

When to Splurge and When to Save at Walt Disney World: A Walt Disney World Review

by Sydney Dean, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Everyone wants to visit Walt Disney World as a big spender and experience all the things money can buy.

But sometimes that is not reasonable for families. There are some big ways that you can "splurge" without breaking the bank. The less expensive experiences are very similar to some more expensive options, and when given the chance, my kids often prefer the cheaper options.

The face painting found throughout the parks is a definite place to splurge. The quality of the experience and the product is very good for the \$10-15 dollar cost. It doesn't take long and is a relatively inexpensive treat for your princess, fairy, superhero, pirate, or animal lover. The face paint is durable and comfortable even on hot days. And the new look makes character picture taking a unique experience.

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□ Save your many pennies and skip the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique. The quality of the experience largely depends on the cast members serving that day. Personally, I don't care for the look of the makeover. The girls don't end up looking much like princesses to me. This is a cash drop of \$40 to \$200 that doesn't offer value for the expense. If your child wants to bring a costume and take a picture with a character -- it is free!

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□ A good place to splurge is to find a special viewing for the fireworks at the Magic Kingdom. You might choose to visit California Grill for a lovely dinner with a view. Or try the Pirates and Pals Fireworks Cruise, which is also a great experience for the money at \$34 for children and \$60 for adults. By using one of these options, you avoid the crowded departure of Magic Kingdom which completely ruins the magic of the fireworks for me. Be sure and plan this for your next trip.

Avoid the Tomorrowland Terrace Fireworks Dessert Party. Again, reviews are mixed on this experience. At \$12 for children and \$22 for adults during regular season, this sounds like a good deal on the surface. However, the reports are that the desserts are in limited supply and the guests are allowed to stand in front of the tables at the rail. So your image of sitting and watching the fireworks while you eat is not what is happening. This experience could cause more stress than it relieves and is a good place to skip in order to save money.

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☐ Splurge on ears or hats. Ears and hats are unique, cute and make inexpensive souvenirs. Some of them serve functional purpose like carrying sunglasses, shielding from the sun, or holding your hair back. Make absolutely sure the ears are comfortable for wearing so they will stay on heads for a majority of the trip. You will also find a ton of uses for them through out the year. Throw them on for a school report on Italy or to give out candy at Halloween.

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☐ Don't buy the Glow with the Show ears. Yes, I know I just said buy ears. The Glow with the Show ears are totally cute but not unique- they are all the same design. They have much more impact in a group or crowd than alone. Your family can have the same great experience watching all the other ears glow and sporting your unique ears that match your personality or make a statement.

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☐ As these are only my opinions, it is always best to do your own research on the experiences you might like to enjoy. Use PassPorter pictures, guidebooks, and boards to check on things that you haven't personally experienced. If I had taken my little girl to a certain godmother, I would have been heart broken with the outcome. Some people on the other hand, love the experience.

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☐ Be a smart vacationer. Don't fall into the trap of doing the thing that everyone else is doing. You might find that following the crowd leads you into paying too much money for the value of the experience. In general, look for the off the beaten path options. They will provide a much better value for your Disney vacation dollar.

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