

LEAH ALTHISER



BUDGET FRIENDLY

Disney World

VISUAL GUIDEBOOK

A detailed guide to a planning a budget-conscious
Disney World vacation without long lines

THEBUDGETMOUSE.COM

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MENU/SHORTCUTS

Click the title to jump to that section

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[GET ORIENTED](#)

[FOUNDATIONS](#)

[SKIP THE LINES](#)

[LIGHTNING LANES](#)

[DAILY ITINERARIES](#)

[MAGIC KINGDOM](#)

[EPCOT](#)

[HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS](#)

[ANIMAL KINGDOM](#)

[RESORT DAYS](#)

[OTHER DETAILS](#)

[RESOURCES](#)





WELCOME TO THE MAGIC!

Sweaty in the parks researching for you

A Disney World vacation is complicated and expensive. That's why I'm so glad you've found me and this guidebook! I promise it will help you have the best possible experience at Disney World while not overpaying and waiting in long lines like most people do.

I've been traveling from my home in North Carolina to Disney World multiple times per year for the past 15 years and have been sharing Disney planning advice online for the past 12 years as my full-time job. You're in good hands now! I am happy to answer any questions that arise as you work through this guide - just shoot an email to support@thebudgetmouse.com.

Thank you so much for supporting my mission to help families have an incredible Disney vacation that doesn't break the bank.

Much love,
Leah Althiser
[@thebudgetmouse](https://www.instagram.com/thebudgetmouse)



OVERVIEW



🐭 1

Get Oriented

Learn the lay of the land of the Most Magical Place on Earth - where the parks are located, how to get around, and the major pitfalls that keep people from having a magical vacation.

🐭 2

Vacation Foundations

Let's make sure your vacation has a solid foundation. Nail down when you're visiting and for how long, where you're staying, how you're getting to Orlando, and what parks you're going to hit up.

🐭 3

Basic Principles of Avoiding Long Waits

Disney World regulars know how to get on most rides in under 10 minutes. Learn the principles of avoiding long waits before we dive into specifics for each theme park.

🐭 4

Mastering Lightning Lanes

A step-by-step guide to making the most of Lightning Lane Multi Pass and Single Pass at Disney World.



Magic Kingdom Strategy

What to expect at the most popular theme park including how to maximize your mornings, must-dos for different types of visitors, character locations, and multiple touring plans.



EPCOT Strategy

What to expect at Disney World's "second gate", including what attractions you can probably skip, where to get the best food, and how to maximize your time to avoid walking 20 miles in a day.



Hollywood Studios Strategy

What to expect at Hollywood Studios, home to the super popular "Star Wars Land" and Toy Story Land. This park requires a lot of strategy in order to dodge long waits and bad food.



Animal Kingdom Strategy

How to get the most from your day at Animal Kingdom which is WAY more than a zoo. How to find the hidden gems in this park and what to expect from a visit while the park transitions to some new lands.



Resort Days

A critical piece of your Disney World vacation are the planned days off. What to do on the days you aren't in the theme park (these might end up being your favorite days).



Other Important Vacation Details

A guide to ALL of the other moving parts of your vacation such as strollers, airport transfers, photos, groceries, and more.

INSIDER TIPS

Inside of these teal colored boxes are the extra pieces of insider info that will help you experience all of the magic available at Disney World that most people miss.

C H A P T E R

1

GET ORIENTED



Congrats on planning a trip to The Most Magical Place on Earth!

Let's dive right in. The biggest stumbling block when planning a trip is the **size** of Disney World, which most people underestimate (especially if they've been to Disneyland in California).

Disney World "property" is roughly **43 square miles**, which is twice the size of the island of Manhattan. It contains four massive theme parks, two water parks, 25 resorts, and a huge shopping/dining complex (Disney Springs).

The size and scope of Disney World lead to people's two major pitfalls when planning their trip: **trying to do too much** and **underestimating transportation times**.

I suggest you take a minute right now to **study the map above to get your bearings** - understanding the lay of the land will improve your trip immensely.



GUIDELINES FOR A MAGICAL TRIP

The number one reason people have a bad time at Disney World is this: **they try to see and do too much** and end up exhausted and broke.

My goal with this guide is to help you have an incredible Disney vacation (with very little waiting in line!) that doesn't break the bank. You will have to take my word for it that you need to factor time to rest into your vacation.

Rest will not only save your sanity, but also your feet (SO MANY STEPS) and your wallet.

