

The Art of Packing: Preparing for Your Disney Vacation

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

There's one thing most of us have in common whenever it comes to a Disney vacation.

Unless you're lucky enough to have a Disney park right on your doorstep (if only -- our nearest is Paris, in another country, a train ride through or ferry ride over the Channel and then three more hours of driving!), you're going to have to decide what to take with you.

Of course, if you're driving to your destination, you can pretty much pack as much as will fit in your car, and you won't have to worry about security restrictions. However, if you've got a big family, you may still be restricted by space. We've never forgotten the family we saw who were dropping off their son who was starting the Disney College Program. They'd driven him down, and he was keeping one of the cars they came down in from New York State. That left them with one car for the journey back. No problem, right? Wrong! They'd bought so much that Grandma was booked on a flight home to make room for everything, and even then, they were struggling to fit it all in! It was quite a sight.

□ But if you're flying to your destination, packing is suddenly a really important consideration. The first thing you need to think about these days is how much luggage (if any!) you can take with you free of charge. If you're lucky enough to be flying Southwest, you can still have two pieces per person in the hold free of charge, but with other airlines, their restrictions are much tougher, and of course you may need to pay to bring your bags with you.

□ If you're working on a budget, knowing how much luggage is coming with you could help you decide which airline to go with. We figured we'd need three pieces of luggage between the two of us on one of our recent trips, and we needed to get from Los Angeles to Vancouver. To find the best deal, I priced up all the available airlines, complete with baggage charges, and was surprised to find Air Canada came out the cheapest, although when we compared just the airfares alone, Air Canada was more expensive than some of the other options.

Once you've worked out how much luggage you need for your trip, the next issue is to work out how to fit everything in -- and that can be quite a challenge! I find a good packing list invaluable, and you can find one in your PassPorter, but personally I find the personalized version that you can get through being a [PassPorter's Club Member](#) much more use

to me. I just need to go through every item on there, and tick it off, and then I know that I'm pretty much set.

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□ If you're going away for more than a few days, you want to think about doing laundry while you're there. If you do, this immediately reduces the amount of clothes you'll need to take with you. We usually plan on doing some washing at least once a week while we're away, so we never need more than a week's supply with us.

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□ Another important thing to do is to look carefully at the weather forecast for your trip. Don't just consider the daytime highs, but think about how cold it may get at night. Florida in the winter can be unforgiving. We've seen nights in the high 20s and low 30s on most of our December visits, which means valuable space in the suitcase taken up with layers, including sweatshirts, coats, gloves, and hats. It's also worth looking in your PassPorter (because you do have one, don't you?!) for the average temperatures during your visit, to give you an idea. You can also ask on the [PassPorter message boards](#) if you're not sure about the usual weather during the time of your next trip as well.

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□ Something else that's worth thinking about when you're packing is whether you're going to need any fancy clothes. For example, are you cruising with Disney and will you want formalwear, or are you going to one of Walt Disney World's Signature restaurants? In which case, you may want a nice set of clothes for those experiences. Whatever you do, don't forget about the footwear to go with those outfits. I've made that mistake, taking, for example, a lovely pair of white shoes that went very nicely with my dresses, but they looked slightly out of place with a pair of black pants!

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□ Moving away from clothes, don't forget electrical items. Cameras are obvious, but without the battery, charger, and memory sticks to go with them, they won't be much use on their own! If you're taking a few electrical items with you (and it's easily done these days with phones, mobile devices such as laptops, and tablets), you might want to consider taking a power strip.

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□ If you're an over-packer, like me, then first you need to realize that, and then you can tackle the problem. Knowing that's a problem of mine, I tend to use the principle of putting to one side everything that I think I'm going to need, then I have another look through it quite carefully, and decide what I can do without. If there are say, six different tops, do I need all of them, or can I make do with five? If you go through this process with almost every item you pack, then you'll find that there are a fair few items you can live without while you're gone.

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□ If things really won't fit in, then it may be time to consider an extra piece of luggage, or can some items perhaps go into your carry-ons? And don't forget the return journey either! With all those tempting souvenirs, you may want to save some space or perhaps even take an extra suitcase with you, maybe one inside another one, just in case!

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□ One final word of comfort for anyone concerned that perhaps they haven't got everything with them. I always say when we leave home that so long as you've got your passports or photo ID, prescription medication, credit and ATM cards, and some money, then you can buy anything else. It's a flippant comment, but it's also true. Packing shouldn't be a nightmare, and hopefully these tips will help, but the more often you do it, the easier it becomes. Hey, now there's a reason to plan another Disney trip?

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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