

MouseFest: Organizing the Magic

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Guidebooks Author

MouseFest. Now an annual event, like everything Disney-related, it all started with a mouse. But this particular celebration grew from the Internet and the many Disney web sites and message boards, where people can meet like-minded friends, such as <http://www.passporterboards.com>. And it was PassPorter authors Dave and Jennifer Marx, along with AllEarsNet.com founder Deb Wills who started the ball rolling, with the first official MouseFest in 2003.

Since then it's grown year after year. Just take a look at the official website <http://www.mousefest.org> and you'll see that in 2007, almost 800 people officially registered and the numbers are growing for this year's event and already stand at nearly 600! MouseFest takes place on land and at sea, starting with a four night cruise on the Disney Wonder, this year from Sunday, December 7 through to Thursday, December 11, followed by five more days of fun at the Walt Disney World resort itself, from Thursday, December 11 to Monday, December 15.

The beauty of MouseFest is that you can participate as much or as little as you like. You could have a diary packed with meetings with like-minded Disney fans or there may only be one or two events that you plan on attending. How do these meets occur? Well, it takes someone to decide to host one and then other people show up (sometimes an RSVP is requested or required).

Of course, the easiest thing to do is just sign up and then turn up, but having been to a couple of different MouseFest celebrations now, I can also tell you that perhaps one of the most fun things to do is to set up your own event. Yes, it may sound daunting and at first, truth be told, it is! But it's also very simple to do and there are lots of people who'll happily help you out, if that's what you need.

To host a meet, there are a few obvious things that you need to decide on first. Where do you want to meet and when and what are you going to do? Keep in mind the plans for the daily park, and the already-scheduled events, which are on the [official MouseFest site](#). The chances are that most people attending will be heading to the chosen Park of the Day, so it's best to schedule your meets to coincide with that. One time when you aren't allowed to schedule a meet is during the Mega Mouse Meet (this year, it's on Saturday, December 13 between 10:00 am and 1:00 pm). You can't hold a "competing" meet at that time for good reason; any other event scheduled at that time wouldn't get much response, as Mega Mouse Meet is the single biggest event on the

schedule each year.

Fortunately, the MouseFest scheduling gurus don't allow that to happen, and stand ready to advise on that and all other aspects of your plans.

I've found that it's always best to have a plan in mind, unless you just want to sit around and talk to people, which is a great idea for a meet in itself. However, most folks are at Walt Disney World to enjoy the parks, and most meets oblige. Without a solid plan you'll find yourselves all sitting there, trying to work out what to do next. We've done that in a big group before and it does waste a lot of time.

Ideas could include a meet to go on a particular ride, with one of the more famous meets (but alas, no longer on the schedule) a first-thing-in-the-morning ride on Kilimanjaro Safaris. Or perhaps you could decide to take a stroll around part of Epcot's World Showcase as a group, maybe enjoying some of the food or drink on offer from each country. It could even be a tour of the various different "mountains" in the Magic Kingdom or a bid to see how many times you can drop on the Tower of Terror. You could also decide to head to a restaurant, either table service or counter service, for a meal. This is an especially good choice for anyone who's heading down to MouseFest solo, as it means that they don't have to eat on their own. On the downside, if you are going to eat at a table service restaurant, you need real commitment from everyone attending that they are going to be there, as reservations will have to be made beforehand. You may also need to strictly limit numbers, as there's every chance you won't be able to book a restaurant for 100 people!

Perhaps the idea of watching IllumiNations or SpectroMagic with a group of fellow enthusiasts appeals? This is something we've done on numerous occasions with great success. Trust me, a whole group of you staking out an area to watch a parade is a lot of fun!

Don't just think about the time that your event starts. You might also want to think about the time you expect it to end; otherwise you may find that it continues all day long. That may not be a problem, but if you have other plans later in the day, then specifying how long you expect it to last may be a good idea.

Of course, a lot of this also applies to the cruise portion of the MouseFest schedule. It's still important to think about what you might want to do, how long it would go on for and whether it will clash with any other big events.

Your meet (and every other MouseFest meet) will be listed on the [MouseFest web site](#), in the printed Pocket Guide to MouseFest that is distributed to all registered attendees, and, for MouseFest Cruisers, the daily events will be listed on the complimentary MouseFest Navigator event schedule that will be delivered to your stateroom each evening. All you have to do is [sign up for it](#) on the MouseFest website.

Once you've decided what you'd like to do, propose your event to the friendly folks at [MouseFest Corner](#), the PassPorter community's center for all things MouseFest. Folks will look it over, make suggestions (if they seem necessary), and when everything is pulled together will submit your proposal to the MouseFest scheduling folks. In short order the meet will be up in lights at the MouseFest.org site, for the benefit of all MouseFest attendees.

There are already lots of fun events listed on the [official MouseFest web site](#), so if you haven't checked it out recently, it's definitely worth a look! To all those heading down for MouseFest this year, enjoy yourselves and hopefully I'll see you there when I return in 2009!

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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