Here is what I recommend as basic guidelines for trip planning:

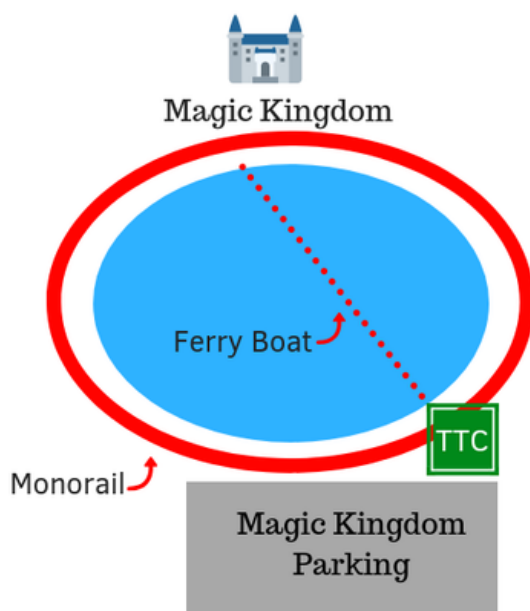
- It is perfectly fine - and recommended - **to NOT visit every theme park.**
- Ideally take a **day off between park days.** If you are young and gung ho you can swing two park days in a row - but I don't suggest more. See Chapter 9 for specifics.
- Take an **afternoon break on your park days.** This is MUCH easier if you are staying at a Disney resort and can hop on a bus to get to your resort and back again. But at a minimum plan for a few hours off of your feet in the air conditioning in the afternoon.
- **Don't pay for the "Park Hopper" ticket add-on.** There is SO MUCH to see and do in each park that there's really no reason to pay \$85 - \$100 per person to be able to switch parks during one day.

PLAN FOR TRANSPORTATION

I'm starting this guide with transportation because **understanding the challenges of getting around Disney World will influence:**

- Where you stay
- What park ticket you buy
- Your overall vacation plan

The majority of people who visit Disney parks drive themselves there. Many people are misled by “off property” hotels (those not within Disney World) that say they are 1 mile to Disney World and think it will be a 5 minute drive to the parks. In fact, you should **plan on 20+ minutes to get to the parks** from most off property resorts during the morning rush.



If you drive to Magic Kingdom, you'll have to park at the **Transportation and Ticket Center (TTC)** parking lots, then take either a monorail or ferry boat to get to the entrance to Magic Kingdom. This adds ~20 minutes of travel time as well.

First time visitors are also often disappointed to learn that off property resorts' “free shuttle to the parks” only leave at 9 am (well after you should plan to arrive) and only drop them off at the TTC where they **have to take Disney transportation to actually get to the theme parks** - adding even more travel time.



The cost and hassle of getting around Disney World is a major stumbling block for most visitors - but not you!

The best way to avoid all of the transportation challenges at Disney World is to stay at a Disney-owned resort that provides **free regular transportation to the parks**.

I know what you're going to say - *but Disney resorts are so expensive!*

I'm going to show you how to stay at Disney World resorts for the same price you'd pay at off-property resorts - *even those that at first glance seem cheaper.*

But if you do decide to stay off property (the main reason to do this is to accommodate groups of 6+ who want to stay together) I'll have recommendations for you too - fear not.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DISNEY TRANSPORTATION

- Unlike at Disneyland, you **DON'T** need a park ticket to ride the monorail or any type of Disney Transportation. It is **100% free for everyone**, even if you aren't staying at a Disney resort.
- Disney buses drop you off **right at the entrance to Magic Kingdom** - no monorail or ferry involved!
- Disney Transportation runs from every Disney resort to the theme parks, water parks, and Disney Springs, but **NOT from resort to resort**.
- Disney Transportation starts running **90-120 minutes before** official park opening every day.

free disney transportation includes
monorail + skyliner + buses + ferry boat + resort launches

C H A P T E R

2

VACATION FOUNDATIONS

[click here to return to the main menu](#)

WHEN TO VISIT

Years ago Disney moved to **date-based pricing for EVERYTHING** related to a vacation - tickets, hotel rates, skip-the-line passes, and even food!

This is all to **encourage people to visit during the less-popular times of year** to better distribute crowds.

Don't underestimate how much more expensive it is to visit during peak times. Check out these costs:

LOW SEASON VALUE RESORT PRICING: **\$133/NIGHT**

PEAK SEASON VALUE RESORT PRICING: **\$305/NIGHT**

LOW SEASON 3-DAY TICKET: **\$395 EACH**

PEAK SEASON 3-DAY TICKET: **\$534 EACH**



As you can see, costs increase *up to 250%* during peak travel times. For this reason, I suggest visiting during **these lower-cost/less-crowded times of year if at all possible**:

- End of July through the end of September
- First two weeks of December
- 2nd week of January through the 1st week of February (avoiding holiday weekends)
- After Easter until the week before Memorial Day

How long you stay at Disney World will be dictated by 1) your budget and 2) how long you can be away from home. Contrary to what you've probably heard **there is no minimum** - I've stayed anywhere from 2 to 10 days and had an amazing vacation each time!



