

When to Book Your Disney Vacations: A Disney Vacation Planning Article

by Katherine Resch, PassPorter Guest Contributor

I often hear the question: "How far in advance do I need to book a Disney vacation?"

□ The answer varies based on the Disney destination. A travel agent specializing in Disney destinations can guide you through the process. There are often significant benefits to booking early, and these vary by destination as well. The best guideline for all destinations is to book as early as possible. Early booking always allows for best availability, so you have the opportunity to have the vacation you want, rather than being limited by what is left over.

How far in advance should you book your Disney vacation?

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□ For all destinations -- as early as possible!

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□ When you book early, you have the best availability and variety of options. In addition, after placing a deposit (which varies by destination), you have a longer period of time in which to make payments or save money for your final payment.

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□ Walt Disney World Resort -- at least 7 months in advance

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□ Millions of guests visit the Walt Disney World Resort each year, and this makes early planning imperative if you plan to be one of these guests. When planning a vacation to the Walt Disney World Resort, it is best to make your resort reservation at least 7 months in advance. For certain popular room categories, such as the Little Mermaid Standard Rooms at Disney's Art of Animation Resort, it is suggested to book even earlier.

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□ Why 7 months? Booking at least 7 months in advance allows time to make transportation arrangements, look at park hours, and decide your dining and tour reservations. At 180 days (about 6 months) before arrival, you can book your dining and tour reservations. There are many dining locations that are extremely popular, so making those reservations as early as possible is essential, and a huge benefit of booking early. When staying at the Walt Disney World Resort, you will be able to make dining and tour reservations for your entire stay at 180 days before your arrival date. You will also be able to make your Fast Pass reservations for your entire stay at 60 days before your arrival

date.

Disneyland Resort -- at least 3 months in advance

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□The Disneyland Resort is the original Disney destination, and has the advantage of being smaller with a more local clientele. This, along with a shorter reservation time frame, allows for a more flexible schedule when booking reservations. For best availability, book a Disneyland Resort vacation at least 3 months in advance.

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□Why 3 months? This time frame gives you time to make transportation arrangements, look at park hours, and decide on dining and tour reservations. Dining reservations at the Disneyland Resort can be made up to 60 days in advance. However, reservations at restaurants at the Disneyland Resort are often available at a later date, even for the most popular dining locations. Reservations for tours can be made up to 30 days in advance. The Disneyland Resort is my top suggestion for a last-minute Disney vacation.

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□Disney Cruise Line -- at least 5 months in advance

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□It is important to note that cruise pricing often increases as the sailing date approaches. This means that the best pricing is available when cruise itineraries are released, usually about 15-18 months in advance. If this is not possible, I suggest that you make your Disney Cruise Line reservation at least 5 months in advance.

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□Why 5 months? I suggest having a passport for all Disney Cruise Line sailings, in case of unforeseen circumstances where you might have to depart from or stay in a foreign port. If applying for a new passport, it is best to allow at least 3 months to receive the passport. Reservations for specialty dining, spa treatments, shore excursions, and group babysitting can be made in advance once your reservation is paid in full, based on your Castaway Club status or stateroom. Booking at least one month in advance of your reservation date allows time to make transportation arrangements and take a better look at the cruise itinerary to determine the reservations you might like to make.

First-time guests on the Disney Cruise Line can make reservations up to 75 days before sailing. Castaway Club members or guests staying in a concierge stateroom can make reservations up to 120 days before sailing.

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□Adventures by Disney -- at least 5 months in advance

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□Adventures by Disney offers the best of Disney service with the adventure of guided tours around the world. This is an amazing way to

experience culture with your family. Early booking ensures best availability, especially for common school vacation times, popular tours, and larger groups. If you would like to arrive early or extend your stay, early booking also offers the best availability for those extensions. I suggest booking at least 5 months in advance for all Adventures by Disney vacations.

□ Why 5 months? Most Adventures by Disney vacations require a passport and international airfare. If applying for a new passport, I always suggest allowing at least 3 months to receive the passport. Even if traveling on a domestic Adventure, airfare can sometimes be difficult because of the destinations. Final payment for an Adventures by Disney vacation is due 120 days before travel, so booking fewer than 5 months in advance often means paying in full at the time of reservation.

□ Aulani -- at least 7 months in advance

□ Aulani, a Disney Resort and Spa in Ko Olina on O'ahu in Hawai'i, offers a tropical vacation with a Disney flair. Aulani offers standard hotel rooms and suites, as well as Disney Vacation Club villas. Transportation to Hawai'i can be difficult and expensive, depending on the city of origin, so booking far in advance can help you to find the best transportation options. In addition, excursions can be booked far in advance (right now there are reservations available in 2019). I suggest booking a vacation to Aulani at least 7 months in advance.

□ Why 7 months? Dining reservations, including the popular Disney character breakfast at Makahiki, can be made up to 180 days in advance. Online pre-registration for Aunty's Beach House (the children's activity area for ages 3-12) begins at 90 days before travel. Having your reservation secured before these deadlines allows you to make arrangements in advance.

□ General benefits of booking in advance

□ For all destinations, booking in advance allows for the best availability and ability to make plans at your leisure. A good travel agent, especially one specializing in Disney destinations, can help you with your plans. If you are not able to make plans far in advance, you have the option of choosing a Disney destination where it is not as necessary (Disneyland Resort is my top suggestion), or accepting the fact that you may be taking what is available rather than choosing from every option.

About The Author: Katherine Resch is an independent agent with Happily Ever Travel, an authorized Disney Vacation Planner agency. She is the proud mom to 3 princesses, and loves to explore Disney destinations with her family. You can contact Katherine through her website at

www.ImaginationsVacations.com

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