

Making the Most of Walt Disney World: Lessons Learned

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

On each Disney vacation, you learn something new.

That's something I guess I've always known, but it's only recently I've really thought about it, and I figure that if that lesson is useful to one person, it may also be useful to others as well.

In this article, I'm going to look at our last Walt Disney World trip back in April 2011, far too long ago now! So what did we learn from that vacation?

□ The first lesson we learned is that perhaps we need to narrow down the times we go to Florida even further. We're not hot weather people at all. Heat and humidity are no friends of ours, and we really feel both. We've never been able to understand how people can visit Walt Disney World in the blistering heat of the Florida summer, and survive the experience! If we visited then, we would literally spend the day in our room, happily encased in blissful air conditioning.

□ As such, we've always said that we would never visit Walt Disney World in June, July, August, or September. After my last trip in May, we also ruled out May, as the heat was unbearable then. See what I mean about learning something on every vacation? Well, on this vacation, we learned to add April to the "do not travel to Orlando" list. The months available for trips are rapidly diminishing for us! We experienced record breaking temperatures, as the newscasters would gleefully tell us every morning, hardly what we needed to hear! It affected our whole trip, meaning we did tend to spend more time back in our room, and we accomplished less in the parks, which was a shame.

Our trip included the week running up to Easter, and we'd heard horror stories about the crowd levels at that time of the year. People had told us that it was worse than the crowds you see between Christmas and New Year, and those are pretty horrendous. However, if I'm honest, although there were big crowds, they were still manageable, particularly if you headed into the parks early, and left by, maybe, the early afternoon. We did learn quickly that the Magic Kingdom was chaotic, with, among other things, an extra parade added in. This meant that one day we visited, people had to be funnelled into the park via the backstage area, which was an interesting sight to see. However, we were surprised to find the park deserted on Easter Sunday morning, with crowds only building when it got to lunchtime. Would I go again

over Easter? I think, weighing everything up, and provided it didn't fall in late April, as it did in 2011, I probably would.

□ Something else I also learned, that I think in fairness I probably already knew, was that while resort-hopping can be fun, there can be such a thing as too much of a good thing! In two weeks on Disney property, we moved rooms five times, taking in four different resorts. It didn't give us long enough to settle anywhere.

□ We also learned that two nights really isn't long enough to enjoy a single resort either. We spent two nights each at the Villas at the Wilderness Lodge and Bay Lake Tower, and it's frustrating when you can't get into your room until check-in at 4:00 pm (for Disney Vacation Club Members), and then after only one full day there, you're leaving the next morning. I think any stay now needs to be a minimum of three nights for us to really spend some time in a resort.

□ Having learned from previous, somewhat bitter, experience (again, see what I mean about learning from every vacation?), this time we planned our meals around where we were staying. For example, when we were at the Wilderness Lodge, we ate one night at Artist Point, while our California Grill dinner was during our stay at Bay Lake Tower. It was certainly the most sensible thing to do, and something we'll be doing again in the future. I'm just waiting to see what dates I can get into Animal Kingdom Lodge, and then you can be sure we'll be dining there at one or maybe more of their restaurants during our stay.

□ Another thing I discovered during that trip was the best time to visit Downtown Disney. It's not rocket science, and you can probably guess what I'm going to say here; first thing on a weekday morning. We were in the World of Disney Store just a few minutes after its opening, and it was lovely and quiet in there. It was a real pleasure wandering around the shops with so few people around.

□ For this vacation, we left our plans a little looser than previous Disney visits. To a certain extent that worked, as it gave us more freedom to decide what we wanted to do on the day, and it was nice not to be tied to plans all the time. However, we also found ourselves heading back to our favorite parks again and again, particularly Epcot, and ignored others as a result. Despite spending two weeks in Walt Disney World, we only managed to spend a total of about five or six hours in Disney's Hollywood Studios, a pretty pitiful performance. That's something we definitely need to learn for our next vacation, to try and ensure that we're a bit more even-handed with our park visits. I did leave Disney that time feeling that perhaps we should have given the Studios a bit more time, and done it more justice.

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Well, as I'm currently planning our next Walt Disney World vacation, that's a lot of lessons to take on board, and learn for our next trip. I wonder what lessons will come from that? In the next article in this series, I'll be looking at the lessons learned from our cruise on the Disney Dream.

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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