Best Dates To Go To Disney World 2026

Calendarpedia
Your source for calendars

recommended dates are highlighted in green

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Best Dates To Go To Disney World 2027

The Budget Mouse

Dates highlighted in green are recommended

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Holidays are highlighted in red

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SAMPLE TRIP ITINERARIES

There's no "perfect" length for a visit to Walt Disney World. Here are ideas:

1
park

LONG WEEKEND / 2-NIGHT STAY

Day 1: Check in, pool/water park, Disney Springs

Day 2: Magic Kingdom

Day 3: Character brunch at a resort, check out

2
parks

4-NIGHT STAY

Day 1: Check in, pool/water park, Disney Springs for dinner

Day 2: EPCOT or Hollywood Studios

Day 3: Sleep in, brunch/lunch and activities at other resorts, afternoon at pool, activities and dinner at resorts

Day 4: Magic Kingdom

Day 5: Character brunch at a resort, check out

3 - 4
parks

6/7-NIGHT STAY

Day 1: Check in, pool/water park, Disney Springs for dinner

Day 2: Animal Kingdom (closes early)

Day 3: EPCOT or Hollywood Studios

Day 4: Sleep in, brunch/lunch and activities at other resorts, afternoon at pool, activities and dinner at resorts

Day 5: Magic Kingdom

(Optional rest day): Sleep in, brunch/lunch and activities at other resorts, afternoon at pool, activities and dinner

Day 6/7: EPCOT or Hollywood Studios

Day 7/8: Character brunch at a resort, check-out

WHERE TO BUY YOUR TICKETS

- **1 OR 2 DAY TICKETS:** The best prices are direct through Disney, but you can easily save 5% by purchasing with discount Disney gift cards [-details here](#).
- **3+ DAY TICKETS:** The best prices are through third parties such as [Undercover Tourist](#). Easily link the tickets to your Disney account (more on this soon).

Picking which parks to visit is difficult - here's an overview to help.

Magic Kingdom



Magic Kingdom (MK) is the quintessential Disney park - if you only visit one, this will likely be it. There are over 50 attractions here including the TRON coaster and Tiana's Bayou Adventure. Has the most rides with low or no height requirement, making it a favorite for families with young kids.

EPCOT



EPCOT (EP) is my favorite park. It has more rides than most people think, including the Guardians of the Galaxy coaster and Remy's Ratatouille Adventure. Visiting (and eating in) the countries of World Showcase is a highlight.

Hollywood Studios



Hollywood Studios (HS) is a must-do for fans of Star Wars and Toy Story, with lands dedicated to each. Has the most "high thrill" rides of any park so the most popular with older kids/teens. 7 stage shows and a unique nighttime show, Fantasmic.

Animal Kingdom



Way more than a zoo, Animal Kingdom (AK) contains "Avatar Land" and several other popular rides. The most beautiful park and has no nighttime show, making it the best choice for back-to-back park days. Getting a bunch of new attractions in the coming years.



TO PARK HOP OR NOT TO PARK HOP?

“Park Hopper” is a ticket add-on that allows you to visit more than one theme park in a day. You must buy it for the entire length of your ticket (i.e. you can’t just add it for one day and not the others) and the cost is \$75 per person for 2+ day tickets. The cost to add it to one-day tickets ranges from \$53 to \$90.

A question I get asked a lot is *“Do we need Park Hopper tickets or not??”*

My answer is almost always NO. Here’s why:

- There is really no need to Park Hop if you are on a family vacation, especially if it’s your first or second trip, since **there is SO MUCH to see and do in each park** that you’ll never get to everything in a day anyway.
- The time spent, cost (\$300 for a family of 4), and **logistical challenges of going from park-to-park within a day** is just not worth it for most guests.

WHO DOES BENEFIT FROM PARK HOPPING?

If you’ve been to Disney World before, are a transportation expert, OR if you’re staying at a Deluxe Resort and want to take advantage of Extended Theme Park Hours, then Park Hopping can make sense for you!

Here are the best park-hopping combos (I have done all of these myself):

- Magic Kingdom/Epcot via monorail
- Hollywood Studios/Epcot via Skyliner or Friendship boats
- AK/any park via bus (great for getting early access to more LLs)



Disney's Polynesian Villas

WHERE TO STAY

"Where should I stay?" might be the #1 question I get asked.

Your overall Disney vacation experience is greatly impacted by where you stay. That's because this choice affects **how you get to the theme parks** and your flexibility with scheduling your days.

First I'll give you **some guiding principles**, followed by my suggestions. I've stayed at all 25 Disney World resorts and just as many off-property hotels, so you'll know this isn't based off of just a few visits!

INSIDER TIPS

If I have a **late arrival or early departure** I will stay that night at an off-property hotel (usually Hyatts where I can stay for free with points from my favorite travel card - [click here for the details](#)) because I don't need any of the Disney resort benefits. There's even a Hyatt inside the airport!

Disney almost ALWAYS **discounts its hotel rooms** but not until 3-6 months in advance. If you are booking further out [use a no-cost travel agent](#) who will get the new lower price for you automatically!

There is a prevalent myth that staying off property is always cheaper than staying at a Disney owned resort. Here's a breakdown of why it often isn't true:

Price comparison (incl tax):

- **Disney's All Star Movies Resort**
 - Room: \$149
 - Parking at resort: Free
 - Parking at theme park: Free
 - Resort fee: \$0
 - **TOTAL: \$149**
- **Similar "Good Neighbor" Hotel**
 - Room: \$119
 - Parking at resort: \$22
 - Parking at theme park: \$35
 - Resort Fee: \$13
 - **TOTAL: \$189**

At first glance the off property hotel appears cheaper, but after ALL costs are factored in, the Disney resort is the winner.

