

Disney Dreaming With Kids: Things to Consider When Planning A Disney Vacation with Children

by Melissa Sulyok, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Some days I am barely organized enough get myself dressed in the morning, let alone my kids, yet I am dying to plan a trip to Walt Disney World.

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□ I am a stay-at-home mother of three young girls, now aged 3, 2, and 1. My loving husband and I went for our magical Disney honeymoon in 2007, then proceeded to have a honeymoon baby, followed by two more. I have been thinking that I want to take my whole family to visit all the wonder that is Walt Disney World.

□ Also, I have to get this off my chest: my name is Melissa and I am addicted to Disney planning spreadsheets. I have been using up my laptop's memory saving spreadsheet after spreadsheet. I have spreadsheets to help me decide which resort, potential dates, the epic dining plan question, which parks which day, restaurant choices, driving vs. flying, and the list goes on and on. I have found that this is one of the few ways that I can try to keep anything involving small children… well, sane.

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□ Now, I am not even remotely suggesting to live life, or a vacation, based on a very strict schedule. You will only be disappointed if you think that anything is going to go according to plan, pretty much ever. But, my goal is to constantly be prepared for the inevitable missteps. Here are some of the things I have decided based on my knowledge of my children and research on others travelling to Disney with small children:

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- 1. Christopher (my husband) and I will in no way be able to see everything we want to see.
- 2. We will spend a significant amount of time in places we don't really care all that much about, like playgrounds, fountains, in line for autographs, and/or watching shows.
- 3. We will need afternoon naps… all of us.
- 4. We will have to be there for rope drop in order to get anything done, as even a 20-minute line is almost impossible.
- And 5. There will be tantrums, tears, whining, anger, and melt-downs - from the kids, and eventually from me - but I will be ready.

Here are some of the things I am planning on doing in order to help my

eventual vacation go smoothly. Let's start at the beginning: we are going to drive from Ohio to The World. Yes, I know some will think we are absolutely insane, but I think it will work best for us since we have a nice van complete with DVD player. Note to self: Don't forget DVDs, snacks, Dramamine, and loveys for sleeping.

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□Here are some things that I have not decided yet: I think we are capable of making a Disney Value resort room work. Our youngest would still be in a crib/pack 'n' play so we can sleep in a room for four. While I think we would be more comfortable in a Moderate, I'm not sure it is worth the additional expense for our family. I think this is cause for another spreadsheet!

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□How many days can we mentally and emotionally survive in Disney without feeling like we want to leave our children on "it's a small world" to be raised by the creepy animatronics? I am thinking probably five days. That is a happy medium between a long weekend trip and a week-long excursion. Gosh, more decisions.

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□To Dining Plan or not to Dining Plan? We had the older version of the Disney Dining Plan on our honeymoon in 2007 and absolutely loved it. I know, I know, it doesn't always make sense for everyone, and it may not be the cheapest option. But I believe that the ability to be able to say to my kids, "Pick something off here, I don't care what it is, just eat it" and not have to worry makes me feel better about it. Maybe its all in my head, but the convenience sounds like it would be worth it to me.

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□On to the inevitable souvenirs. Children, particularly girls, can shop you out of house and home. My idea is to stock up on Disney paraphernalia, maybe at deep discounts at after-Christmas sales, or at local dollar stores. Then, maybe with a little help, Tinker Bell or Mickey can leave each girl a gift. This is something I'm planning in order to get my children out of the park each day without a "Mommy, I NEED that" moment. I can somehow strategically divert attention to "I wonder if Tink left us any goodies in our room!"

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□These are just a few of the things I think about when fantasizing about our first family vacation to Walt Disney World. I hope this helps anyone if you are deciding whether or not to think about thinking about a trip with children. While I have never experienced it myself, I dream about it day and night!

About The Author: □Melissa Sulyok is a stay-at-home mother to a Jessie-wannabe (Emma, 3 years old), a Cinderella-wannabe (Abigail, 2 years old), and a Stitch-wannabe (Natalie, 1 year old). Melissa and her husband, Christopher honeymooned at Walt Disney World in 2007 and she has been

dreaming of returning ever since, to share the magic with her little ones.

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