

Four Lessons, One World: Disney with A New Friend

by *Melissa Sue Sorrells Galley & Tracy Antonioli, PassPorter Guest Contributor*

[PassPorter](#) is an amazing community.

It's a great way to chat with fellow Disney fans, keep up on the latest Disney news and even make close friends. Many of us have even taken the big step: an in-person meet at a Disney theme park with friends from PassPorter.

Last December, Tracy (my co-author for this article) and I met on the PassPorter Boards and felt an instant connection. We became friends on facebook, chatted via e-mail, and eventually we met for lunch near her home while I was passing through town.

□ Then, in July, we decided to take the biggest leap two PassPorters can make: we planned to spend four days in Walt Disney World. Just the two of us. Maybe we're both crazy, but we went into this adventure with open minds and hearts, and we had an incredible time. Hopefully we'll inspire some of you to take a crazy adventure of your own. And, if you do, learn from our experience …

Be Honest About Your Expectations

□ Whether it's a loose set of guidelines for two or a commando-style course for five, you know that it can be nearly impossible to create a touring strategy that makes everyone happy. Now imagine trying to pull together a plan with someone you barely know. Yikes!

□ Our trip went smoothly because we were honest about our expectations up front. For example, I am afraid of birds, so Flights of Wonder wasn't an option. Tracy hates Finding Nemo - The Musical, so even though I've never seen it, we crossed it off our list.

□ About three weeks before the trip, Tracy mentioned that she'd like to explore a resort or two. My husband would never 'waste' three or four hours of park time touring a resort, so I couldn't have been more excited. If she hadn't brought it up, we never would have spent an awesome evening exploring Pop Century Resort.

□ In the two months leading up to our trip, we easily exchanged more than 45 e-mails. And that doesn't include Facebook messages, tweets and texts. All this boils down to one very important thing: be open and honest about what you want and don't want to do while you're touring

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together. It'll make the trip more enjoyable and it's a great way to get to know each other!

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□Keep Being Honest and Flexible

□Despite all of that pre-planning, our trip changed. A lot. If you continue to be honest with each other once you're in The World, your trip will change too. And you'll be glad it did!

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□On day two, we had planned to check out Jellyrolls at the BoardWalk, after dinner nearby at Kouzzina, but over dessert, Tracy suggested that we go back to the condo instead. We could have powered through the show, but we were both tired and full, and we wouldn't have had any fun. I'm glad she spoke up. We had a better evening because of it.

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□On day three, we ditched our afternoon plans and instead decided to spend more time in Disney's Hollywood Studios. Once we decided to stay, I practically insisted that we watch the Countdown to Fun Parade. Tracy would be the first to admit that this wasn't on her touring plan. But it ended up being one of the absolutely best moments of our trip.

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□Don't get caught up in 'being nice,' don't let your touring plan run you, and don't defer the decision-making. Be honest about how you're feeling and how you want things to go. It's not always easy to speak up, especially with someone you've just met. But in the end, you'll both have a better time if you do.

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□Practice Patience

□Even if you think you know what to expect going in, touring with someone you barely know can be different in ways you couldn't have planned for in advance. And, odd as they may be, those differences may introduce new depth to your travel experience.

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□For Tracy, this was a research trip. I knew she was going to have to stop frequently to take photos and write notes. I was prepared for that. What I wasn't prepared for is the fact that Tracy goes to the bathroom every hour or so. Cue my impatient foot tapping.

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□Actually, this down time allowed me to notice things I'd never noticed before, and I took lots of great photos while Tracy was indisposed. And, once I had my camera out, I wanted to take more photos! Tracy ended up having to be patient while I snapped away. "I'm right behind you," became my catch phrase as I paused to take photos then scurried to catch up with her.

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□As the days went on, Tracy started to take a look at what I was photographing, things like signage and light fixtures. She came away

with a new appreciation for the little details the Imagineers left for us. Now, she loves WDI Lighting Design as much as I do!

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☐ A Disney vacation brings out the kid in all of us. Take the good with the bad and, if you can, turn the inconvenient into a new way of looking at things.

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☐ Take Time (And Space) For Yourself

☐ Sometimes, it seems like Tracy and I were separated at birth. We'll like the same things, laugh at the same jokes and share similar values. Chances are, if you're embarking on a Disney trip with someone you just met, you feel the same way.

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☐ But no matter how close you feel, you're going to need some time for yourself, especially after a long day at the parks. Tracy and I got along marvelously, but I don't think she'll be surprised to hear that I relished that wonderful moment at the end of the day when I was alone in my own personal, private bedroom. Sometimes you just need a moment to be alone and breathe.

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☐ Whether you're staying on-site or off, make sure you have your own space, somewhere you can go to be alone and put a solid inch and a half of wood between you and your companion. If that means a two bedroom villa, book it. If it means getting completely separate rooms, plan for it. It will be well worth the added expense.

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☐ Take this advice while in the parks, too. Just because you're touring together doesn't mean you have to be together every second of the day. On day two, Tracy wanted to ride Dinosaur, and I wanted to explore Dino-Rama. So we split up for a half hour and then met up for a great lunch at Restaurantosaurus. We managed to create the perfect mid-morning for both of us. And, when we came back together, we had even more to talk about!

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☐ As with any Disney trip, Tracy and I quickly decided that once was not enough! Before we even made it to the airport, we were plotting and planning our next trips together. To Vegas. To Disney World. To Disneyland. To the Finger Lakes. Wherever we end up, we'll be sure to share our adventures on PassPorter!

About The Author: Melissa Sue Sorrells Galley works in higher education communications in upstate New York, where she lives with her husband, Robert, and her cavapoo, George. Her favorite Disney characters are Elliott (also known as Pete's Dragon) and Figment. Follow her @msorrellsgalley.

Tracy Antonioli is a teacher-turned-writer, currently working on her first

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