

Arrival Day at Walt Disney World: What to Do on Day One of Your Trip

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

We all look forward to our arrival at Walt Disney World.

But what do you actually do when you get to Disney?

The answer, naturally, depends on a few things. First, at what time of the day are you arriving? If it's late evening, then perhaps you won't feel up to doing anything at all. However, if you get there in the morning, you won't want to waste the first day of your vacation. Then again, if you take a red-eye flight into Disney or you've had a long drive, you may find that you can tour the parks for just a couple of hours before you need to take a break.

□ The second thing to consider is how far and for how long you've traveled. Perhaps we're talking more than a day on the road, or maybe just a couple of hours on a plane; each will affect you differently. If you've been cooped-up in a car for a long period of time, you may be desperate to stretch your legs, but you may find that your energy levels are low. Even when I'm just a passenger on a long drive, I still find it tiring.

□ You also need to think about if you're crossing time zones. Our arrival at Walt Disney World is probably extreme -- our flight usually takes nine-and-a-half hours from the United Kingdom to Orlando, and leaves us five hours ahead of our regular time zone. However, it's not much better if you're travelling from the west coast, as you'll still be crossing three time zones to get to Walt Disney World.

Something else to think about is how long it will actually take to get to your destination. It's easy if you're driving, as presumably you'll just drive directly there. However, if you're flying, you need to think about the actual arrival time at your resort. You need to allow time to pick up your luggage, and if you're arriving from another country, like us, there's the not-so-small matter of immigration and customs.

□ Once you've done that, then you need to complete your journey, with most people opting for either a rental car, town car, or Disney's Magical Express (DME). We find renting a car quicker than DME, but then again, we did have a poor experience with DME the last time we used it, with the bus stopping off at several other resorts before it got to ours, and a half-hour wait before it even left the airport. We prefer to be in control of our own destiny, but even so, there's still the time spent

at the rental desk, and it's a good half-hour drive to Walt Disney World once we're in the car.

□ On average, it takes us a good hour to two hours from touchdown at the airport to actually arrive at our hotel, so don't make any plans too soon after your plane arrives. If you're scheduled to land at midday, if you have a delay, and then a rough journey from the airport, you may not actually be at your resort until say 3:00pm.

□ That's one reason we never plan much for our first day. We work on the theory that anything we get done is an extra, rather than planning a lot and being disappointed. One year, we were due to arrive in the late afternoon, and we had an IllumiNations cruise with friends booked for that evening. We figured we had a good cushion before the cruise sailed, but our flight was delayed, and we only just made it, running to catch the boat, which still had to wait for us. It's not an experience I'd want to repeat again, as we could've missed an amazing experience.

□ Our usual arrival time is late afternoon, and we know that we're not going to last much past early evening, although we always stay up as late as we can, to try and acclimatize to our new time zone. We always leave touring the parks until our first full day, as we feel it's too much for our arrival day.

□ Perhaps you'll have a more pressing issue to consider. If you have, say, a four-day park ticket, but you're there for five days, maybe you want your arrival day to be the day you don't visit a park. Why not take time to relax, enjoy your resort, do some shopping, and maybe go swimming?

□ We usually do reserve a meal for our first evening, just so we know that there's something in the diary, but in the past, we've missed meals due to a late arrival, or we've just found we're not hungry enough. Equally, we tend to find that, if we're tired, perhaps the food doesn't taste as good. I don't think it's a coincidence that we've rarely enjoyed a good meal on our first night after a long flight. Again, it's something worth thinking about.

□ I certainly don't want to be a downer on the first day of anyone's vacation, but these are all things worth thinking about. You also know yourself, and your party better than anyone, and what they're capable of. You may well be able to pack in a full day's touring at the parks and have a great time, but you do need to consider how much the travelling will take out of you. For us, it's a lot. For others, it may only be a little. The last thing you want is to try and cram too much into the start of your vacation, and wear yourself out for the rest of it.

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About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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