

# Make Your Magical Memories: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Lucinda Sowers, PassPorter Guest Contributor

As I made the 10-minute drive to my parents' that evening, I was thinking through what I was going to say. I knew they, especially my Mom, would be disappointed to hear that we did not have the time or interest to go with them on a 3-week road trip of the West next summer. And then to turn around and tell them that we'd just booked another Disney Cruise ... well, my expectation for this visit was bleak.

An idea had entered my head just before I left the house -- why not ask them to join you on the cruise? The thought stuck with me.

Our conversation started casually, and after a few minutes, I broached the main reason for my visit. I explained that, although we could appreciate the value of the road trip they were proposing, it was just not practical for our family. Somehow I was able to segue into our plans for another Disney Cruise, my husband, me and our two sons (22 and 17 at the time). I was met with silence and a sense of disappointed resignation. Then the words came out, "Would you want to go on the cruise with us?" Their expressions brightened considerably. I had checked price and availability on my way out the door, so I told them the cost. I also was quick to establish some "ground rules." We were doing late seating for dining, and I knew they would probably not want to eat that late. Also, traveling with young-adult guys, we were not going to function well trying to do things together 24/7. I promised we would plan to have breakfast and/or lunch with them each day, but I couldn't guarantee much more. They were agreeable and booked their cruise the next day.

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□ We had planned well in advance and enjoyed talking about the trip for months. I loaned them my [PassPorter Disney Cruise Line](#) book so they would have an idea of what to expect. They had cruised before but not with Disney. Somewhere along the way, I mentioned the AquaDuck to my dad, I think I even showed him a video, and he was quite intrigued -- wondered if the grandsons would be willing to ride it with him. I was sure they would. Mom's only request was for the boys to play shuffleboard with them.

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□ It wasn't too far into the planning when I realized we would disembark the day before Dad's birthday. What better way to celebrate than to visit Magic Kingdom? And it was the last weekend of the Flower and Garden Show at Epcot. Mom and Dad love Epcot. So we added a post-cruise stay

at Port Orleans Riverside, our first experience there.

Finally, THE day arrived. We met the folks at McDonald's for breakfast and headed south for the 8-hour-ish trek from South Carolina to Port Canaveral. We had a bit of a hiccup along the road (Dad ended up with food poisoning), but we checked into the Country Inns & Suites right on schedule. (We highly recommend this hotel for the stay-park-cruise deal.) Port arrival and embarking went smoothly. We were immediately directed to the Enchanted Garden for lunch, and we were able to get into our cabins shortly after. We were thrilled with our verandah cabin (now we're spoiled). Our boys, both over 6-feet tall, had no problems with the couch fold-out and bunk for sleeping.

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□ We were able to keep our promise of eating with the parents at least once a day, many days twice. Dad got his AquaDuck ride -- twice! Once with each grandson. And Mom got her shuffleboard date.

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□ The boys enjoyed Goofy's Sports Deck, playing a lot of basketball and a round or two of miniature golf. It was a little awkward due to the age difference of our boys. The younger being 17 couldn't go with us to the adult areas, and the older being 22 and not a "nightclub" person wasn't sure what to do with himself in the beginning; however, it did not take long for them to find things to do together and have a great time. The 5K and snorkeling on Castaway Cay were definite highlights.

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□ We were back in Port Canaveral all too soon, but Port Orleans Riverside, here we come! We ended up in one of the Magnolia buildings in connecting rooms. We were very impressed with the resort -- would go back in a heartbeat! The sprawling layout of the resort was a concern, since my Mom was scheduled for knee replacement surgery just several weeks after our return; but we managed.

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□ Our first park day, Dad's birthday, was Magic Kingdom, with our first stop being City Hall for a Happy Birthday button. It was so fun to hear the many birthday wishes directed Dad's way, and it was fun for him to run into "birthday buddies" all over the park. We were fortunate to get into Be Our Guest for lunch (this was pre-FP+) and loved the food and ambience. We did things together and separately at the park but met up again for dinner at one of our favorite places, Columbia Harbor House. While we were relaxing over our meals, a CM stopped by our table. She was a senior-aged lady, so she connected with my parents and chatted a bit. When she saw it was my Dad's birthday (yeah, birthday button!), she said a birthday was a celebration for everyone and proceeded to go get Celebration buttons for all of us &hellip; along with a huge piece of chocolate cake with a candle for Dad! It was a magical day.

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□ Our Epcot visit the next day was made more special by my daughter flying in to join us. Exiting the park after Illuminations, I was content that we'd had a very special, memorable family vacation.

□ We've talked a lot about that trip -- recounting the adventures and sharing the memories. The magic and specialness of this trip became all the more precious the next year. In April 2014 my mother suffered a life-altering stroke. Seven short months later, my Dad passed away. That magical Disney adventure was our last family trip with my parents. It would have been so easy to ignore that "little voice" and tell myself I deserved the time with just hubby and the boy -- having Mom and Dad along would "cramp our style." I could have come up with dozens of reasons to keep my mouth shut, but I'm so glad I didn't! It's cliché, but life is short -- and unexpected. There is no warning for "last chance." It takes effort at times to create those special memories, but it's worth it. Don't hesitate to make it happen; it's magic to treasure for a lifetime!

*About The Author: Lucinda is a wife, mom, soon-to-be-grandma, administrative assistant, and Disney nut. She's been hooked on the parks since the 1980s and got addicted to Disney Cruising in 2012.*

Article last updated: 06-25-2015

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