

Make Your Own Welcome Gifts: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Lisa Smith-Lester, PassPorter Guest Contributor

This story needs a bit of background first.

While planning for our 2010 trip, I found the Disney Florist website, <http://disneyworld.disneyfloralandgifts.com>. They have some amazing products on here and I purchased a lovely gift basket for my then two-year-old daughter, which was delivered to our room at Walt Disney World's Kidani Villas. With tax and shipping costs added, this cost between \$60 and \$68 (I don't have the exact figure). I looked at buying again for our October 2013 trip and found the same gift basket was now \$103.95 plus tax and shipping! Far too expensive, especially as I now have two daughters.

I thought about [Mickey's Grand Welcome](#), but decided that as well as being too expensive, the items included meant this was really geared as a gift for one person; so I ruled this out. I made the rather crazy decision to make my own!

□ As my parents, siblings and nieces were all vacationing with us, I couldn't just do this for my two daughters, so I started planning a Grand Welcome for five! (The ages of the children were 5, 4, 2, 18 months and 6 months on our vacation.)

□ My original plan was to do a themed gift box based on the Fab Five plus Daisy, so this would have been six gift boxes (Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Goofy, Pluto and Daisy) for each child, making a total of 30 gift boxes! (Did I mention I am from the UK so would have to get these there via airplane?!)

This all started about 18 months before our trip so I asked in every shoe store I went past for empty children's shoe boxes, and managed to get more than enough over quite a period of time. I bought red, blue, black, white, purple, green, orange, yellow and pink colored wrapping paper, tissue paper, ribbons, bows, and card to be able to make the boxes.

□ I bought loads of little bits to go in the boxes. Things like crayons, notebooks, items from the Disney Store including little flip phones, magnets, purses, little Princess dolls and playing cards, small toys, teddies, stickers, and a ridiculous amount more! Almost everything I bought was on sale or was fairly inexpensive.

□ It was a bit harder getting items for my two youngest nieces, but we managed to get enough for them in the end. My Mum helped with the

buying and was also on the lookout for inexpensive, small items.

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□A couple of months before our vacation, I made gift tags to go on each gift box, then I started wrapping all of the gift boxes over a period of a few weeks, doing a few each night. I had decided on five gift boxes for each of the girls, instead of the original six, so made up five each of Mickey-, Minnie-, Donald-, and Daisy-themed boxes, along with three Pluto-themed gift boxes and two Goofy gift boxes. I also made some banners that said WELCOME HOME that included each of the girls' names.

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□Obviously, 25 gift boxes were a lot! As the gift boxes were different sizes, I was able to fit some boxes inside of one another so ended up with 12 empty boxes that I had to pack in our luggage. When the time to pack came around, I also had five gift bags full of all the items for the girls, one for each of them. Everything I had took up a whole suitcase, plus a few of the boxes went into one of the other cases. Thankfully, we were able to check four cases with the airline and had already planned on taking an empty case for souvenir shopping!

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□Fast forward to our arrival day. Once my daughters were in bed sleeping, I got busy unpacking all of the boxes and presents. The tissue paper needed to go inside each gift box and this was very difficult to cut without scissors (there were none in our 2-bedroom villa at Saratoga Springs Resort), then we put all the gifts into each box. We stacked them in piles, one for each girl, and then hid them behind the TV in the master bedroom so that my daughters wouldn't find them in the morning.

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□The next morning we were up early as normal. We got dressed and gave the girls some cereal. My sister took my daughters to the second 2-bedroom villa that the rest of the family were in and then came back to help my husband and I set everything out. This didn't take too long to do and we were soon on our way to Animal Kingdom for the morning.

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□We left the park at 1:30 pm and made our way back to Saratoga Springs. My husband and I went in to get the video camera set up and then everyone else came to the room to surprise the girls. They were excited coming in as we had put a big Mickey banner on the door and they were even more excited when they saw the piles of presents.

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□They loved opening all of the gift boxes and showing us everything they had, and had a really fun time.

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□I really enjoyed doing this for my daughters and nieces. It took a lot of time and quite a bit of money but it was completely worth it. It wasn't

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too difficult to do either. The girls loved it and my daughters enjoyed playing with their gifts and the boxes for the rest of the holiday. And though I spent quite a bit on everything I bought, it was still a lot less expensive than the Disney Florist version!

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□ I would tell anyone interested in items on the Disney Florist website, but not at the prices quoted, to consider making their own.

About The Author: Lisa Smith-Lester is a working Mum with two daughters who is visiting Walt Disney World again this year, a year earlier than originally planned.

Article last updated: 02-05-2015

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