

My Disney Wins: A Walt Disney World Planning Review

by Rebecca Pearson, PassPorter Guest Contributor

If you've read my articles on [My Disney Mistakes](#), I wouldn't blame you for wondering, "What hasn't this woman screwed up?!"

However, I'm happy to say that, despite my many Disney mistakes, I do feel like I've had some amazing Disney "Wins."

1. By far, my best "Win" was finding the [PassPorter's Walt Disney World](#) guidebook, and from there, the [PassPorter.com](#) web site. After our first trip, I was a goner. I desperately wanted to visit again, but was really hoping to find out more information to make the most of our time, as well as hopefully save some money. Since we had never been before, I had booked our first trip via Disney directly, and on Spring Break. While it was fabulous, I was by no means a Disney "expert." So, in my opinion, my biggest "win" was visiting our local bookstore after our first Disney trip, and after perusing the Disney books, deciding to purchase *PassPorter's Walt Disney World 2006* edition. I looked at the others, but for me, they seemed too "wordy." I wanted a mix of information, charts, pictures and reviews that seemed easy to access quickly, and felt this guidebook offered the best mix of all of that.

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2. We traveled during the off season. Based on what I learned from reading *PassPorter's Walt Disney World*, I decided our next trip had to be during the "[off season](#)." Our first trip was a 7-night trip at value resort during the spring break season. Arguably expensive, especially when you factor in the flights during peak season. After learning about travel seasons that I didn't even realize existed, our second trip was an 11-night trip at a deluxe resort (the *Contemporary* no less!), for nearly a thousand dollars cheaper than our first trip. More time, free dining and a deluxe resort? Knowledge is power!

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3. I splurged. A few times. Besides our stay at the [Contemporary](#), or dinner at [California Grill](#), which is arguably a splurge, we have been lucky enough to be able to book the [Magic Behind Our Steam Trains Tour](#), as a surprise for my son on his 10th birthday, as well as the [Wild Africa Trek](#). While both were definitely an extra expense, we felt that both were well worth the cost, either due to the access to an empty Magic Kingdom prior to rope drop, the access to "backstage" areas at both the Magic Kingdom and Animal Kingdom, or just the extra knowledge, perks, and photo opportunities that we got during this tour.

We definitely felt that these were very special experiences.

4. We visited during the [Holiday Season](#). I love Christmas, so naturally the draw of [Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party](#) and the holiday decorations in general were a huge draw for me. While the party could also be considered a splurge, the decorations everywhere, holiday castle lights, [Osborne Spectacle of Lights](#), and [Candlelight Processional](#) were what I'd argue to be once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for us, and gave us a entirely different views and experiences for our visit than what we'd had before.

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5. I brought my mother. For us, this was a [great decision](#). She came with us on our first trip, and all but two others. Because we have a great relationship with her, and the kids are extremely close with her, this turned out to be a great bonding experience for everyone and contributed to lifelong memories. We even plan to bring her on our next vacation.

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6. We used [PhotoPass + \(now Memory Maker\)](#). This was an outstanding value for us. I could never resist at least one or two attraction pictures of my children, mouths wide open or eyes wide, and at nearly 20 dollars for the cheapest package, after buying only a couple, the cost of Memory Maker was justified. With the option of all attraction and dinner photos, as well as the regular PhotoPass photos, this is an outstanding value if you already plan on purchasing PhotoPass images and plan to ride the major attractions offering photo opportunities.

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7. I also took the kids by myself. While this was arguably nerve-wracking the first time, Walt Disney World is a comfortable, safe place for us, so our first long distance trip with only myself and the kids was an easy one. The feeling of safety and convenience at Disney made this possible. I found these [solo trips with my children](#) not only gave me confidence in my ability to plan, travel, and navigate (both literally and figuratively), but also brought my children and me closer. It not only taught me to be somewhat dependent on them, but also provided them with an opportunity to show how grown up and responsible they have become.

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8. We stayed at many different resorts. Our first trip was at a value resort, and we loved it. Our second was a deluxe, with monorail service, which we loved even more. Since then we've also tried two moderate resorts, another value, and another deluxe, all of which were great, honestly. While budget and timing may affect your choices, and you may have even found the resort that feels most like home (for us, the Wilderness Lodge), visiting these very different resorts has helped us to

appreciate all that Disney has to offer, in terms of theming, convenience and price. And by visiting each, we feel as if we have a different experience every time.

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□9. **We ventured away from Walt Disney World.** It feels almost wrong to say this, but for us, a day or even a few days trip to other Orlando attractions have been great for us. Whether it's a one day trip to [SeaWorld](#) or [Discovery Cove](#), or even a few days at Legoland or Universal, I've found that these trips allowed us to see things that were special to the kids at certain times of their lives that Walt Disney World couldn't necessarily provide. While none of them were "Disney," I don't regret a single day or dollar spent on them, and the kids thoroughly enjoyed them all. Seeing those new attractions were exciting to us. We've ridden Splash Mountain numerous times, but a new attraction is always exciting, simply because it's new and you don't know what to expect. Finally, while we thoroughly enjoyed those trips, somehow, this also always gave us a greater respect for Walt Disney World, as I found myself comparing various minor things to our favorite vacation destination. To this day, when given a choice of where to go, the kids always choose Disney, even if they try to finagle a day or two at LEGOLAND or Universal in addition.

About The Author: Rebecca Pearson is the proud mother of two children and is known for "epic fails" in her every day life that inspired her to write this article. She has been to Walt Disney World seven times in the past seven years!

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