

Cinderella Royal Family 5k: runDisney Event Review

by Joelle Sinclair, PassPorter Guest Contributor

What would you do in exchange for a vacation to Walt Disney World?

I ran a 5K to justify a Disney trip. It may seem extreme, but the experience totally justified the work.

Let me start from the beginning. My friend and I decided that we wanted to take a vacation. I had heard about the Disney Endurance Series and asked if she was interested. I thought it was a great way to go to Walt Disney World without my husband and kids. As long as it wasn't the half marathon, she said she was game.

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□ In retrospect, I was delusional. I thought I could train for a few weeks and be ready. To say I was not in shape was an understatement. My idea of exercising was parking in the furthest spot from the grocery store entrance. I had taken exercise classes, but never for a sustained period or to accomplish any goal. I didn't know where to begin besides putting on a pair of running shoes. After some research, I was amazed at the number of published training plans to prepare for 5K races. It was overwhelming. What had I gotten myself into? After more reading, I was finally ready to start training. The holiday season was fast approaching and time to train would be hard to carve out. I live in the northeast United States. Unless I found an indoor running track, I would have to run in snow and ice. I developed my own hybrid training plan that worked for my schedule and climate challenged location.

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□ I trained five days each week and rested the other two days. Monday was my designated rest day. The other rest day was used when needed by my body or schedule. My first week of training went so well that I absurdly thought my body had somehow maintained some level of fitness even though I had not exercised in eight years. Although delusional, I was inspired. I was convinced that I could do it. That first week I walked for thirty minutes each of the five exercise days. The following week, I ran for thirty seconds and walked for five minutes for a total of thirty minutes. My dog became my training partner. He loved to go running with me. He made me feel guilty if I didn't run.

The work-out intensity increased quickly. In a few weeks, I was running one minute then walking one minute intermittently for a total of thirty minutes. Race day was fast approaching, but I realized that I had yet to run the full course distance. I did not want to be scooped because I physically could not complete the course. The thought of being scooped

and not finishing pushed me to work harder. I faithfully kept my training plan through wind, rain, and snow. I decided to follow the advice of my doctor, himself, a marathon runner and not run the full distance before the race. That way, I will feel like I accomplished something when I finish. Before the race, the furthest I ran was 2.5 miles. But, I felt ready. I was running for ten consecutive minutes and walking for 2-3 minutes. In two months, I had come a long way.

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□ We arrived at Walt Disney World and life was good. All I had to do was run in the race and the rest of the weekend was mine to enjoy. I started to get nervous. What if I didn't finish? The next morning, the day before the race, I awoke at 5:30 a.m. and went for a run around the Caribbean Beach Resort. I rationalized that if I did one last training run, I would feel more prepared and confident. It didn't work. I didn't share my fears with anyone.

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□ Later that day, we picked up our packets and bibs at the Expo. It was exciting, but also terrifying. There was no turning back now. As we toured the Expo booths, we began talking with one of the vendors. At that booth, in the midst of the crowds, I received the most spot on advice about the race. She said, "Run your own race. You trained for this moment. Don't try to run someone else's race. You didn't train for that. Do what you do and you will be fine." And there it was. Run your own race. She was right. I had trained. I could do this. That night at dinner, we overloaded on carbohydrates and enjoyed what we jokingly called our last supper.

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□ We awoke very early the next morning pumped and ready to go. While we waited for our bus at the shelter, we were joined by another racer. As we talked, I realized we had the same hopes and fears about the race. When the race started, self-doubt resurfaced as I looked at all the fit women around me. After all those months of training, I had not lost a single pound. How could I compete against these women? As I started running, I saw that not everyone was ultra-fit. In fact, there were women (and men) of all shapes and sizes. I wasn't competing against anyone, but running with a group. With each step, I was closer to the finish line. I was really doing it. I didn't have to finish first to prove something. I was going to finish and I would get the same medal as everyone else.

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□ I finished. As soon as I crossed the finish line, a volunteer draped a medal around my neck. She congratulated me and wished me a magical day. I felt like a princess.

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□ It was a wonderful experience. One I will always remember. A journey I did not travel alone. I am grateful to have shared it with my friend and

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my dog. I hope I have inspired someone to give it a try. You have plenty of time to train. The next Cinderella Royal Family 5K Race is February 21, 2014 during the Princess Half Marathon Weekend. This weekend has grown to include several races, including the Cinderella Royal Family 5K. The beneficiary of the weekend of race events is the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, an organization dedicated to the fight against blood cancers.

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□All runDisney races are walker-friendly, but the participant must be able to maintain the required pacing for their race. All ages are welcome to participate in the Cinderella Royal Family 5K, although each racer must be able to complete the race herself. Start time for the race is 6:15 a.m. The course for the 5K race is through Epcot. 5K races are approximately 3.1 miles. But don't be surprised if you run further for the Cinderella Royal Family 5K race. When I ran the race, the course was 3.2 miles. For more information, go to runDisney's website at rundisney.com. The site contains training tips about running and nutrition and other information about various races. But let me warn you, running is habit forming. I never dreamed that four years later I would still be running. I thought my race would be a one and done, cross it off the bucket list. Two years after my 5K experience, I ran the Disney Princess Half Marathon, but that is a topic for another article.

About The Author: Joelle Sinclair is currently raising the next generation of Disney fans. She is still running in hopes of participating in future runDisney events.

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