

## Getting There is Half the Fun: Enjoy the Planning Part of Your Trip

by Dr. Kenne Whitson, PassPorter Guest Contributor

I love the new Walt Disney World commercials that show families surprising their children with a trip to Disney on the day they are leaving. The reactions are classic! But for our family's first visit to Walt Disney World we decided to go a different route.

If you have ever planned a Walt Disney World vacation you already know that it is quite an undertaking. Finances, scheduling, reservations, hotels, flights; it can almost be overwhelming, if it weren't so totally worth all of the effort. So as I began to plan our vacation, I decided to make it a process that lasted the year instead of just the one-time event. By doing this we were able to have our Walt Disney World experience last us all year long. There are many ways to approach your vacation, but I hope that the ideas we had will get your creative juices flowing so that your next trip will be all the more enjoyable.

As with most things, this family event started out as just a dream. After many years of Walt Disney World commercials, followed by "We should go there!" comments, I had the opportunity to visit the Walt Disney World resort for a conference in January. It was while I was visiting the Magic Kingdom for my first time that I decided, "We're doing it!"; and began planning.

I immediately headed over to the Toontown Hall of Fame Tent and got in line to meet the Princesses. My youngest daughter is four and loves all things Princess. I waited in line and then had my picture taken talking with the princesses and this was when they "invited" us to return and meet them as a family. When I arrived home from the trip I showed my daughter and son the pictures and told them that the princesses wanted to meet them, so we were going to go and see them. The kids were ecstatic and thus began the daily ritual of answering the proverbial, "Are we going to Disney today?" At that point we had 297 days until we left and we loved it every time she asked.

The next surprise for the kids came two months later, when I arranged for them both to receive calls from Mickey and Minnie Mouse. The prerecorded calls were found through an Internet search and they once again had their "Disney fires" stoked. Next I ordered custom maps and the Disney vacation video from the [Disney web site](#).

The maps arrived first, about four months before the trip, and we pored over them for several nights, dreaming about what things we would do.

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Three months to go and the video arrived! We watched with mounting anticipation as our dreams were laid out before us on the DVD. Now we all woke up each morning asking, "Do we get to go to Walt Disney World today?"

With two months until our departure I ordered us all Mickey Mouse ears and we wore them as we watched the DVD once more and scoured our maps. At this point we were walking salespeople for Walt Disney World. Anyone who asked us how or what we were doing was bombarded with plans for vacation. We were raring to go!

When the day arrived for us to leave for our trip, we loaded up and boarded our plane for the family's first plane ride together. We had planned to arrive early in the afternoon so that we could spend our first night in the Magic Kingdom. As we rounded the corner on Main Street USA and saw the castle for the first time I watched as both the kids' eyes filled with wonder, and then accepted hugs of thanks. We had managed to turn a year of preparation into a little vacation in and of itself.

There are many ways to prepare your family for a trip to Walt Disney World, but we sure did enjoy the experience of building anticipation together.

*About The Author: When Dr. Whitson is not planning for a Disney vacation he spends his time running St. Catherine Hospice in Garden City, Kansas. Dr. Whitson and his family are actively planning their next Walt Disney World vacation for February 2012.*

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