

Planning a Disneyland Vacation: Choosing Disneyland Over Walt Disney World

by Kristin Billings, PassPorter Guest Contributor

For Disney parks fans, it's the eternal debate: Walt Disney World vs Disneyland.

Walt Disney World, with its sprawling size, seems to be the first choice for many vacationers. It offers a fully immersive theme park, dining, and resort experience that is simply unmatched anywhere else in the world. However, depending on your vacation priorities and travel style, the Disneyland Resort, with its more intimate size and laid-back feel, may actually be a far better fit for your needs. Sure, the castle at Disneyland may not be quite as grand as its East Coast counterpart, but this resort definitely has its advantages, particularly for the following types of travelers:

Spontaneous Vacationers Who Dislike Long-term Planning Let's face it, a trip to Walt Disney World will probably be the most highly orchestrated, intricately scheduled vacation most people will ever experience. These days, the best dining reservations at Walt Disney World book up 180 days in advance, and the most coveted FastPass+ reservations disappear by 12:01 a.m. 60 days before guests arrive. While this kind of hawkish long-term planning may provide a fun challenge for some guests, it can feel more than a little overwhelming and overscheduled to more free-spirited folk. In stark contrast, Disneyland, with its high percentage of local visitors, offers a much more spontaneous experience. The Disneyland Resort doesn't even allow dining reservations until just 60 days in advance, and great reservations are often still available at the last-minute. In a recent search, I was able to find several character dining openings for just one week away, which would be nearly impossible at Walt Disney World. Scheduling attractions at Disneyland also requires minimal advanced planning. Currently, Disneyland still uses the old-fashioned paper FASTPASS system. While not as high-tech as the World's version, the Disneyland system allows guests to grab even the most popular FASTPASSES on the day of, with very little advanced planning required. For example, guests hoping to meet the famous Frozen sisters can easily obtain FASTPASSES for this experience simply by snagging them early in the day at Disney California Adventure. In contrast, these coveted reservations are nearly always gone within seconds of midnight a full 60 days in advance for Walt Disney World guests. Overall, the Disneyland Resort is a much more laid-back choice than Walt Disney World for last-minute travelers

and those who prefer a less tightly planned vacation experience.

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□ **Travelers Who Only Have a Few Days** For those guests who want a full week-long Disney immersion, Walt Disney World is definitely the best bet. However, if vacationers only have a few days available, Disneyland Resort offers a much more manageable option. I typically recommend three days for first-timers at Disneyland, which is plenty of time to experience nearly all attractions that the West Coast Disney parks have to offer. Seeing all of Walt Disney World takes much more time (you could probably stay for weeks and not do everything!), and Magic Your Way tickets for four days or more provide the best value at the World. If you just want a quick getaway, Disneyland makes great sense.

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□ **Travelers Who Value Walkability** Some people dislike the inconvenience of public transportation, and others feel uncomfortable driving in unfamiliar areas. If you prefer a compact vacation destination that will allow you to simply walk everywhere you need to go, Disneyland is your place. In addition to the three onsite Disney-owned hotels (The Grand Californian, The Disneyland Hotel, and Disney's Paradise Pier), there are dozens of lodging options at Good Neighbor (Disney-approved) hotels within walking distance of the theme parks and Downtown Disney. Some of these offsite hotels, at a variety of price points, are actually even closer to the theme parks than the Disney ones! Lastly, because the two Disneyland parks are only a few hundred yards from each other, Park Hopping is infinitely easier in California. For vacationers accustomed to complicated transportation gymnastics and premium prices for walkable resorts at Walt Disney World, the ease and economy of walking everywhere at Disneyland can be a welcome relief.

People Who Struggle in Heat and High Humidity Let's face it, the weather in Southern California is about as good as it gets.

Temperatures at Disneyland range from the 60s to the 80s year-round and humidity is consistently low. In contrast, summertime temperatures at Walt Disney World can easily reach the 90s, with humidity levels as high as 85%. Anyone who has braved August in Orlando can attest that the weather there can be brutal for even the hardiest of visitors. For travelers who have heat-affected health concerns, I frequently recommend Disneyland, especially if their vacation dates are limited to the hot summer months.

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□ **Disney History Buffs and Superfans** For those of us who find ourselves enthralled by the legacy of Walt Disney, Disneyland is a Mecca of undeniable appeal. Known to superfans as "Walt's Park," the place remains full of the echoes and visions of the man himself. While Walt Disney did provide the vision behind Walt Disney World, he passed

away six years before the Florida theme park opened, so it does lack the intimate connection between the park and its creator that Disneyland retains. From Walt's private apartment on Main Street to the old fire engine that Walt loved to drive around the park before it opened in the mornings, Disneyland exudes an incomparably rich history. Consider taking the "Walk in Walt's Footsteps" tour if you're interested in learning more about the story and vision behind Disneyland.

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□ In the end, both Walt Disney World and Disneyland offer unforgettable vacation experiences. However, taking the time to consider your own personal travel style and priorities can help you to choose the most fitting destination for your next Disney trip.

About The Author: Kristin Billings is a Magic Maker with Off to Neverland Travel. She lives in sunny Southern California with her husband and two boys, and they love heading to any Disney destination whenever they get the chance.

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