Here are the the types of lodging I recommend at Disney World and what I typically pay to stay there:



Disney Value Resorts

\$100-\$250/night

260 sq ft rooms with two queen beds. Bus and skyliner transportation; food courts; playgrounds; and themed pools (no waterslides or hot tubs).

Disney Moderate Resorts

\$200-\$400/night

314 sq ft rooms, some that sleep five. Bus, skyliner, and boat transportation; table service dining; pools with slides, hot tubs, and water play areas.



Disney Deluxe Villas

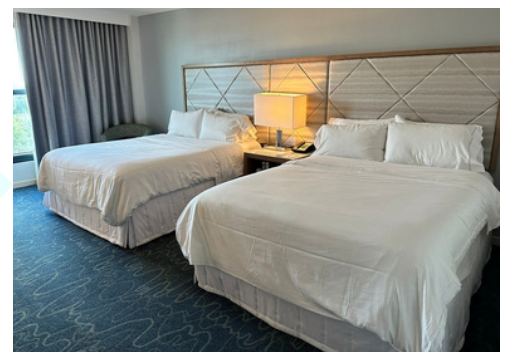
\$200-\$500/night

350 sq ft rooms with kitchenettes, most sleep five. Some walkable to parks and on monorail line. Fine dining, incredible pools, fitness centers, and gorgeous lobbies.

Non-Disney Accommodations

\$0-\$700/night

Some non-Disney places I recommend include the Swan and Dolphin, some Hyatt properties, the Disney Springs hotels, and Lelani Beach Club (details on pg. 22).



DISNEY VALUE RESORTS

I love the Disney Value resorts and recommend them to first timers. The rooms will feel small but are fine for no more than two adults. Connecting rooms are great for when you want more space or grandparents are joining.

I book Value resorts with my travel agent, direct through Disney, or through third parties (my go-tos are Priceline and Undercover Tourist) which often offer savings of 10-20% off.

Here are my recommended Value Resorts:

- **Disney's All-Star Movies Resort**
- **Disney's All-Star Music Resort**
- **Disney's Pop Century Resort**



Disney's All-Star Movies

DISNEY MODERATE RESORTS

The Moderate resorts are great for families since some resorts have rooms with a "fifth sleeper" Murphy bed.

I love **Caribbean Beach** for its rooms that sleeps five, access to the Skyliner line (which quickly gets you to Epcot and Hollywood Studios), and an incredible pirate-themed pool. Port Orleans Riverside also has rooms that sleep five.

Coronado Springs has amenities that other Moderates don't have such as fine dining and fitness centers. BUT it is a convention center and has inflated food prices as a result. Recommended resorts:

- **Disney's Caribbean Beach Resort**
- **Disney's Coronado Springs Resort**

Disney's Caribbean Beach



DISNEY DELUXE VILLAS

Disney Vacation Club (DVC) Villas are spacious rooms at Deluxe resorts that sleep 4-5 and have small kitchenettes. These gorgeous resorts have fine dining, all of the amenities, and the closest locations to the theme parks.

I do something called “renting DVC points” to pay between \$200-\$500/night for these rooms that are typically double that cost when booked through Disney. It is the #1 way I save money on my frequent Disney vacations.

[Click here for a detailed guide to renting DVC points](#) - I recommend it to everyone I know. You can **save THOUSANDS of dollars** compared to Disney prices for these resorts.



Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge

Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge

My favorite Disney resort thanks to the wildlife viewing, beautiful design, great food, and fun pool. A downside is that it only provides bus transportation to the parks, but the setting makes up for it.

Disney's Polynesian Villas

A stunning resort with a chill island vibe that is a short monorail ride away from Magic Kingdom and Epcot. Great food, pools, and fireworks viewing nightly on the beach. A classic Disney experience.

Disney's Beach Club

The closest resort to Epcot (walk to the back entrance in 5-10 minutes) with arguably the best pool on Disney property. Easy access to the Boardwalk and Hollywood Studios.

Disney's Beach Club



OFF PROPERTY RECOMMENDATIONS

Sometimes staying at a Disney resort doesn't make sense - e.g. if all Disney resorts in your price range are booked, or you're traveling with a large group that wants to stay together.

Here are places I have stayed personally that I would recommend:

- The Disney Springs hotels have bus service (less frequent than Disney buses), Early Entry privileges (see pg 34), and some can be booked with points (get ideas here)
- Hyatt Place Orlando/Lake Buena Vista - rooms sleep 6, good free breakfast, close to Disney Springs
- The Swan/Dolphin hotels offer huge value - walking distance to the parks. Early Entry, and much lower prices than other Deluxe resorts, but with far less magic than Disney resorts.

Disney Swan



Lelani Beach House

A common way to visit Disney World with a large group is to rent a house nearby through Airbnb or VRBO. The problem with these is the quality varies tremendously and you might not get help if you need it.

