

Date Night at Disney: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Amy Jones, PassPorter Guest Contributor

This September our family celebrated our second trip to Walt Disney World, and my husband and I started a new tradition: date night at Disney.

□ Our girls are ages 6 and 8, which is too young to be left alone at a resort, but perfect ages to enjoy Walt Disney World's awesome kids' clubs. I had heard great things about Lilo's Playhouse, and was very interested in placing the girls where they would 1) be fed a nutritious meal and 2) enjoy planned activities, such as science experiments and cooking classes.

I was interested in the flat fee of \$55 per child that Lilo's charges, which includes meals, snacks, and all activities between the hours of 4:30 pm and midnight. If you take into account hourly childcare plus meals, that's a very good deal!

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□ To sweeten the situation, our girls were very excited about going to Lilo's Playhouse. While they'd never experienced any of Walt Disney World's childcare facilities, they had stayed in the facility provided by the Disney Vacation Club when we took the tour last year and had a great time. In fact, when asked about what they liked best about that vacation, the childcare facility was always one of the first things mentioned!

□ So, off to Lilo's it was. We dropped our girls off as close to 4:30 as we could, and the transition went off without a hitch. After a few hugs goodbye (and a few forms to fill out), the girls disappeared into their own magical land, and we were free to discover Disney through our own eyes.

Our date night at Disney officially began with dinner at Morimoto Asia. My husband is a long-time fan of Iron Chef, of food, and of anything Asian, so this was a place he'd wanted to try since it opened.

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□ The atmosphere of the restaurant is contemporary and classy while lighthearted and fun--perfect for a date night after a day in the park! We were seated right next to the kitchen, which was a good thing. I don't mean that we had to sit by the kitchen door as it swung in and out. I mean we got to sit right next to the glass wall that separates the dining area from the exciting kitchen, where the diminutive head chef shouted orders to her team and they rushed to comply, where the meals were plated, and where Peking ducks hung merrily all in a row.

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□We were on the Disney Dining Plan, but since Morimoto's takes 2 credits we opted to pay out of pocket and keep it simple. We ordered one eel and avocado sushi roll, a Vietnamese iced coffee, and an iced green tea. The green tea was lovely, almost floral, and the Vietnamese iced coffee was like a tasty mocha frappuccino. The eel and avocado roll was melt-in-your-mouth good, and we took our time, savoring every bite until our entree arrived.

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□The Peking duck, which had "peeked" at us through the glass throughout our appetizer experience, was our entree of choice. I will point out here that the menu states that the Morimoto Peking Duck serves a minimum of two guests, but costs \$27 per person. That means that the duck, for a party of two, costs \$54. However, our server made sure that we understood this when we ordered, so there were no surprises for us when the bill came.

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□The duck was tender and delicious, with crispy skin that could have been an appetizer on its own. We took plenty of time enjoying this and the fried rice dish that our server had recommended to compliment the duck. We bypassed dessert however, because, although we had enjoyed Morimoto Asia, the night was young and there was much to see.

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□We then crossed off another entry on the Bucket List by going to Jock Lindsey's Hangar Bar. My husband is a lifelong Indiana Jones fan, and both of us wanted to check out the decor and the details.

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□While the establishment is small, it is very well decorated in what I would call "Twentieth Century World Traveler," down to realistic newspaper clippings about Jock Lindsey himself. We are primarily teetotalers, but I'd done my homework on this place and the names of the drinks were so fun and so intended for Indiana Jones fans (like "The German Mechanic" or "Cool-headed Monkey") that we had to give at least a couple a try.

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□So, at almost forty years old, I did something I'd never done in my entire life. I walked up to a bar, sat down, and ordered an alcoholic drink from a bartender. Yep, I did. I was honest and told him that I didn't usually drink, and asked him if he could recommend something very light and gentle. He recommended "The Scottish Professor," which is a light whiskey/gin mix with pear nectar, simple syrup, and fresh lemon juice. It just had a tiny bit of alcohol and was quite tasty.

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□We took a bus back to the Polynesian, and discovered that we had time to hop on the Monorail and have just a few minutes of Magic Kingdom time before the park closed.

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□ This is where the fun really began! We ran/walked courteously through the crowd of people exiting the park in hopes of riding both Splash and Space Mountains. I should note that we seldom get to ride anything fun together, since our kids are pretty anti-coaster, anti-speed, anti-drops, so we usually take turns. But, it was date night!

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□ However, something did get in our way, something that turned out to be a moment of serendipity...The Main Street Electrical Parade! As you may be aware, this parade has since taken a bow at Walt Disney World and has careened its way back to Disneyland. We got to see the parade in its entirety, and I am so glad that we did.

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□ We watched the parade at Frontierland, so we were just a hop, skip, and a jump into the Briar Patch from Splash Mountain. This ride has a bit of history with us. We were blessed with one day at Magic Kingdom way back in 2003, and this was the only big ride I tried. I was petrified the entire time and screamed like a banshee when it came time for the drop. This time, I loved seeing the castle lit up in the distance, I had three or four Splash Mountain experiences under my belt, and I was the one telling my husband "No, this isn't it yet" all through the ride. We got a bit soaked at the splash, but that made it all the more fun.

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□ We then raced to Space Mountain, which had already closed, but we didn't mind. We leisurely exited the park, strolled to the monorail, whizzed back to the Polynesian, and picked up our kids (who wondered why we were so wet).

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□ As we drove back to our resort, the kids were effervescent about their experience at the Kids' Club, which included art, science, cookie baking, acting, and movie watching, just to name a few things, and chattered on in spite of the lateness of the hour.

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□ This started a new tradition for us, and we will hopefully have a date night every Disney vacation. As Rapunzel would say, "Best. Date. Ever!"

About The Author: Amy Jones lives in Kentucky with one husband and two future Disney imagineers. She is a stay-at-home mom, a runner, a writer, and a Disney planning fiend. She and her family have been to the World twice and have two more trips scheduled for 2017 to celebrate birthdays, Star Wars, and a long-awaited 20th wedding anniversary.

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