

Coping with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Your Special Needs

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Everyone looks forward to a vacation and most of us plan and prepare for that time away from work, school, and just the daily routine of life.

However, for some of us, there are more preparations to be made than most people, those who have some form of special requirement because of health issues.

It's something I'd never thought about until the summer of 2009. That's when I contracted chronic fatigue syndrome, completely out of the blue. For many weeks, I had no idea what was wrong with me and neither did anyone else who saw me. After many tests and many fears, the conclusion we were left with was that I had an illness that would leave me tired at sometimes the slightest of physical activity.

As the months passed, I was able to do more and gradually got myself back to work full time, although my activity levels were nowhere near what they had been before my illness. It was a very hard thing to come to terms with and to deal with and, as the time wore on, I found myself wondering how it would impact on the amazing vacation that we already had planned. It would take us to Disney twice, with a road trip to Key West in between and then a trip to see our friends in the Pocono mountains. You see, I never do things the easy way when it comes to vacation. I've always had the view, why see one place, when you can see a multitude instead? After all, it's a long flight from the UK to the United States and we may as well make the best of our time once we're there.

Of course, by the time my illness started, there was no way we could make any changes to our vacation, as flights were already fully paid for, DVC points were committed to our time in Walt Disney World, other hotels were paid for and we'd bought Annual Passes. I wouldn't have had it any other way. I didn't want to change anything. After all, why should I let my health problems rule my life?

I had no concerns about the road trip aspect of our trip. After all, it would leave me with plenty of opportunity to sit down whenever we were in the car, which was no bad thing and so it proved to be. The concern was more how on earth I'd cope with our time in Disney. Let's be honest, we all know that you do much more walking than usual whenever you're in the theme parks, as they're so huge.

I realised that I needed to plan out how to handle this and, for this task,

[PassPorter's Open Mouse to Walt Disney World and the Disney Cruise Line](#) quickly became my best friend. This title covers a multitude of health problems and I was delighted to find that chronic fatigue was one of those listed. I quickly devoured all the information in the book relating to my condition and it helped me to plan which attractions I could still easily do and which might be more of an issue for me.

For example, I hadn't thought about the stretching room in the Haunted Mansion possibly being an issue for me, but of course, you have to stand during it. In the end, I was fine with it, as when we went on it, it was practically a walk-on, so I had barely done any standing. But had there been a long wait beforehand, I would've known to ask the Cast Member to show me through a route that allows you to avoid it.

Fortunately, I'm not a big coaster fan, although I do like things like Big Thunder Mountain Railroad. The book quickly told me that particular ride wasn't a good idea, as it would throw me around and I took that advice and avoided it for this trip.

Other things I hadn't thought of before included the fact that you need to stand for some of the movies in World Showcase. I quickly ruled out Reflections of China, as you have to stand for that. It was a shame, but I'd rather ensure that I kept my strength for other things.

Apart from that, the other real change this trip was that I literally did almost no planning for the times we'd be in the parks. Sure, I knew which park I wanted to go to on each day and most of those, as is usual for us, revolved around our dining choices. But further than that, I just stopped planning altogether. I only had a couple of attractions in each park that I was determined to get on, but that list was much shorter than our previous trips. That way, if I wasn't feeling great, there wasn't any pressure on me to walk between rides. It actually turned out that we did much more than my little list, but it certainly allowed me to relax and enjoy our time a lot more.

When we got to Disney, I immediately became very good at seeking out any opportunity to sit down, and I was amazed at how many seats there are when you're looking for them. Disney really does provide plenty of opportunity to rest as you walk around and, if it's not been raining, you can quite often just sit yourself down on the sidewalk, so long as you're out of the way of people walking along. I would often just sit and recharge my batteries for a few minutes, while my husband wandered around taking photographs. It was something I quickly came to love doing, as it allowed me to people watch and just take everything in around me. On our previous trips, it's fair to say that I very rarely stopped to "smell the roses" and that's something I appreciated being

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able to do this time.

Staying on property is almost a prerequisite for someone with chronic fatigue as well. As we're DVC members, we always stay on property and being able to head back to our resort for a couple of hours rest during the afternoon again really helped to recharge those batteries. After that, I was ready for dinner and to head out to the parks for an evening of fun.

Disney really does everything they can to help anyone with a special need of any kind and, if you're in that position, it's perhaps more important than ever to plan your trip beforehand and to know your limits. That really proved to be a valuable lesson for me and ensured that I still enjoyed my Disney vacation, even if it was at a totally different pace to my previous ones.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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