That's why I recommend Lelani Beach House. It is lovingly maintained by a local family who you can reach easily if you have issues, has gorgeous Disney-themed rooms, sleeps up to 20 people, and has a private pool. It's a 15-20 minute drive to the parks but the space and quality make the drive worth it. [Click here to learn more and book.](#)

FOOD & DINING AT DISNEY WORLD



Another key piece of the Disney vacation puzzle is what you'll eat while you're there. You'll want at least a loose plan in place to avoid sticker shock and gross theme park food (it does exist). I'll go into more detail in later chapters, but here are some guiding principles to start with:

- **Eat breakfast in your hotel room** before you head to the parks. To dodge sky-high resort prices, I have groceries delivered to my resort with breakfast items such as cereal, fruit, yogurt, and pastries. [Click here for more info on grocery delivery.](#)
- **Eat mostly Quick Service food on park days** so as to not waste time in the parks. But beware - the quality varies tremendously. Stick with my recommended restaurants.
- **Limit Character Dining to once per trip** and try to do it on a non-park day. Book the latest breakfast reservation possible (usually 11:30 am) and make it your big meal of the day.
- **You can make dining reservations 60 days before you check in** for up to 10 days into your trip if you're staying at a Disney resort.

DISNEY DINING PLAN OVERVIEW

The Disney Dining Plans are basically a way to pre-pay for dining before your vacation starts. The plans are certainly not for everyone, so here's a guide to whether or not they might make sense for your trip.



First, **you can only add a Dining Plan to a Disney-owned hotel stay**, so you can't buy one if you are staying "off property".

Next, **kids under 10 get a free dining plan for each adult on the plan in 2026**. Visiting with two young kids makes the plan MUCH more affordable since the kids are free.

Alcoholic beverages are included with the plans, so if you're buying them anyway, the plans will likely save you money.

Here's a chart that compares what you get and the cost of the two different plans (keep in mind anyone 10+ is charged the adult price):

Disney Dining Plan 2026 Prices		
	Credits (per night)	Cost(including tax)
Quick Service Dining Plan	2 Quick Service Meals + 1 Snack	\$60.47 (adult)\$0 (child)
Disney Dining Plan	1 Table Service Meal + 1 Quick Service Meal + 1 Snack	\$98.59 (adult)\$0 (child)

Each person also gets a resort refillable mug to use for the length of stay.

If you like the idea of a more "inclusive" feel to your vacation where you don't worry about the cost of every menu item, you will likely enjoy the dining plans. I prefer the Quick Service Plan myself, since the cost of one or two table-service meals (which is all I like to do) is less than the cost of upgrading to the full Disney Dining Plan. [Read more about the plans here.](#)

FAVORITE RESTAURANTS



MAGIC KINGDOM

- Pecos Bill Tall Tale Inn & Cafe
- Columbia Harbor House
- Liberty Tree Tavern (table service)

EPCOT

- Connections Eatery
- La Cantina de San Angel
- Les Halles Boulangerie & Patisserie

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

- Docking Bay 7 Food & Cargo
- Woody's Lunch Box
- Sci-Fi Dine-In (table service)

ANIMAL KINGDOM

- Flame Tree Barbeque
- Satu'li Canteen

RECOMMENDED CHARACTER DINING

- Topolino's Terrace (Breakfast only)
- Akershus Royal Banquet Hall
- Chef Mickey's
- Cape May Cafe (Breakfast only)
- Crystal Palace



ADVANCE DINING RESERVATIONS

Advance Dining Reservation (ADR) is Disney-speak for restaurant reservations. They are recommended for any dining experience that you are sure you don't want to miss.

In general, the ADR booking window opens up **60 days in advance at 6 am EST** ([click here for a date calculator](#)) However, if you are staying at a Disney resort, you can **make dining reservations for the entire length of your stay** (well, up to 10 days) at 6 am EST 60 days before the day you check in.

This gives Disney resort guests a distinct advantage for grabbing the most in-demand ADRs.

You can make ADRs in both the MDE app (tap the +) or on the website (I prefer the app).

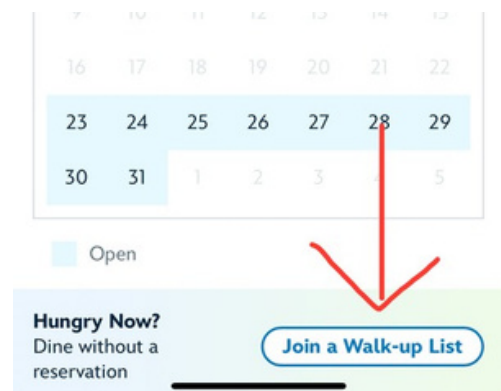
These are the most in demand ADRs:

- Space 220 Lounge (EP)
- Space 220 (EP)
- Cinderella's Royal Table (MK)
- Yak & Yeti (AK)
- Sci-Fi Dine-In (HS)

I try to limit lengthy sit-down meals in the parks, unless I am staying all day and need a break.

If you aren't able to secure the ADRs you want before you leave, fear not. Many people change/cancel their ADRs in the days leading up to their trip, so the day before MANY spots will open up.

