

## Disney Vacations: Something New Every Time

by Andee Zomeran, PassPorter Guest Contributor

"Yay! A trip to Disney \_\_\_\_\_ (insert: World, land, Cruise, Store)!"

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□ You'd think I'd be over it by now. The excitement, the constant planning, the sleepless night before leaving -- all telltale signs of the first trip. Or 5th. Or 25th. PassPorter readers, I know you understand. We are constantly asked, "Really? You're going again?" And our reason is this: every Disney vacation is a new experience.

I wish I could remember my first trip to Disneyland. Alas, I was too young to speak at the time. I've seen the pictures, though. I was a babe in a stroller with smiles for Mickey. It was new for me and little did I know, there would be so many "first time" experiences in the years to come.

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□ I remember my 12th birthday when instead of a party, my parents let me take a friend to Disneyland. In 1982, 12 was the magic age that I was able to go around the park without any adults. My friend and I no longer had to do what the family did. We were off to ride Space Mountain as many times as we wanted! No shows, only characters we wanted to see, and I think even a little boy watching. Pre-teen independence!

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□ The first time I went to Disneyland on a "boy/girl trip" without parents, my friends and I experienced true freedom as high school teens. We spent a lot of our day on the "E-ticket" attractions, but probably just as much time on "Adventure Through Inner Space." (Don't remember this one? We called it "the make-out ride." It's probably a good thing that the attraction was removed, especially before my own daughters become teenagers.)

Growing up in Southern California, our high school band and drill team was invited to march in the Disneyland Christmas Parade. Being backstage was brand new for me, and knowing that I was a part of "Disney Magic" for 15 minutes was equivalent to my 15 minutes of fame.

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□ I was really a rebel in college when a group of friends showed up to school one morning and decided to ditch classes for a day at the Park. Something about the daring attitude of skipping school gave me a new confidence that day. In 1988, Disneyland was taken over by hula-hoops and poodle skirts of the 50's with the "Blast to the Past" event. My friends and I became immediately immersed in the culture and volunteered for contests, danced with performing cast members, and

made huge fools of ourselves. We were silly, but felt like stars when other guests asked if we were part of the entertainment.

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□ Soon after, I visited Walt Disney World for the first time. A girlfriend and I saved our part-time job money and we booked our trip to the Resort and a voyage on the Disney licensed, Premier Cruise Line's "Big Red Boat." It was my first time traveling across the country without my family. Between ports of call and Epcot, I suddenly considered myself very worldly.

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□ It wasn't until even later in college when I had my first experience in a real, Disney, "sit-down" restaurant; the Blue Bayou. My dorm's Resident Advisor (who is now one of my best friends) actually had the nerve to claim he was a bigger Disney fan than I. We challenged each other to a Disney trivia contest -- the winner buying the loser dinner in New Orleans Square. I will never live down the fact that I lost. (Also a new experience.) But it did give me the opportunity of eating somewhere I never thought I'd eat -- right there with the Pirates of the Caribbean. And that experience led me to a love affair with the best Monte Cristo I've ever had in my life!

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□ My 20's took me up the coast to the Pacific Northwest where I met a man who thought Disney was fun, but didn't understand my obsession. I took this man on a long weekend trip to Disneyland where he not only began to understand my fixation, but also quickly joined in the passion. This Disney trip would mark the first time I fell in love.

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□ This same man was by my side when at a young age, I suffered a stroke. On the road to recovery, I was mobile by wheelchair. While this may be devastating news to some, I viewed it as good enough to go to Disneyland. I had never experienced the Park with a disability and this gave me a first time look at how Disney accommodates their mobility-impaired guests.

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□ Little did I know that something else I'd never experienced was planned for that vacation. After a day of wheeling me around each land, the last stop was in line to take our picture with the Mouse. When our turn arrived, my boyfriend helped me stand and then bent down on one knee to ask Mickey for permission to marry me. After all, he needed to ask the other man in my life!

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□ We started our new lives together with a honeymoon to Walt Disney World and we've been discovering the romance of Disney ever since, whether a walk on the beach at the Polynesian, or a glass of wine while watching "Wishes" at the California Grill. When Disney announced they would be in the cruise line business, we knew we had to go during the

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inaugural year. Nine months later our first daughter was born and the newness of each Disney trip continued.

□ The first time we saw Walt Disney World through our daughter's eyes, she was 11 months old. We had used our new Disney Vacation Club points for a villa at the Boardwalk and invited my whole family to join us for their first time at the Florida resort. For grandparents and grandchild, it was an experience like no other. After months of trying to teach our daughter to blow kisses, she saved her first one for King Louie at Animal Kingdom. The whole family then knew that the Disney gene had been passed down.

□ After a few trips to Florida, my small family visited the newly opened Disney's California Adventure. I'd grown up with the familiarity of just one park, but now it was a whole resort! This west coast addition expanded all of the exciting adventures I was about to have.

□ A short time later another daughter was born and for the first time, we took two children to Walt Disney World. Because they were so young, we tried things we might have thought extravagant in the past. Watching "Illuminations" was much more comfortable in our rented Pontoon Boat. We ignored the faster paced attractions and slowed down while exploring the parks. We stood in line to meet every character and were proud when our eldest was chosen to be a part of "Story time with Belle."

□ As the children grew, so did our new experiences. Once we thought it would be a change to stay off property and visit over Spring Break. (We will never do either of those things again.) We've gone with friends and family and have learned what others appreciate in the Disney Resorts. Recently, we took the kids on their first Disney Cruise. The week that followed was the week my husband and I had been looking forward to for 11 years. Both girls were finally tall enough and brave enough to try every attraction! (Okay -- almost. I couldn't get them on Tower of Terror.)

□ People return to Disney Parks over and over again, it's true. But I'm not sure Disney should receive all the credit for the magic. Each stage of life -- young, old, married, single, parent, grandparent -- brings an enchantment through new eyes. When I hear the question, "You're going again?", it gives me great pleasure to respond, "There's always a first time!"

*About The Author: Andee Zomerman lives in the Pacific Northwest and is a wife and mother to a family that loves all things Disney. They seem to be constantly planning their next Disney vacation -- even while experiencing*

the current one.

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