

Taking a Toddler to Disneyland: A Disneyland Planning Article

by Katrina Stillwell, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Going to Disneyland with a toddler last summer was a first for me. We had a great trip and I loved seeing Disneyland through the eyes of my 16 month old son. It was a wonderful trip but it does require planning ahead of time and knowing it will be much different than when you go with just adults.

Where to Stay Our first decision was where we wanted to stay. The Disneyland Resorts are BEAUTIFUL but out of our price range. We enjoy staying at the hotels right outside from the main gate: Best Western, Tropicana and Camelot. These are our favorite hotels because we are in walking distance which means no Anaheim Resort Transportation (ART) buses needed. That being said we have stayed at hotels further away that are Good Neighbor Hotels and they are great but waiting for ART at the end of the day when your so tired is no fun. □

Stroller? Being able to walk to the hotel made it very easy for us, no need to try and load the stroller onto the bus. You can bring your own or rent one. I suggest renting one with the insurance from a third party company. We rented from City Stroller Rentals, they dropped it off at the hotel office and at the end of our stay we just dropped it back off at the office. No need to drive anywhere to pick up or drop off the stroller. I rented a stroller that was almost identical to our one at home and my son was very happy. Renting a stroller from a third party or bring your own also insures that you get a stroller everyday. Stroller rentals at Disneyland are first come first serve. And knowing my family we will not be there when the park opens. Also if you rent one from Disneyland you will not be able to bring it back to your hotel and a sleeping toddler at 9 o'clock at night weights twice as much as they did at 9 o'clock in the morning. And its always a good idea to mark your stroller. We rented a red stroller from the rental company and that made it easy to find but you could use a scarf or bandanna. We also did not move our stroller every time we went to a new attraction. Once we were in a land we left the stroller in one spot until we were done exploring that land. □

Baby Carrier Another option for a tired toddler is a front pack/back pack baby carrier. Depending on how you feel about carrying your toddler on your front or back I highly recommend one. My son loves being carried and we used it for nap time. That way we could still walk around the parks and see shows.

Baby Care Centers Any time you bring a toddler to Disneyland it's good to know about the Baby Care Centers. There is one in each park. The Baby Care Center in Disneyland is located at the end of Main Street, U.S.A. by the hub and the one in California Adventures is located next to Ghirardelli Soda Fountain and Chocolate Shop in the Pacific Wharf area. The Baby Care Centers have nursing rooms with chairs to nurse or pump. The Baby Care Center at Disneyland has more chairs available in the nursing room than the one in California Adventures. Only mother and baby are allowed in the nursing room. So my mother and husband would take the time to do rides like Star Tours and Space Mountain, which I love but makes me sick. Both locations have changing rooms with tables, feeding areas with highchairs and a kitchen with microwave and sink. The Disneyland Baby Care Center has a space for older children to watch tv or play games. Both locations offer formula, baby food, juice, diapers, wipes, sunscreen, over the counter medications and pacifiers for purchase. The Baby Care Centers are great but they do not allow strollers in. The Baby Care Center is a great place to take a moment and relax with your little one out of the heat and crowds.

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□ Three Things My Son Loved Here are the three things I was surprised that my son loved : the fireworks, Jungle Cruise and the Redwood Creek Challenge Trail. My son loved the firework show we saw on the fourth of July but we forgot his noise cancelling headphones and I thought the sound from the fireworks would scare him. It didn't, he was a pro. He loved being on the boat on the Jungle Cruise and seeing the animals. And here this is the one that really surprised me: he loved the Redwood Creek Challenge Trail. Thankfully my husband had all the energy to run after him and the only reason we left was because they were closing down for the night. They close about the time the sun goes down.

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□ Three Things My Son DID NOT Love Here are three things I thought my son would love but did not: Frozen Live at the Hyperion, the lobby at Art of Animation and Storytelling at Royal Theatre. During the Frozen stage show we were too far away from the stage so he lost interest very quickly. If you want to take your toddler to see Frozen I would make sure you get in line very early so they can see the show well. My son did not enjoy the lobby in Art of Animation. This was my biggest surprise! In the past I had seen all the kids running around after the lights on the ground and thought my kids will love that, nope. My son wanted to go through every door way he was not allowed. But he did sit through Animation Academy fairly well. And last but not least the Storytelling at Royal Theatre. Here they tell our favorite Disney tales, Beauty and the Beast and Tangled, in a live show thats just as funny for adults as it is kids. They have the children sit in the front on the floor and the adults sit behind them on benches. Well my son was too young to be trusted to

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sit on the floor by himself for the whole show. So once again he could not see as well as he would have liked and he just wanted to run around.

□ Parade Tip They no longer block off all the parade route on Main Street like they used to when I was little but they do block off the area in front of the train station. Its the perfect place for kids to run around and burn off some energy while you can sit and see them.

□ Rider Switch When your toddler doesn't met the height requirement on Big Thunder Mountain Railroad, what do you do? Use Rider Switch! Rider Switch is a great feature to use when you have two adults and someone who can not or do not want to go on a ride. This feature allows one person to go on the ride while the other stays with the guest that doesn't want to ride and than they switch. The second person does not have to wait in line to go on the attraction. Many rides have this feature, you can go online to disneyland.com and find a full list. Its very easy to use: find the greeting cast member at the attraction you would like to go on, tell them you'd like to use the rider switch feature. Each attractions instruction may be different just ask the cast member.

□ You will have a great time at Disneyland with a toddler. Enjoy it through their eyes. Go prepared and be flexible!

About The Author: Katrina Stillwell is a stay at home mom and graphic designer. She and her now family of four are moving to California this fall and can't wait to buy their Disneyland Annual Passports.

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