There are also free and paid services for ADR alerts: [Thrill Data](#) and [Add More Magic](#) are recommended.



If you're willing to be flexible, you can often find **same day walk-up availability** at many restaurants in the MDE app.

Just start to make an ADR, then look for “**Join a Walk-Up List**” at the bottom of the screen. I've been able to walk up to even the most in demand places. Just don't expect this to work during peak season - there won't be anything then.

GETTING TO ORLANDO

The easiest part of your vacation to get for cheap/free are flights.

In order to have room in my budget for the things that really matter (like staying at a Disney resort and buying skip-the-line passes), I look for easy wins.

It's not hard to get cheap or even free flights to Orlando (I do this on every trip and I visit 3-4 times each year) if you know how to use travel rewards.

POINTS/MILES FOR FREE FLIGHTS

For the past 15 years I have been learning how to regularly fly for free with points and miles I earn **just from putting my regular everyday spending on a credit card instead of a debit card.**

If you are brand new to this concept and have reservations (most people do) I strongly suggest you spend an hour to take [my FREE intro to reward travel course here.](#)

If you are ready to give it a try, the points you'll earn from [my favorite travel card](#) can EASILY fly your whole family to Disney World for free.

One way Reset Mon, Dec 9 < >

November							December						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1 \$82	2 \$71	1 \$164	2 \$54	3 \$24	4 \$36	5 \$64	6 \$70	7 \$50
3 \$71	4 \$49	5 \$49	6 \$73	7 \$130	8 \$128	9 \$83	8 \$59	9 \$84	10 \$36	11 \$44	12 \$64	13 \$70	14 \$50
10 \$49	11 \$29	12 \$29	13 \$49	14 \$60	15 \$64	16 \$36	15 \$24	16 \$29	17 \$36	18 \$29	19 \$49	20 \$94	21 \$143
17 \$29	18 \$29	19 \$24	20 \$24	21 \$49	22 \$44	23 \$60	22 \$94	23 \$93	24 \$29	25 \$124	26 \$131	27 \$114	28 \$94
24 \$34	25 \$34	26 \$29	27 \$83	28 \$54	29 \$84	30 \$84	29 \$94	30 \$69	31 \$29				

I use [Google Flights](#) to find the best and cheapest flights using these tips:

- Always search **one way at a time**
- It's fine to book your outbound and return flights on **two different airlines** to get the best price
- Select the bags you are bringing to **compare prices incl bag fees**
- Don't be scared to **fly ultra low cost carriers** - just be prepared for seat selection fees, very little legroom, and no free snacks (fine for short flights).

INSIDER TIP

Most people book their domestic flights **WAY too early**. The "Goldilocks window" for buying flights is actually 3-8 weeks before your trip. Buying before that usually leads to overpaying, sometimes by hundreds of dollars.

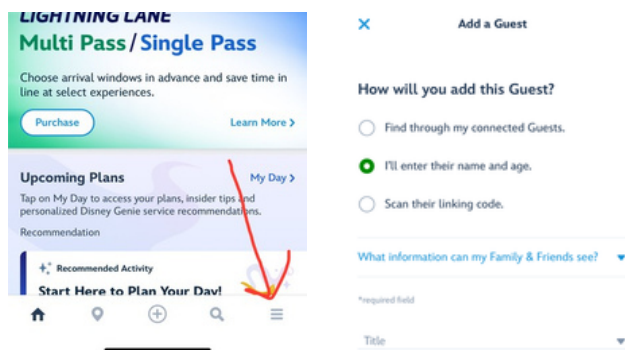
SUCCESS WITH MY DISNEY EXPERIENCE

My Disney Experience is both an app and a part of the Disney World website. Knowing how to use it is essential to your Disney World vacation. Here's how:

First, download My Disney Experience (MDE) app and turn on notifications:

- MDE for iPhone
- MDE for Android

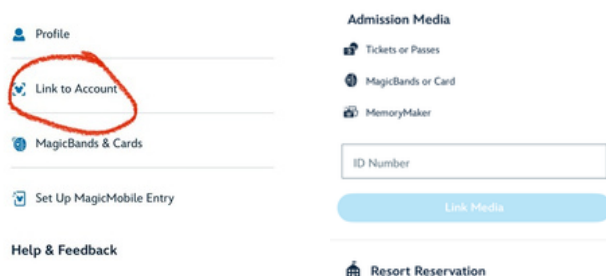
If you haven't already, you'll create a MDE account for yourself. Next, tap the "hamburger" menu (three horizontal lines), scroll down and tap **Profile**, tap **Family & Friends List**, then tap **Add A Guest**.



Everyone in your travel party age three and up will need to be added - kids' profiles are managed by an adult.

