

## Season Survival Guide: Walt Disney World at the Peak Season

by Myron Spiwak, *PassPorter Guest Contributor*

Chances are if you travel to Walt Disney World with children, you are forced to visit when they are on school break, whether it be spring break or summer vacation. I know our family has gone three times since 2004, each time during the last week of March.

So if you must go during peak season, is there anything you can do to beat the crowds and still have a great time without going crazy? It's taken a lot of trial and error, but I've come up with some sure fire tips to maximize your enjoyment if you must visit at these peak times.

The first step is quite basic but I'm amazed by how many people I talk to don't bother to do this. If real estate is all about location, location, location, then having an enjoyable Disney experience is all about planning, planning, planning. As Elton John sang in *The Circle of Life*, "there's more to be seen than can ever be seen, more to do than can ever be done." The need for planning doubles when you're attempting to navigate the parks and Advance Dining Reservations during the busy seasons. Some might say that planning every day from start to finish takes the fun out of a vacation. This may be true for a long weekend in the Wisconsin Dells, but trying to wing it at Walt Disney World will only lead to frustration and missed experiences.

If one thing has really saved us on each of our spring break trips, it has been the FASTPASS ticket. First and foremost, you should always be holding fastpasses for your group. Walking around from ride to ride without a pass is really a missed opportunity. What has always worked for our family is having me run ahead to the fast pass attraction of our choice while the rest of the group proceeds to a different ride. Once I have the fast passes, I quickly head over to the other ride where we all get in line. By the time we get off of that ride, it is often just about time for our FASTPASS return window.

A key thing to note is what time you can get another FASTPASS. This is shown on the pass and is not always the same. You should always be thinking about what ride you want to get your next ticket for and be near that attraction at the available time, or at least have your runner there. It is very possible to have two different passes at once. As a matter of fact, this past spring we achieved the trifecta and had three valid passes in our hands at one time! If the FASTPASS return time is much later in the day, I would grab passes anyway even if you don't

---

think you'll be at the park for that time. You can always spread some magic and give them to someone just entering the park, or you may decide to return on a whim after dinner if your resort or Advance Dining restaurant is nearby.

An absolute must during peak seasons is getting to the parks before they open. I know it's tough to set an alarm on vacation (my girls routinely sleep to 10:00 am on weekends), but the relatively light crowds for the first two or three hours the park is open are well worth climbing out of bed. This past March we arrived at the Magic Kingdom for the Extra Magic Hours 7:00 am opening and managed to get on ten rides before 10:00 am. Don't forget to ask for a wake up call so Mickey can at least wake you up in a good mood!

If you do get the early start, another time saver is to simply eat something very light in your room or on the way to the bus. We always pack granola bars so we can eat on the go. This will also allow you to have an early lunch right when the food services open around 11:00, which will offer short lines and plenty of places to sit and eat. The same holds true for dinner, where we book an Advance Reservation between 5:00 -- 6:00. The restaurants aren't packed yet, and you get the added after dinner bonus of riding attractions or just walking around the parks while many people are seated for dinner.

As your days wind down, you're probably gearing up for the SpectroMagic parade, Wishes, or Illuminations. Finding a good viewing spot is always a challenge, but it can be particularly tough on the days where the crowds are at their largest. Aside from the obvious advice to find a spot early and camp out, I'd offer two additional tips. For Wishes, especially if you have seen it before from the ideal in front of the castle area, consider grabbing a spot on the other side, just past the carousel, facing the Pinocchio Village Haus. You'll still have a great sight of the fireworks, and you'll get an extra thrill with many of the loud charges going off from the roof top very close to you (this may be too intense for very young children). The other tip would be to make sure you don't try to see Illuminations on any night there are Extra Magic Hours at Epcot. This will guarantee extra large crowds and longer camping out times for quality viewing spots.

Someday we hope to experience Walt Disney World when the crowds are small and the lines are short. Until then, we'll be using these tips to squeeze all the fun we can into our trips. Hopefully you will as well!

*About The Author: Myron and his family live in the Chicago suburbs. They are trying to decide between returning to Walt Disney World in 2010 or taking a Disney cruise.*

---

Article last updated: 7/10/2008

View the latest version online at:

<http://www.passporter.com/articles/surviving-walt-disney-world-during-peak-season.html>

Copyright by Myron Spiwak. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act. Resale of this guide is strictly prohibited without the copyright holder's permission. If you purchased this publication from someone other than PassPorter Travel Press, please call 877-929-3273.

View more PassPorter Articles online at <http://www.passporter.com/articles/>