

## Transportation at Walt Disney World (Part 1): The Underappreciated Ride

by Justine Fellows, PassPorter Guest Contributor

I'll admit it, I may be in line for the "are you insane?" award for this article; however, I truly believe that Disney magic can be found during those anxious transportation moments we all know well. For me, it's often the early morning wait for the bus to the parks, where every restless bone in my body needs to be calmed. I'm usually wondering why two Animal Kingdom buses have come without one for Epcot, or trying to discern why the boat we are in seems to be slower than the duck paddling beside it. It has taken great control and a little ingenuity, but I have learned to find great joy in what I like to call the underappreciated ride, Disney's transportation system.

Starting with Magical Express from the airport, and then working our way to the buses, boats, and monorails, those lucky enough to stay on site are constantly being shuffled here and there. Walt Disney World has a vast array of transportation options that are often disregarded, yet truly impressive. Take a moment to contemplate the sheer magnitude of transporting millions of guests each year. When you think about what it takes to run such an intricate system, the time you have to wait doesn't seem so bad, and the comfortable ride can seem even better.

Let's start with Disney's Magical Express. OK, it's not a magic carpet ride or the tele-transport machine we had hoped Imagineers would have invented by now, but to many, it is magic. No need to wait for luggage, no surprises at the car rental counter, and the driver knows the way without maps or a navigation system - to my family, that's magic! With comfy seats, air-conditioning, and a fun video to introduce your family to the excitement to come, Magical Express sets a nice tone for the trip. When you consider the many partnerships and strings Disney had to pull to offer up this free service, including a partnership with Orlando International Airport, the Mears Transportation Group, BAGS, Inc. (who created the innovative off-airport passenger check-in service), and the Transportation Security Administration and airlines, Magical Express is a miracle to me and a free service that I'm not likely to give up.

Once you are on site, Disney's internal transportation system takes over. Over 270 buses, 12 monorails, 3 ferry boats and dozens of motor cruisers and launches make up the fleet. If you are staying at a Disney resort, you will have at least one form of transportation to the parks and Downtown Disney, most likely buses. If you live in an area with heavy

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traffic (such as my home state of Connecticut) you will be used to playing what I like to call the transportation game. The game involves a series of questions to determine our best route: what time is it, how tired are we, which is the path of least resistance (crowds and time), and if we are not too tired, which is the route with the best view and consists of the calmest ride? For example, we are in the Magic Kingdom, 45 minutes from a dining reservation at the Polynesian - short on time, love the view from the boat or monorail, not too tired. Today's choice? Take the monorail to the Ticket and Transportation Center (TTC) and enjoy a nice 5 minute walk to the Poly. Can you figure out a few other options?

My favorite ride is a toss-up between the monorail and an outside seat on the boats. The 12 monorails each are adorned with a different color stripe -- a great game for every age is trying to spot all twelve. Disney's monorail system is the most heavily traveled passenger monorail in the world. Seasoned monorail fans will be happy to recite the monorail mantra, "Please stand clear of the doors. Por favor mantanganse alijado de las puertas." For a memorable experience, ride the monrail from TTC to Epcot during the evening. It's magical to circle right into the park above the people and attractions, especially at night. And how about a monorail progressive dinner!? Grab drinks at the Grand Floridian, head to the Polynesian for dinner and make a reservation for dessert and fireworks at the Contemporary. Want another twist? Try holiday resort-hopping. Spend the afternoon visiting the three monorail resorts during the holiday season to take in the wonderful decorations. Serving more than 22 million riders annually, the monorail is a must ride!

The next episode of the transportation game puts us at Fort Wilderness following the Hoop Dee Doo Revue, with still a bit of energy in supply. A boat ride it is! There are two types of boats that leave from the dock at Fort Wilderness, a motor launch and a motor cruiser. The motor launch is the smaller, open-air, and cuter of the two. A quaint awning adorns the boat and the driver is easily accessible and steers from up front. There are six motor launches plying Seven Seas Lagoon and Bay Lake. They are named the Adventurer, Navigator, Explorer, Seafarer, Mariner, and Voyager. Two items of caution - if it's cold outside the open air launches can be a bit chilly. They also cannot accommodate electric convenience vehicles (ECVs). They are more nostalgic and quieter, and if you can catch the fireworks on your way across the Seven Seas Lagoon you will have an especially thrilling and enjoyable ride!

The more powerful motor cruiser has a larger capacity, accommodates ECVs, and has an inside cabin area providing shelter from the elements. It's the less aesthetically pleasing of the two boats but definitely has it

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perks, especially if you can grab a seat up in the open-air front area when the weather is warm and dry. There are three motor cruisers and each sport two, four cylinder Perkins engines. If you are heading home from a long day at Magic Kingdom, the sound of the engines and pleasant motion of the boat will surely put any child to sleep, so make sure to have strong arms or a stroller ready!

Next week: Ferry Boats, Busses and Facts - oh my!

*About The Author: Justine, the author of [PassPorter's Disney Speed Planner: The Easy Ten-Step Program](#), works in education in Connecticut. She is also the host of [Travel Girl's\(TM\) Tips for Disney World](#) podcasts.*

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