

Tips For Traveling With Your Bestie: Walt Disney World Touring Tips for Traveling with Friends

by Shelby Joseph, PassPorter Guest Contributor

The first time my friend Emily and I decided to take our families on a Walt Disney World vacation together, we received a lot of comments suggesting our friendship wouldn't last after spending a week together.

We were surprised by the comments and assured everyone everything would work out fine. This was Emily's first time to Walt Disney World and my family and I had been multiple times. She relied heavily on my experience and my planning skills and I was more than happy to help her out. Now Emily and her family are pros and our families just got back from our second trip together. And guess what? We are still great friends!

There are a few guidelines Emily and I followed while on vacation. Actually, it's something we do as friends in general. We didn't sit down and write up a list before vacation; they just happened naturally. Maybe these tips will help your friendship survive a Walt Disney World vacation together.

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□ Family time -- Accept the fact that your families do not have to spend every waking moment together. It's okay to ditch the other family once in a while. Don't try to stay in one hotel room because it may be cheaper. Constant interaction with someone you're not used to being with around the clock can be exhausting. Split off from the other family while you are at your favorite park so you are sure to experience the attractions you love without worrying about it being too boring for the others. My husband, Jared, loves EPCOT's World Showcase. He visits every single country and reads all the information he can. Doing that bores Emily's family (and honestly it bores me too, but I stick with him). Emily could spend her whole vacation in Magic Kingdom because she wants to ride as many rides as she can fit into the day. On those two days we split up and we had a lot of fun things to talk about the next time we all got together.

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□ Group time -- Now that you have plans to disperse the group, make sure to plan group activities, too! Make dinner reservations for the entire group at least once during your trip. Dining together is a great time to share the stories and highlights from the time your families were apart. Gather at the pool, rent watercrafts or bikes, or join the campfire at Fort Wilderness Campground with Chip and Dale for

s'mores! Plan a few hours for 'moms only' time. Emily and I left the kids with their dads and shopped in Downtown Disney. Our husbands grabbed their swim trunks and spent some 'dads only' hours at Blizzard Beach.

Swap babysitting duties -- Along with group and family time, there is couples time. Yes, this is a family vacation, but sometimes parents need some alone time too! If you have babysitters, take advantage of them. Offer to watch your bestie's kids while the couple rides Aerosmith's Rock 'n' Roller Coaster or babysit the kids at the pool while their parents take a nap. Maybe the couple wants to have a romantic dinner at Victoria & Albert's.

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Get pictures with your bestie -- On our first trip Emily and I were the photographers. We did not have a single picture together. The second time we made it a point to remember and may have been a little obnoxious with the "selfies."

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Don't force your children on rides -- If your kid thinks Pirates of the Caribbean is scary, please don't force him on it just because the rest of the group wants to ride. Isn't that equivalent to "if all your friends jumped off a cliff? ". Don't make a big deal about it if they are scared. What kid wants to look like a baby in front of the rest of the group? Think about the ride you don't like (mine is the Mad Tea Party) and then think about how you would feel if someone forced you on it. Stay back with your child and enjoy some one-on-one time.

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Respect the bestie's parenting style -- This is a big one! First of all, I'm not suggesting one parenting style is better than the other. All parents have their own way of rearing children and more than likely they aren't going to change it during vacation. There are parents who want to keep their children's routine and there are parents who decide to forgo the nap and keep on pushing through the day! While some parents want to maintain their healthy eating lifestyle, there are others who have the "free for all" attitude and let the kids gorge themselves on pretzels, Dole Whips, and Mickey Bars (that parent may or may not be me). Some parents are on a budget and allow only a certain amount of money spent on souvenirs. Personally, I am a mom who follows a budget. If I know I am traveling with another parent who buys everything their child wants, I will have a talk with my daughter reminding her of her budget. Of course, Mom always has a little wiggle room.

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Whatever your parenting style, please don't interfere with your bestie's parenting decisions and please don't pipe in with an, "Oh come on, let her have it, you're on vacation!"

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□ There are two stories Emily and I like to share from our very first Walt Disney World vacation together. The first happened while waiting for the bus at our resort. Emily and her husband repeatedly asked their daughter, Madison, to not hang or climb on the queue railing. Inevitably, Madison ended up face-planting in the concrete. Madison bounced back up, no worse for wear, but immediately started crying from her mother's panicked reaction while inspecting Madison's face. There was a "there's blood!" comment from Emily which made Madison cry even more. In the meantime, my husband and I were watching the scene slightly dumbfounded. We saw no blood or any other mark on Madison's face. Later that evening after we knew Madison was fine, we all laughed about the incident and eight years later we still pick on Emily.

□ The second incident happened while having dinner at Trail's End Restaurant. My daughter Joy, who was 11 months old at the time, was gnawing on a breadstick and bit off a chunk too big for her little mouth to handle. She started to gag on it. I calmly watched for a second to see if she could get it out herself, but when I realized she could not, I thumped Joy on the back (which I now know was not the best thing to do). The chunk of breadstick popped out and Joy immediately started crying. I scooped her up and walked outside until she calmed down. I always get picked on for being too nonchalant with my parenting style.

□ In either instance, Emily and I did not interfere. At the time we did not offer a "better" way of doing things. We just let each other handle the situation. Depending on the type of friendship you have, wait until the drama has passed to tease each other about it!

□ That is how Emily and I survive our Disney vacations together. I hope these vacation planning tips help you keep your friendship with your bestie undamaged.

About The Author: Shelby and her husband Jared had their first Walt Disney World vacation on their honeymoon which started an obsession. They have also been on three Disney cruises with and without their daughter, Joy. Shelby is the Disney guru among her friends and loves to help plan their vacations.

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