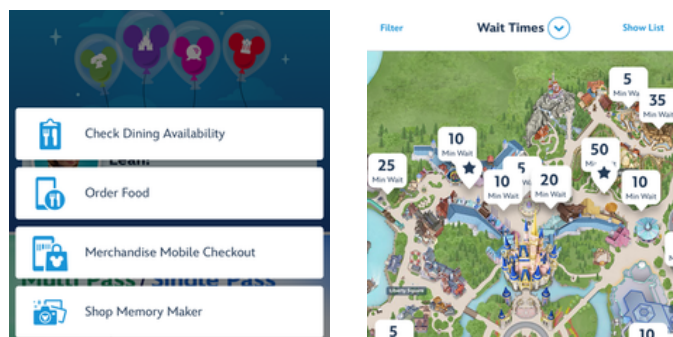
I suggest creating a profile for the other adults in your party and **inviting them to manage their account** - you'll just need their email address to invite them.

Spend some time exploring the app before your trip. There's a LOT there that will make your trip go smoothly!



If you've **purchased tickets or made hotel reservations through a third party**, you'll need to link them to your MDE account.

Click the hamburger menu, scroll down and click **Link to Account**, then select **Type ID** at the top. Enter the confirmation numbers you received via email here.



Tap the + symbol in the bottom center to make dining reservations (check walk up availability there too) and place mobile orders at quick service restaurants.

The map feature within the app is super useful - tap the 📍 icon to access the maps. You can see wait times and find restrooms, dining, characters, and more by searching.

C H A P T E R

3

HOW TO SKIP THE LINES

[click here to return to the main menu](#)

NOT EVERYONE WAITS IN LONG LINES

Most visitors to Disney World think that waiting 60 to 90 minutes for rides is just part of the experience. But Disney World regulars know that doesn't have to be the case!

In many ways the Disney World theme parks are like machines that move in predictable patterns. For example,

- The parks will always be the most crowded from noon- 4 pm.
- Magic Kingdom will always be the most crowded on Mondays and Saturdays.
- People tend to start with attractions at the front of the park and work towards the back.

It's also true that most people who visit the parks have no idea about these patterns AND **have no plan to avoid the predictable crowds.**

In this chapter you'll learn the basics of dodging the crowds and **join the small group of insiders who never wait in long lines!**

“My family typically waits less than 10 minutes for every ride.”





SKIP THE LINE STRATEGY OVERVIEW

An overview of seven insider strategies to limit wait times at Disney World.

RD

ROPE DROP

The strategy of arriving to the parks before they officially open in order to ride a popular attraction(s) with a shorter wait.

PC

PARK CLOSE

The strategy of getting in line for a popular attraction right before park closes in order to ride it with a much shorter wait.

RS

RIDER SWITCH

How to avoid waiting twice when your party has to split up to wait with a child who isn't tall enough or doesn't want to ride.

SR

SINGLE RIDER LINE

Some rides offer a shorter wait if you are willing to ride separate from your party - the Single Rider Line. Detailed in Chapter 6.

MO

MOBILE ORDER

How to avoid long waits at counter service restaurants and snack windows by placing your order in the app before you arrive.

LL

LIGHTNING LANES

Paid skip the line services that allow you to enter a separate queue called a "Lightning Lane" for a much shorter wait for select rides.

SS

STANDBY SKIPPER

A third-party app that makes Lightning Lane selections on your behalf on the day of your visit; can often get passes for "sold out" rides

BEST DAYS TO VISIT EACH PARK



Courtesy of [Thrill-data.com](https://thrill-data.com)

Crowds move in predictable ways at Disney World, including which parks people tend to visit on which days of the week.

As you can see from the chart above, **Magic Kingdom is most crowded on Mondays and Saturdays**. This has been true for YEARS simply because many people travel to Orlando on Fridays and Sundays and want to visit Magic Kingdom on the first day of their vacation!

Below are my recommendations for **what days are best to visit each park** and a sample itinerary. I also *strongly suggest* consulting this crowd calendar when creating your itinerary (use the printable form on the next page).

MAGIC KINGDOM: Sunday, Thursday, Friday

EPCOT: Wednesday, Friday, Thursday

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS: Wednesday, Thursday

ANIMAL KINGDOM: Wednesday, Thursday, Tuesday

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
MK	REST	AK	HS	REST	EP	TRAVEL

Disney Park Days Planner

DATES: ____ / ____ / ____ to ____ / ____ / ____

RECOMMENDED DAYS TO VISIT EACH PARK (RANKED BY LOWEST CROWDS)

MAGIC KINGDOM: Sunday, Thursday, Friday

EPCOT: Wednesday, Friday, Thursday

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS: Wednesday, Thursday

ANIMAL KINGDOM: Wednesday, Thursday, Tuesday

Date:

Day of the week:

Park:

Date:

Day of the week:

Park:

Date:

Day of the week:

Park:

Date:

Day of the week:

Park:

Date:

Day of the week:

Park:

Date:

Day of the week:

Park:

Date:

Day of the week:

Park:



SKIP THE LINES

Disney releases the **calendar with park hours 70 days in advance** and you can find it in the MDE app or click here:

[Click here for the current calendar](#)



Magic Kingdom Park
9:00 AM to 9:00 PM

Early Entry
8:30 AM to 9:00 AM

Park Hopper Availability
9:00 AM to 9:00 PM

MORNING ADVANTAGE

It's probably not surprising that most visitors find it difficult to get to the parks as early as they plan to, especially if they are driving there.

