

## Enjoying the Peace at Disney: Walt Disney World During the Off-Season

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Following my recent look at how to cope with crowds if you visit Walt Disney World at its busiest times, perhaps you're thinking the most logical time to visit Disney is when it's at its quietest. After all, it involves less planning, as there are fewer people and less lines to deal with. However, tempting as it may sound, visiting when the parks are quiet may not always be the best plan.

As you sit there and wonder why, one of the first things to say is that the parks are usually quiet for a good reason. Naturally the quieter times tend to be when the schools are in, as families often find it harder to travel then, but equally something else that has a dramatic effect on attendance is weather.

First off, when is Disney at its quietest? Generally, if you're visiting from the start of the year until mid-February, from mid July until the end of September, and from after Thanksgiving until mid December, that's when the parks will be emptiest. Other good times to visit include the period from just after Easter until the beginning of June and from the start of October through to just before Thanksgiving. We've been a number of times during these periods and have never had a problem with lines for even the most popular of attractions.

The downside though is that the weather may not cooperate for your trip. You only have to look at the conditions that Orlando has experienced over the last few months to realize that the winters can be very cruel and cold sometimes. Generally, from late November until February, you could find one day exceptionally cold and the next very pleasant. There's simply no way of knowing for sure until just before you leave. We've had days where the temperatures have barely climbed into the 50s and nights where it's been in the low 20s. If you're planning on watching the fireworks on a night like that, you certainly need to be well wrapped up, as you will feel the cold just standing around.

Equally, the tail end of the summer into September is value season for a very good reason. That reason? Because it's the peak time for the annual hurricane season, which is a concern for some people. We never visit at that time of the year, simply because the weather is generally too hot and humid for us to cope with, but if hurricanes are a concern to you, it's worth knowing that Disney do go the extra mile to look after their guests if the worst happens.

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Yes, the parks may well close, but sometimes they'll close at say lunchtime or early in the afternoon, depending on the forecast. Provided foreboding skies don't worry you, you can often find yourself almost alone in the parks on those days. And let's face it, if you're going to get stuck anywhere during a hurricane, I can't think of anywhere better than a Disney resort. After all, they all have excellent facilities in terms of places to eat and shop and, for some resorts that are housed in one huge building, it can be a good opportunity to explore that resort.

Something else to keep in mind, when visiting at quieter times, is that this is usually when Disney will take various attractions out for rehab work. You can almost guarantee that all the top rides, such as Big Thunder Mountain, Space Mountain, Expedition Everest, Tower of Terror, the Rock 'N' Roller Coaster, Soarin', and Test Track will always be running whenever crowds are at their peaks. So if these need work done, when's the best time to do it? Obviously when the parks are at their quietest. Equally, with rides like Splash Mountain and Kali River Rapids, there's likely to be much less demand for these in the cooler months. After all, who'd want to get soaked when it's only 50 degrees outside?!

Don't forget as well that you may miss out on some of the extra shows that Disney puts on during the busier periods. That can include shows like Fantasmic!, which has been cut back during slower times and parades like SpectroMagic, which isn't on every night.

Equally, when there are less people around, you don't need to open the parks for as long as during busier times of the year. Don't be surprised to find the parks closing quite early in the evening, particularly if it's during the winter months, as it's dark early, meaning the fireworks can be done earlier than during the summer months. If you're a night owl, it's worth thinking about this, as you may find yourself with less to do. Equally, if that's the case, you can also plan your meals for later in the evening, after some of the parks have closed. There's nothing worse than having to decide between a lovely meal at a Disney restaurant and all the night-time entertainment the parks have to offer.

However, despite these downsides, when the park's quiet, Disney is making less money. So that means they're anxious to push numbers up as much as they possibly can. That's why you'll often special deals, such as free dining or additional free nights on packages during the traditional quiet times. A lot of people have saved a lot of money by taking advantage of these offers, but one of the important things to remember is to check which is going to be the best deal for you. It's often the case that there will be several offers on at quieter times of the year. For example, is free dining going to save your party more money

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than a big discount on the room rate? Remember that you can't combine discounts, so you do have to make a choice and work out which one is better for you.

Of course, the quieter times do bring many, many benefits and that's why many people who are able to take advantage of them do so. It is worth keeping in mind though that there may be some reasons why those times of the year are quieter and whether that might affect your plans in any way.

*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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