

Disney's PhotoPass and PhotoPass Plus: A Disney World Add-On Review

by Thomas Urbain, PassPorter Guest Contributor

They say a picture is worth a thousand words.

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□So what is Disney's Photo Pass worth? For me and my family, I believe it is worth every penny that we spend on it.

There are PhotoPass photographers throughout Walt Disney World who will take professional-grade pictures of you and your family; this allows every person in your party to be included in the image. Photographers are stationed in all four theme parks, the water parks, many dining locations, and in a few resort lobbies like The Grand Floridian and the Animal Kingdom Lodge. The beauty of it is that it doesn't cost a dime to have your picture taken by a PhotoPass Photographer.

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□When you get your first PhotoPass picture taken, the photographer will give you a PhotoPass card. (NOTE: It is a good idea to write down the number printed on the back of the card, or take a good digital picture of it with your camera or cell phone. If you lose the card, you can still access your pictures with that number.) As an added convenience, you can have more than one PhotoPass card and then enter all pictures from multiple cards onto the same account. This allows families to split up in the parks while still taking advantage of all PhotoPass can offer.

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□From personal experience, there are three ways to take advantage of PhotoPass: The first is to get as many pictures taken as you want and decide later which you want to purchase. Pictures can be viewed and purchased at PhotoPass locations in the four parks, Downtown Disney, and a handful of the Deluxe Resorts. You can also set up an account on the PhotoPass web site, enter the number(s) on the back of your PhotoPass card(s), and view and order prints of any of your pictures for up to 30 days after your trip. Doing it this way allows you to work within your own budget. Here is my tip if you are trying to save money: ask the PhotoPass photographer to take a picture using your personal camera so your entire party will be in the picture. When asked nicely, many of them will be happy to do this.

The second way is to purchase the PhotoPass CD. This allows you to get as many photos taken as you want and then, after your trip, Disney will put all of your photos on a CD and send it to you. Once you have the CD you can view the photos on your computer and get any or all of your pictures printed at your local Wal Mart (or other photo printing center).

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You can usually pre-purchase the PhotoPass CD for about \$119.95 but expect to pay \$169.95 if you purchase the CD after you arrive. (Check the Disney site for accurate pricing). Here is another tip for saving money on your Disney vacation pictures: Create an account at YorkPhoto.com or Shutterfly. These companies often send out promotional e-mails. I recently received a promotion from YorkPhoto.com where I could buy 4x6 prints of my PhotoPass pictures for only 0.04 cents each.

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□The third way is to purchase the new PhotoPass Plus CD. This gives you the same benefits as the regular PhotoPass CD plus some very cool extras.

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□On a recent trip I decided to try out PhotoPass Plus. I was able to find a pre-purchase discount that saved me \$50.00 off of the regular \$199.95 price. (Note: You must pre-purchase at least 14 days in advance.) I received a PhotoPass Plus packet in the mail that explained how everything worked, and it also contained a voucher. As soon as I entered Epcot on our arrival day, I went to the PhotoPass location to redeem my voucher. I was given a special PhotoPass Plus card that hung on a lanyard around my neck. The lanyard made it convenient to access the card whenever we came across a PhotoPass photographer.

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□If you have dined at certain Character Meals, you probably remember having your picture taken before being seated. Then, at some point during the meal, a cast member would come to your table to show you the printed copies of your pictures in the hope that you will make a purchase. With PhotoPass Plus, the pictures came to our table in a themed folder that contained one 8x10 and four 4x6 prints for free. This is a great benefit of PhotoPass Plus if you have reservations at any of the dining locations that take part in the program. Participating dining locations are: 'Ohana (breakfast only), Spirit of Aloha Dinner Show, Cinderella's Royal Table, Tusker House (breakfast only), Chef Mickey's, 1900 Park Fare, Hoop Dee Doo Musical Review and Princess Storybook Dining at Akershus Royal Banquet Hall.

