

13 Tips for Touring Disney World with Scooters and Wheelchairs: Three People, Seven Wheels

by Ginger Jabour, PassPorter Guidebook Co-Author

Is Walt Disney World closed to your parents when they can no longer walk the long distances?

Heck, no! But touring the World with parents in a scooter and a push wheelchair for the first time is a whole different experience and requires some adaptations.

We visited Walt Disney World several times with my mom, Leila, and her husband, Bob, when my sons (and they) were much younger, and they enjoyed it immensely. But Mom's lower energy levels and Bob's hip problems meant their touring days were over. Or were they?

□ I decided to try and give them at least a short visit, and started scheming about how to do just that. She had just turned 78 and Bob was 82, so it was now or never!

□ Mom has used the power scooters at department stores, so she was good to go for a scooter at the parks, but we all agreed that Bob would have trouble operating one. I toyed with the notion of looking for a double scooter (they exist!), but my friends on PassPorter.com reminded me that those monsters would never fit on buses or in the ride queues, so that brilliant idea was a bust. Nothing for it but to push!

We stayed at a value resort and had a local rental company deliver the chairs to us. Renting off-site saved quite a bit of money, and it also meant the chairs were available to help them travel from our rooms to buses and then to the parks. The delivery guy briefly explained the scooter's operations to Mom and left. I pulled out a pair of cushions I'd brought from home (another useful tip from my fellow PassPorters!), and we were ready to go.

□ Riding the buses was pretty simple, although Mom quickly realized she wasn't skilled enough to park her scooter inside. The drivers were all friendly and helpful, and one showed us a button to pull that put the scooter in neutral, so it could be pushed around. I was also not too skillful at pushing the wheelchair straight up the ramp, so Bob walked onto the buses on his own after my first comical attempt to drive him in.

□ We decided to limit the visit to two days, so as not to overtire them,

and chose to visit Magic Kingdom and Epcot. We kept the pace slow, had FastPass+ reservations in advance, and concentrated on their very favorite rides. Bob rode a couple of thrill rides (Mission Space and Space Mountain) and we all went to Mom's favorites, Mickey's PhilharMagic and Soarin'.

☐ Pushing a grown man in a wheelchair was a bit tiring, but it was well worth it to share this experience with them. Plus, I figured all those extra calories I'd burned entitled me to dessert, as well as some adult beverages in the evening!

☐ If you're considering making your first trip to the World with a person in a wheelchair or scooter, you may find these tips helpful:

☐ 1) Have those new to scooters practice with grocery-store scooters before your trip, so the learning curve is less steep.

☐ 2) Beware the trolley tracks in Main Street, USA! One of Bob's wheels was caught in them, and he had to get up so I could extricate it.

☐ 3) Bring or rent cushions for the chairs, as the seats can start to feel awfully hard by the end of the day.

☐ 4) Try to hit the ramps going onto sidewalks head-on, not at an angle, or you may get stuck.

☐ 5) Get a helium balloon to tie to the scooter so you can find that person in a crowd! I lost Mom on a turn at Epcot, and she went sailing on to The Land without us, sure that we were just ahead of her. Also:

☐ 6) One of the walkers in your group could also carry a balloon or wear a brightly colored hat to be easily seen. This leads to the next tip:

☐ 7) Make sure the scooter-bound person and those on foot have charged phones, and plan out a meeting spot in each park in case you get separated. My cell phone's battery was almost dead when we lost her and her ring volume was too low to hear in the crowd, so I was close to panicking. I had contacted Security for help when she finally texted me with her location.

☐ 8) Understand that steep, steep ramps occur without warning, and have a plan! My brother Jay and his wife, Tammy, were there on a separate trip at the same time, and we met them so Bob, Jay, and I could ride Space Mountain together. Even in the FastPass+ queue, those ramps were awful! Jay pushed Bob up one, I pushed him up another, and I almost lost him going down the moving sidewalk at the exit. After this,

we decided Bob would use his limited walking time to push the wheelchair up ramps.

□ 09) Realize that Animal Kingdom's walkways are murder on wheelchairs. They randomly tilt up or down, and the roughness, while picturesque, is jarring to the riders. I learned this on a previous trip, so we avoided that park on this visit.

□ 10) Whenever you leave the scooter, take the key. Also, if you leave the scooter somewhere and another person retrieves it, that person needs the key! I made this mistake, but Bob was able to catch up with me and hand me the key.

□ 11) Ask for a wheelchair-accessible room, even if everyone is able to walk around a little. I learned that wheelchair-accessible rooms tend to have king beds in order to leave space to park the wheelchair or scooter.

□ 12) Bring a walking cane to help make transfers easier. Bonus points if it's collapsible!

□ 13) Make a fun, colorful name tag for the back of the wheelchair or scooter, and bring safety pins to attach it to the back. These make it easier to find your chair and they're fun, too.

□ With a little planning and adjustment, touring the world with most of your party on wheels can still be fun! No matter what happens in the future, we'll have those memories of a wonderful visit to our Happy Place, and a little inconvenience was well worth it.

About The Author: Ginger Jabour is a PassPorter guide and co-author of the new [PassPorter's Disneyland Resort and Southern California Attractions Guidebook](#). She's also a retired Air Force colonel, a tutor, and assistant Scoutmaster. She has two sons: Matt, a recent graduate of Purdue University, and Mark, who is a high school senior.

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