

Planning a Girls-Only Vacation: Tip and Tricks

by Sue Kulick, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Okay, ladies -- stressed out and cranky? Tired of your other half's constant complaining?

Don't want to spend another moment doing somebody else's laundry? Sounds like you are ready for a girl's trip!

What can be more fun than just you and some of your **best gal pals getting together**? You can eat in fine dining, or grab a quick bite for dinner. You can spend an entire vacation without one single order of chicken fingers! You can do a spa treatment, or swim after dinner. You can relax with a glass of wine. And, you will come back relaxed, happy and ready to face the mountain of other people's laundry again.

So how do you begin? It's easy! **First, pick a destination.** Walt Disney World is a natural selection, but it's not your only choice. You can go scrapbooking in Minnesota or to Cape May, New Jersey to enjoy the beach. You can go shopping in Connecticut, or spend a weekend in a bed and breakfast on Long Island's North Shore.

Once you have your destination in mind, you need to **consult your gal pals and pick a date.** This is not as hard as it seems. Once the idea is planted, come up with a few choices and go from there. For logistics' sake, it's best to keep the group of planners relatively small, say 3 or 4. You can open it up to other friends if you like, but it's much easier to pick a place and a time with a finite group. Then you can invite more pals if you want.

Decide where you want to stay and **be prepared to be flexible.** Designate one person to make the hotel arrangements, unless there are several credit cards involved. It's much easier if it's done by one, that way, rooms and reservations can be linked if need be. Also, now is the time to discuss budget. If this is a budget trip for you, say so! There is nothing that will take the enjoyment out of a fun trip faster than going over your budget because one of your group has a bigger budget than the others. Don't be afraid to say "No, I really can't swing the spa this time, you guys go. I will be in the lounge with my wine waiting for you!" Your gal pals will understand, and it will stop any problems that might arise.

Once you've got your dates, destination and your resort secured, the fun really begins! Everyone should **make their travel plans to the**

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destination on their own. If you can carpool or travel with someone else, all the better! Discuss what you would like to do (or maybe, what you want to avoid doing!) and again, be prepared to be flexible. If you have chosen a Disney destination, think about things like parks, shows, and extras. (We'll get to food later.) If it's not a Disney destination, are there things in the area you want to see, or do you want to relax on the beach all day? Pre-planning these things makes the trip run smoothly. For instance, maybe your family always spends a large chunk of time in the Magic Kingdom, but you've always wanted to spend the day browsing the shops at Epcot. Now is the time to do that! Bring it up, throw it into the mix and see where it fits into your plans.

Keep in mind that **a group vacation doesn't mean you will do everything together all the time.** You are still separate individuals, and everyone will have slightly different ideas. Be prepared to spend some alone time, too, or time with one of the group but not all. This is not a bad thing. Let me repeat that, THIS IS NOT A BAD THING! Just because you don't spend 24/7 together doesn't make you are not friends! Think of how little alone time you get in your day-to-day life. Your gal pals get pretty much the same amount of alone time. They totally understand that you want to go back to the room for a nap, or want to go browse that funky little book shop for an uninterrupted hour or two. It's all good!

Now, onto dining! Whether you are at Disney, or another vacation destination, you will have a **plethora of dining choices**, some of which are not options when you are traveling with your family or spouse. Decide what you would like to do, and again, be flexible. If one of the group wants seafood but you are more of a pasta gal, go to seafood one night and pasta the next. Also, there will be times when you may not all eat out together. Two of the group may want to try that little corner bistro you passed on the way in, but the other two really just want a burger and fries. It's okay to do both and meet up for ice cream later. If you have a funky suggestion, such as waffles for dinner, this might be the perfect time to try it. On a recent girls' trip, one of my friends and I split a sandwich and fries. My husband, a meat-potatoes-pasta guy, was appalled! He couldn't believe that was all we wanted for dinner, because that wasn't "real food" (read: guy food). To me, it was a great treat and a really fun night! If you are staying somewhere where you need to make dinner reservations, again, I would suggest that one person make them all, to avoid confusion.

Keeping in touch with your gal pals during the planning is vital. It's pretty easy in the age of e-mail and texting to keep in touch, and all the details can be downloaded into one file or spreadsheet. That way, you will have everyone's travel information, contacts, preferences and

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details in one spot.

Something else to include in your planning: **it is important to know everyone in your group's emergency information**, including family phone numbers, allergies, medications, and medical history. If something should happen and one of your group needs emergency attention, you need to be able to tell the paramedics medical information, as well as who to contact. While this scenario seems unlikely, it can and does happen, and a little knowledge can help out a lot.

For a little more peace of mind, take some time before you leave home to **get everything in order**. Take care of child or pet care issues (for instance, I have my nephew double check on my cat's status!), fill the refrigerator with enough food to avoid unnecessary trips to the grocery store (accompanied by the ever-present whining), and make sure the bills and check book are up to date. You might want to have all the laundry done, too. Leave phone numbers and contacts, and leave your significant other the names of your traveling buddies. I like to clean the house before I go, that way my husband feels obligated to keep it somewhat clean while I am gone!

Let's see, we covered planning, destination, resort, travel, activities, dining...did I forget anything? Oh yes ... **have a great time!** Don't worry about a thing ...the laundry will still be there when you get home!

About The Author: Sue Kulick is a resident of the Pocono Mountains and an avid Disney fan. She and her husband, Steve, live in a log home with their Golden Retrievers, Cody and Belle and their cat Tigger.

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