

The FASTPASS System: Making the Most of the System

by Yvonne & Sam Mitchell, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Imagine it. You are standing in line at Walt Disney World's Space Mountain, you are enjoying the air conditioning, the music, and the futuristic scenes but for the past 5 minutes the kids keep asking "Is it our turn yet?" You tell the kids that you can see the end of the line, then the cast member lets a bunch through and you are next. You and the kids are all excited! Then up walks a family of four in the empty line beside you. They hand the cast member several pieces of paper and the cast member puts them in the next rocket. Your kids are now tugging on you and asking "Mom how come they let those people ahead of us?" You are thinking the same thing and you ask the cast member who politely answers "Because they have FASTPASS tickets, Ma'am." FASTPASS tickets? What are FASTPASS tickets?

All day, every day a scene like the one above plays out at Walt Disney World because many people do not know what Disney's FASTPASS is, or how to make the best use of the system.

First introduced at Walt Disney World in July of 1999, FASTPASS is similar to making a reservation to ride an attraction and reduce your time standing in line. You place your park admission in the FASTPASS machine and receive a ticket that grants you access to the much shorter FASTPASS line.

FASTPASS has become a huge hit with park guests. Savvy users of the system find that they can free up to 2 to 3 hours of time, usually spent standing in line, during a full day in the parks and get to experience more attractions.

Who can use Fast Pass, you ask? Anyone with park admission. The exception is children under the age of 3, who do not require park admission. Not to worry, if they meet the attractions height and age requirements, there are cast members at the FASTPASS machines that can give your child a FASTPASS.

There are two important times on your FASTPASS. The first is the opening and closing time of your ride reservation window, for example 1:15 pm -- 2:15 pm. This time can be anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours from when you got the FASTPASS, depending on how busy the attraction is. You are usually given a one hour window in which to come back and experience the attraction. (It is rare that you will be turned

away if you are late in using your FASTPASS ticket. If the cast members say anything at all, it will be a polite "Please try to be on time with your FASTPASS tickets.")

The second and most important time listed on your FASTPASS, and the one people usually miss, is when you can get your next FASTPASS ticket. After getting a FASTPASS ticket, there is a set time you have to wait before you are able to get another FASTPASS. This time is usually five minutes after your ride window opens. So using the above example, if you have a FASTPASS to ride Space Mountain between 1:15 pm and 2:15 pm, you cannot get another FASTPASS until 1:20 pm.

Here are some tips to make the most of the FASTPASS system:

When the park opens, head for your most important ride of the day -- your "Must See" attraction. Get a FASTPASS, then get in the stand-by line and ride it right away if the wait time is not longer than 20 or 30 minutes. This ensures that you will get to experience your favorite thing at least once, if not twice.

On especially busy days, the FASTPASS tickets for an attraction may be gone for the day by early afternoon. If the park is having evening Extra Magic Hours, go back that evening and check out the FASTPASS machines again. Disney has been turning them back on in the evening for Extra Magic Hours on occasion.

At special events such as Star Wars or Super Soap Weekends at Disney-MGM Studios, if you want to get that coveted autograph from Warwick Davis or Susan Lucci, you must have a special Autograph FASTPASS. In order to get these coveted items, as soon as Disney's MGM-Studios opens head as fast as you can to Indiana Jones Epic Stunt Spectacular. The FASTPASS machines there will be programmed to first print out a ticket with a time to get the autograph and they are very limited. When those are gone, it will print out numbered stand-by tickets. Stand-by tickets are not guaranteed to get an autograph but as a general rule the first 40 will get an autograph.

Do you know anyone who belongs to the Disney Vacation Club? One of Disney's best kept secrets is the Disney Vacation Club FASTPASS Exchange Cards. These cards are sometimes given as a promotion to new and existing DVC members. Each of these cards comes with two Instant FASTPASS tickets. Put the card in the FASTPASS machine and out pops a FASTPASS ticket that you can use immediately with no waiting to get your next FASTPASS. If you are a Disney Vacation Club member, you may have a chance of being receiving these cards from your DVC rep.

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Starting in October, Disney begins "The Year of a Million Dreams Celebration." One of the things you could win is a "Golden FASTPASS." Imagine all the FASTPASS' you want, anytime you want, to get on any ride you want. Now that's a dream come true!

About The Author: Yvonne (Tinkerbelz on PassPorter Message boards) runs the family antique jewelry business, and is a full-time mom. She was a peer reviewer for PassPorter's Walt Disney World for Your Special Needs. She's been to Disneyland and Walt Disney World 25+ times. Sam (DVC_Increda_Man on the PassPorter boards) was a little reluctant to go to Walt Disney World for the first time in 2005, but enjoyed it so much that he is now a proud DVC owner.

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