

## Top 5 Tips for Planning A Disney Trip with Teens: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Christie Lamphier, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Walt Disney World used to be an annual tradition for our family. Every year we would pack up our Mickey Mouse luggage and head off for a week or more of family time in the World.

But as our children got older, they began asking to visit other places. Instead of Florida, we spent a few years doing cruises and visiting Europe and other U.S. destinations. But last year, the summer between my oldest daughter's junior and senior year of high school, she made a special request to take a family trip to Disney World, just as we had done so many times when she was younger. So once again we packed up our Mickey suitcases and headed down south, this time with two teenagers in tow.

A trip with 17-year-old Lucy and 14-year-old Liam was much different than a trip with their elementary age selves&hellip;and in some ways it wasn't different at all. The best parts, laughing, having fun, and getting the chance to connect in ways we don't always have time for at home, was the same. But there are definitely a few things I wish I would have done differently! For anyone heading to Disney with teens, these few things would have made our trip much smoother!

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□1. Cell phones Think very carefully beforehand about cell-phone usage. Our kids both have their own phones and we didn't want them to stay glued to the screens like they sometimes seem to at home. But because they also function as cameras for our family, we didn't want to leave them at the hotel. We decided to make a rule that unless our teens were taking pictures, then cell phones were not to be used without specific parental permission. This seemed like a good idea to my husband and I, but in reality what we got was Lucy and Liam asking for permission every few minutes to post a picture, respond to a text, etc. After a few days of this, we specified a snack break in the afternoon and a few minutes after dinner that would be "free phone time", meaning the kids could use their phones to do whatever. That worked really well because they knew they would have a chance to post pictures and talk to their friends but didn't annoy us to do so at other times. It even had the added benefit of cutting down on the number of times my husband checked his work email.

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□2. Break Time Don't assume that just because they are older, teens

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don't need a mid-day break. When they were little, we always followed the afternoon nap touring plan. But I assumed that now they would have enough energy to keep up with a full day touring schedule. It was obvious that was a mistake on our second day in the parks. Around 2pm, in the heat of August, it became clear that we needed to take a break or risk the teen version of a melt-down (less kicking feet, more sarcasm and glaring). After that, we took a break at least every other afternoon to go back to the hotel and swim or just relax.

3. Tradition There is no such thing as "kiddie" rides at Disney World. Most of the rides will be enjoyed by all age groups. There will come a time, however, when Dumbo is not your first priority. On all of our previous trips, we would beeline for our favorite pachyderm at rope drop. This time, when I innocently mentioned that we would be heading there first "as always" my kids looked at me very pityingly and let me know they had no intention of riding Dumbo. My heart twinged, but I took a deep breath and let it go. Instead, we rode Space Mountain&hellip;and then Peter Pan. Be careful of sticking too much to past traditions in dining as well. When the kids were little they loved eating at the Biergarten and some of my favorite memories are of dancing with my son. In retrospect, that would have been another good tradition to skip. My daughter is now a vegetarian; there wasn't a lot for her to eat and needless to say, neither kid wanted to dance. We had much more fun sharing pizza at Via Nappoli. So when it comes to tradition, be sure to think about where you are now as a family and not just where you've been. It is very likely that new traditions more suited to an older family will spontaneously present themselves.

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□4. Thrill Rides Just because they are finally tall enough for the thrill rides doesn't mean they want to ride them all. I had kind of hoped Lucy would have overcome her fear of roller coasters, but while we convinced her to ride Space Mountain, she wasn't going anywhere near Everest or Rockin' Roller Coaster. While Liam was happy to ride everything that his sister wouldn't, the attraction he wanted to revisit over and over again was Monsters Laugh Floor. My son is a real jokester and may have a future as a comedian, so it makes sense in retrospect but certainly came as a surprise at the time!

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□5. Split Up The time we spent together as a family on this trip was priceless, but so was the evening at Epcot that we spent apart. My husband and I had a wonderful, relaxing experience doing the Wine Walk and leisurely experiencing World Showcase while our kids raced around Future World taking second and sometimes third rides on their favorites. While I definitely appreciated the time my husband and I got to spend together, the kids spending time by themselves was even more valuable. It was a great bonding experience for them and I honestly

believe that their relationship is stronger because of it. Disney World is a very safe place to give teens some freedom, so give them an opportunity to bond, while you do something they may not appreciate as much.

*About The Author: Christie Lamphier is a first-time contributor to PassPorter News.*

Article last updated: 06-09-2017

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