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□PhotoPass Plus also includes ride photos. For instance, Rock & Roller Coaster takes your picture right at the start of the ride, when you are going from 0 to 60 in 2.8 seconds. When exiting these attractions you are funneled through an area that has monitors on the wall showing pictures of you and all the others in your ride vehicle. If you are interested, there is an attendant who will write down the number of your photo on a slip of paper. You take this slip of paper to a kiosk where you can order a print of your picture. There are many different options to choose from. If you have PhotoPass Plus, you give the cast member your slip of paper and your PhotoPass Plus card and

they will add your picture(s) to your account. This costs about \$15 if you don't have PhotoPass Plus. Participating attractions are: Space Mountain, Splash Mountain, Buzz Lightyear's Space Ranger Spin, The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror, Rock & n' Roller Coaster, Expedition Everest, and Dinosaur.

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□ One other benefit to PhotoPass Plus is the CD that was sent to me that contained 400 professional stock photos of many points of interest in and around Walt Disney World. In addition to the aforementioned stock photos, we ended up with over 400 of our own pictures on the PhotoPass CD (some are duplicates with different borders). So, if a picture is worth a thousand words, I believe we got our money's worth from our PhotoPass Plus experience.

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□ A few quick tips about PhotoPass:

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□ If you have PhotoPass Plus or have ordered the PhotoPass CD, be sure to let the photographer know about this. When they know you have paid extra, they will often times give extra time and take extra pictures.

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□ Some PhotoPass photographers can take special pictures that are called "Magic Shots." Once my 8-year-old found out about this, he started asking every photographer we came across if they did the Magic Shots. We now have pictures of my son with Tinker Bell standing on the palm of his hand, of him holding Simba, of him pointing at the sidewalk with Stitch breaking through and of him holding a big bunch of balloons.

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□ If you purchased the CD or PhotoPass Plus, take time to log onto your PhotoPass account when you get home from your trip in order to modify your photos. You can adjust the photos using different tools on the site and you can also add some very cool borders and effects to your photos before sending for your CD. Just remember, the photos will expire after 30 days so don't wait too long or all of your photos could be lost forever. You can buy extensions if you need more time to work with your photos.

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□ You can also upload any of your own photos to your online PhotoPass account. The photos that you upload will not be placed on your PhotoPass CD, but they are useful if you are putting together a Photo Book on the Disney site. I can tell you from experience that Disney's Photo Books are of very high quality. Of course, Disney's Photo Books are much more expensive than creating one on a site like Shutterfly, but I think being able to use all the Disney-themed backgrounds, images, and borders make them worth the extra money.

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□ If you are planning on creating a Disney Photo Book, on the last day of your trip take any memory cards from your personal cameras to a

PhotoPass location and ask the Cast Member to upload the pictures on the memory cards to your PhotoPass account. This can be done in a fraction of the time it would take you to upload your photos from home. □

□ I have one last piece of advice. If possible, either log into your PhotoPass account online or visit a PhotoPass location before leaving Disney property. Browse through all of your photos. On a trip a couple years ago I went back to the room because I was sick, while my wife and son went on to Epcot. While they were there they got some PhotoPass pictures taken. It wasn't until we got back home that we saw a few photos of strangers mixed with in our PhotoPass pictures. We then realized that our PhotoPass cards must have been switched so we never got to see the photos of my wife and son. So, on our most recent trip, I reviewed our photos online and realized that the Story Time with Belle photos were not in our account (my 8-year-old played the part of the Beast!!) I went to the PhotoPass location in Epcot and, by using the time stamp on the digital photos on my personal camera, the Cast Member was able to locate the missing pictures and put them back into our PhotoPass account.

About The Author: Tom works in Human Resource Development as an Instructional Designer and Trainer. Tom's favourite hobby is listening to Disney Podcasts and planning trips to Disney. Tom and his family are currently planning trips to the world in 2 months, 6 months and a Disney Cruise in 18 months.

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