

Planning Makes the Magic Happen: Plan for a More Relaxing Disney Vacation

by Tiffany Andrisani, PassPorter Guest Contributor

For many, the idea of a true vacation is nothing but relaxation.

Visions of white sand beaches, tropical drinks, and napping in hammocks fill the minds of those on the quest for the ultimate vacation. To others, the idea of vacation is simply going wherever the wind blows, sleeping in and just a variance of daily routine. To me, the ultimate vacation is one that is planned out in thorough detail. If I know where I need to be, when I need to be there, and how I am getting there, I am able to relax!

My daily life as a working mom of three kids is full of on-the-spot decision-making. When it comes to my Walt Disney World vacation, I like to have all my decisions made in advance! It is both a blessing and a curse that due to the nature of my husband's job, he picks all of his vacation weeks for the following year in advance. For many, having to pre-plan when you're going away that far in advance isn't enjoyable. For me, it lets me know exactly what our family options are for vacation, and gives me enough notice to thoroughly plan our trip. Once the dates of our trip are decided, I am able to book our vacation package and have my firm dates in hand. You know those crucial Disney dates that every planning fanatic knows by heart - 180 days from arrival to make Advanced Dining Reservations, 45 days from arrival for payment in full, and 10 days from arrival for online check-in! I immediately put these dates in my calendar.

Next, I consult the crowd calendars that are available on the Internet. Using the advice offered, I decide which parks my family will visit on which days. I enter this information into a spreadsheet that I maintain for this very reason. After our park days are determined, I consult my family to decide which restaurants we would like to dine in on our upcoming visit. I plan our restaurant visits to coincide with the planned park, or if we are dining in a resort, I choose which day we will visit the resorts based on the nearby park in order to minimize travel.

My next step, once park and dining are decided, and Advanced Dining Reservations are booked, is to choose a theme for our clothes for each day. Something like animal prints for Animal Kingdom, or everyone wears their favorite Toy Story character to Hollywood Studios. When I am packing for the trip, I even go so far as putting each outfit for my

children in a Ziplock bag that is labeled with the day it should be worn. I put the entire outfit together - top, bottom, underwear, socks, and hair accessories. The last time I visited Walt Disney World I made a list for myself that noted which shirt to wear with which pants. It helps make mornings much smoother when we are up early for rope drop and helps avoid my wearing mismatched clothes on the last day because I matched wrong early in the trip!

Once my spreadsheet is complete with all the details for each day, I transfer the information to the daily forms on my PassPorter pockets. If anyone is traveling with us, they receive a laminated, pocket-sized version of the spreadsheet that lists parks for the day, the location and time of any dining reservations and the outfit theme. Then, it is always on hand, easy to carry around and I don't have to worry about making sure that other people know where they're supposed to be!

□ Some people may think that I go overboard in my preparedness but really, doing as much preparation as I can before we ever leave our house to head for Florida makes my trip seem like a real vacation! I don't have to decide what's for dinner, what we are going to do that day, or even what to wear! My extensive planning makes our vacation run like a well-oiled machine.

□ By addressing all of the extraneous details beforehand, it frees us up to be more spontaneous in the parks. Although we do make it to rope drop most days and follow a touring plan in the morning, that helps us to see all if our favorite attractions with minimal waits so that we can wander the park and go where the wind blows us or where our hearts desire later in the day without feeling like we have missed out on anything. I truly feel like I have a vacation from my everyday life when I don't have to make decisions! That is worth it to me to put in hours of work in details before I leave!

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