

# Avoiding Exhaustion at Walt Disney World, Part 2: Do Less, Enjoy More: A Walt Disney World Special Needs Article

by Amy Wear, PassPorter Guest Contributor

As noted in [Part 1 of this series](#), the Disney vacation goal for adults with special needs is to maximize enjoyment and minimize the risk of overextending oneself. We discussed strategies to put into place during the vacation planning stages.

Now it's time to head to the World with an energy conservation game plan.

Arrival day: "My Plans" = No plans! When you're making plans with the My Disney Experience App, it's tempting to book an advance dining reservation for your arrival day. Since flight delays are always possible, the best way to start off your trip is to leave your arrival day free of plans. No need to rush off to use those fastpasses or contemplate how much energy you will have left for touring by the time you arrive.

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□ Resist the lure and enjoy your resort! When you step off the Magical Express and your senses grab a hold of the sights, sounds, and smells of everything Disney, it's hard to resist hopping a bus to the parks or Downtown Disney. Then it hits you: Your body is aching and exhausted from a day of traveling. There's no shame in giving in to that Towel Mickey inviting you to test out your temporary bed. Take a breather!

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□ When you're ready, head out and explore your resort. Stop by the gift shop and pick up an autograph book. Grab a bite to eat in the food court and pat yourself on the back for keeping your first day free of plans. Yes you do have time to stop and try out those hammocks. Yes you can sink into that inviting hot tub. What could be better for your aching joints? Campfire and movie under the stars? No problem!

Arrive before park opening (or don't). You've heard it before, but arriving before park opening truly does give you the best start to your park touring day. It's often said that you can take in more attractions in the first two hours of the day than you can all afternoon. On the other hand, if you function better later in the day, enjoy leisurely mornings at your resort and take on the parks later at your own pace.

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□ Focus on your FastPasses. If you followed my advice from Part 1, you will have your fastpasses booked sixty days before your trip. Each day,

focus on enjoying the three attractions that you chose. Consider it a bonus if you take in more than these three things. Remember, you are under no obligation to use your fastpasses if you aren't feeling up to it. You can also change your fastpass times and selections throughout your vacation, subject to availability.

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□ Enjoy other attractions as time and energy (or pain levels) permit. You may want to focus on seeing shows instead of going on rides, where queues often move along quickly.

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□ Avoid high intensity rides that may trigger a flare-up. If the ride has any motion warnings at all, it's probably best to avoid it. Numerous Disney attractions are gentle rides that focus on special effects and elaborate theming, rather than a "thrill."

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□ Don't criss-cross the parks. While some unofficial Disney park touring plans can work well for people without any health issues, these often encourage criss-crossing the parks and will quickly fatigue a susceptible person. Even if you don't get to scratch as many attractions off your list, you will enjoy the ones you do get to experience that much more. By the same pressed penny, try to eat at the closest counter service area to where you are in the park so you aren't wasting energy walking long distances for food.

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□ Take an afternoon break. When the parks start to get crowded in the early afternoon, this is the perfect time to head back to your resort. If you have already reached the point of exhaustion or flare-up, consider springing for cab fare rather than walking the extra distance and waiting for bus transportation.

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□ If returning to your resort is impractical, treat yourself to a Dole Whip and seek solace in a quiet corner of the park away from the most popular attractions. If you need to get out of the sun and into some air-conditioning, try a less popular attraction like the Hall of Presidents at Magic Kingdom or Captain EO at Epcot.

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□ Relax back at your resort. For those with chronic pain, relaxation time back at your resort gives you a chance to use your therapy modalities, such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or reclining with a heating pad. If you decide to take a nap, try to limit this to about 40 minutes to prevent disruptions to your night-time sleep routine. After you're feeling rested, enjoy your resort amenities as you see fit.

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□ Let your pain (and fatigue level) be your guide. Anyone living with chronic pain and fatigue knows that it's impossible to predict how you are going to feel from one day to the next. Symptoms are your best

indicator of how much activity you can tolerate on any given day. Even though Disney vacations tend to foster hyper-planning, you also need to allow ample room for flexibility and be prepared to abandon plans.

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□ You will enjoy your vacation most by savoring the atmosphere and magical moments (and Mickey bars!), rather than viewing Disney as an exhausting checklist of attractions to cover. As my favorite unofficial [Disney guidebook authors and podcasters](#) like to say, "DO LESS, ENJOY MORE." This is a vacation, not a to-do list!

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Article last updated: 08-27-2015

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<http://www.passporter.com/articles/avoid-exhaustion-disney-world-part-2.html>

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