have free admission to the parks. They also do not need their own fast passes, as they just go with you on attractions. However, include babies in the total number of your party when making dining reservations or riding attractions. I didn't know this at first, thinking my baby didn't count as she would be sitting on my lap. However, the cast members take the lap sitting into account when assessing your party and it can cause confusion if you give the wrong number before getting on a ride.

4. Babies can go on ANY attraction that doesn't have a height requirement! We took our daughter on rides like Pirates of the

Caribbean, Roger Rabbit's Car Toon Spin, and the swinging version of Mickey's Fun Wheel with no problem. Baby-friendliness is one of the huge perks of Disney. For rides with a height requirement, take advantage of rider switch. This is how it works: a. The whole party goes to the cast member at the entrance of the attraction and says that they need rider switch. The cast member will then give instructions, as every attraction at Disneyland seems to work a little differently. Most of the time though, it involves the first group of riders getting in line, and the second group of riders get a paper pass to come back later to ride. The second group goes and does something else with the baby while the first group rides. This is an excellent time to use the bathroom, change and feed the baby, visit a gift shop, rest in the shade, go get the next fast pass, or even ride a baby-friendly attraction. b. The second group of up to 3 people go back to the attraction later to ride. This time, they go to the fast pass queue, and present the rider switch ticket as they would a fast pass. Pay attention to the return time on your rider switch ticket. Usually you can use it any time that day, or sometimes it even has a window of several days in which it can be used. This is nice as it gives you the option of "banking" your rider switch tickets to use whenever it works best for your schedule. c. Rider switch can be used in conjunction with Fast Pass! The first group of riders don't have to wait in the standby line either, providing they have a Fast Pass.

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□5. Both Disneyland Park and Disney's California Adventure have Baby Care Centers, and I would recommend you take advantage of them. Disneyland's is next to The Plaza, off Main Street, back behind the corn dog cart. Disney's California Adventure's is between Cars Land and Pacific Wharf, across from Wine Country Trattoria. Both feature diaper changing stations, private nursing stations, high chairs, seating, and have baby care items for sale such as formula, diapers, and baby food. These centers are attended by cast members that make sure only those who need the center is there, which is nice as it keeps it quiet and private.

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□6. **BABY WEARING.** Do it. Strollers must be parked before going into attraction queues, which could mean you are left holding a baby for a long time. It's amazing how heavy a 20 pound child can get after even just a few minutes. I had never baby worn much prior to this trip, but wore my daughter in a Tula nearly the whole time. She fussed riding in the stroller and refused to nap in it, but had no problem taking her naps in the Tula. It was supportive and adjustable enough for my husband to use as well. As a bonus, carrying around my daughter's extra weight all day made me LOSE weight on the trip (and I promise you, I enjoyed many of the yummy foods that Disneyland has to offer)! Most of the attractions even let me wear her while riding, which was especially helpful if she was asleep.

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□7. Bring a sun hat and umbrella for shade. California experiences a lot less rain than Florida, but the sun can be just as intense. Also, many of Disneyland's queues are outdoors with limited shade. You don't want Baby's delicate skin to burn, so slather with sunscreen, put a sun hat on them, and pop up a small collapsible umbrella whenever needed.

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□8. Most quick service and table service restaurants have high chairs, but you will want to bring sanitizing wipes for the chair and the table, and wet wipes for your baby's hands. With thousands of visitors every day, there is no telling what your baby is touching.

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□Enjoy this first trip with your little one! There is nothing like the look on their faces the first time they ride Peter Pan, or experience a parade and fireworks. Make the most of every magical moment.

About The Author: Tara lives in Tampa, Florida with her husband and 1-year-old daughter. An Illinois native, she is excited to live so close to Walt Disney World.

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