

The Year Without Disney: How to Keep the Disney Spirit Alive Between Trips

by Andee Zomeran, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Outside, the leaves have ended their colorful transformation, the crisp air has forced my sweaters out of the closet, and my afternoons are booked shuttling kids to all of their extra-curricular activities.

Normally this time of the year keeps me busy enough to let frivolous thoughts escape. But recently, something occurred to me, and my heart sank to my stomach. The year-end nears and I have not taken a Disney vacation.

It's not like the revelation surprises me. Earlier in the year, my husband and I discussed our travel plans and decided an extravagant vacation didn't fit in our calendar or our budget. Though we had no formal plan to travel far from our Oregon home this year, I secretly thought we might escape for a long weekend to the Disneyland Resort. But unless a truckload of Pixie Dust dumps on us in the next few weeks, 2011 will be the first year that I will not step foot on Disney property. It appears that Mickey and I won't reunite until at least 2012 (or later?), so I am discovering ways to keep my "Disney spirit" alive.

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□ Helping Friends Plan Their Disney Dreams

□ Helping people I know plan their Disney vacations excites my "Disney spirit." Just last week, my Girl Scout co-leader met me for panini and soup to devise a touring plan for her family's first visit to the Disneyland Resort. She became a tad overwhelmed when I spoke of spreadsheets, but the result was a fun-filled schedule, fully planned by the end of lunch.

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□ Helping Strangers Plan Their Disney Destination

□ The PassPorter.com community forum displays an abundance of questions waiting to be tackled by fellow readers. When not planning my own getaway, I lose myself in scanning posts from others planning theirs. In the past, I've spent countless hours on the site researching every detail about an upcoming trip. I may be stuck at home this year, but I can take time to share my experiences in order to help people I've never met plan the vacation of their dreams.

Manage Those Photos

□ Knowing I won't be taking new Disney pics this year, I can devote some time to organizing the prints from previous sojourns. Will I fill one album per trip? Should I make a compilation of excursions by the decade? Maybe I can dedicate a scrapbook focused on my children

growing up with the characters. Whatever I come up with, I know my "Disney spirit" awakens in the photographed memories that are significant to each magical vacation.

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□Keep "Expert" Status

□Even though I'm not traveling to a Disney location this year, I can still send away for my free planning DVD for the Resorts and Cruise Line. A multitude of blogs constantly update me on current Disney events, while reading the latest edition of PassPorter's Walt Disney World keeps me abreast of the changes and additions I need to be aware of to maintain my Disney-expert reputation.

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□Trying Something New

□I almost feel blasphemous sharing this. Knowing we wouldn't be saving our pennies for a 2011 Disney vacation, we did activities we don't normally do on a Disney excursion. Staying local, we rode bikes, went water skiing, tried horseback riding, and even went camping! I admit I had an honest-to-goodness, restful time in the outdoors. Time away from the theme parks proved that we could keep the "Disney spirit" of family alive even if a life-sized mouse wasn't there to welcome us.

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□Yes, I have experienced mini pity-parties because I don't get to see Mickey this year, but working with others as they prepare their own Disney holiday gives me almost as much joy. One recent morning, a friend texted me as she and her family were driving to a different California theme park for her son's birthday:

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□Friend: Driving by Disneyland. He asked if we could go there instead. So we are.

□Me: Much better decision. Stop by City Hall on Main Street to get him a bday sticker.

□Friend: Keep the hints coming. Do you suggest Park Hopper since it's open until 10?

□Me: Yes on PH to get max roller coaster time. No if coasters aren't important.

□(20 minutes later)

□Friend: Screamin' is AWESOME!

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□Throughout that day via our iPhones, my "Disney spirit" was kept alive as I vicariously shared my friend's impromptu destination decision. She texted after favorite attractions and sent pictures of "World of Color." After all, if I can't experience the Disney Magic in person, I might as well share in the Magic others are having!

About The Author: Andee Zomeran lives in the Pacific Northwest and is a wife and mother to a family that loves all things Disney. They seem to be

constantly planning their next Disney vacation -- even while experiencing the current one.

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