It's hard to get everyone out the door, then there's traffic to get there, the line to pay for parking, then taking the ferry or monorail over to Magic Kingdom.

For these reasons, **the first 1-2 hours the park is open offer the shortest waits of the day.**

Now if you are taking my advice and a) taking days off between park days and b) staying at a Disney Resort, then getting to the parks on time should be a breeze!

First, you'll need to know what time the park opens on the day you're visiting (it changes regularly).

EARLY ENTRY

Guests of Disney World resorts get a perk called **Early Theme Park Entry** which allows them to get into the parks and on certain rides 30 minutes before anyone else.

[Click here for Early Entry details](#)

Cast members (aka Disney employees) will scan your park ticket or Magic Band (more on those in chapter 9) to verify that you're a resort guest.





ROPE DROP

A term you'll hear a lot in Disney circles is "rope dropping".

It's shorthand for the strategy of arriving early to the parks and heading straight to rides **as soon as the "rope drops" to allow guests into the park**. And yes, there is a physical rope in most situations!

Note that crowds form behind the rope every morning and that you will be shuffling along with hundreds of others - so you know what to expect.

What attractions you rope drop will depend on your priorities for the day and your plans for using Lightning Lanes. I'll give suggestions later.

For now know that **rope dropping is one strategy for riding popular attractions with some of the lowest waits of the day**.

WHEN TO LEAVE

Most people don't know that Main St USA in Magic Kingdom and Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood Studios **open to ALL guests ~one hour before the posted park opening time**. You can take pictures, get some coffee and pastries, and find the line for rope drop.

Here's my suggested schedule if you are staying at a Disney Resort and *want to take full advantage of Early Entry*:

For Magic Kingdom & Hollywood Studios:

- If you are taking the monorail or Skyliner, leave your room **75 minutes before park opening** (eg 7:45 am for a 9 am park opening).
- If you are taking a bus, leave your room **90 minutes before park opening** (eg 7:30 am for a 9 am park opening).

For Epcot & Animal Kingdom:

- Leave your room 75 minutes **before park opening**.

If you are staying off property, I suggest leaving 90 minutes before park opening for Magic Kingdom and Hollywood Studios and 75 minutes for Epcot & Animal Kingdom.



CLOSING DOWN THE PARK

Another opportunity to get on rides with short waits is at the end of the night.

Most people don't know that parks stay open after the "official" closing time.

In fact that time just represents **your last chance to get in line for rides**. You'll even notice on the park's daily schedule that the nighttime entertainment is often scheduled right at park close, or sometimes (especially at Hollywood Studios) even after "park close".

I have gotten in line for some of the most popular attractions in all of Walt Disney World (such as Rise of the Resistance and Seven Dwarves Mine Train) 5 minutes before park close and **the wait was less than five minutes**.

Something to be aware of is that Disney is known to **inflate the posted wait times** in the last hour before the park closes. Posted wait times of 30 minutes often means 5-10 minute waits.

Now I definitely *don't* suggest both rope dropping and closing the park down without an afternoon break or on consecutive days.

INSIDER TIP

It is possible to make dining reservations after "park close" at some restaurants. This allows you extra time in the parks with the place to yourself for photo ops. My favorite is Oga's Cantina in Hollywood Studios for lightsaber pictures in an empty Galaxy's Edge.

WHAT'S RIDER SWITCH?

Rider Switch is a brilliant solution to the problem of traveling with a young child who is unable (or doesn't want to) ride certain attractions that others want to ride.

It works like this:

- Your whole group approaches the ride and **tells the cast member at the entrance that you want to use Rider Switch.**
- The cast member scans the ticket of the adult who will wait with the child unable to ride (let's call her/him "Adult B") while the rest of the party goes on the attraction.
- I suggest Adult B does something fun while waiting such as taking the child on an attraction with no height limit or grabbing a snack.
- Once the others are done riding, they let Adult B know.
- Then Adult B **picks one other member of the group to ride with him/her** and returns to ride with no waiting.

The best part of this system is that one member of your party will get to ride the attraction twice in a row!



TRON Lightcycle/RUN offers Rider Switch

Most rides with height requirements (these will be covered in each park chapter) offer Rider Switch.

However if you are using a Virtual Queue, Lightning Lane Multi Pass, or Lightning Lane Single Pass, **note that everyone who wants to ride (including Adult B) must have a pass or spot in the Virtual Queue.**

This isn't a way to avoid buying a LL pass for a ride - it just lets Adult B take someone with them for a bonus ride so they don't have to ride alone.

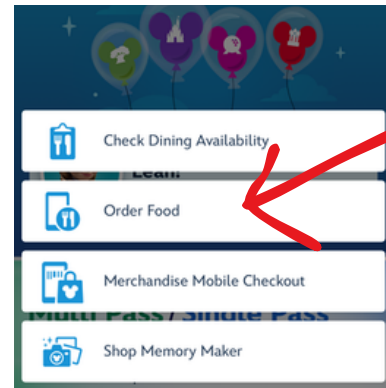
[Click here to view the 25+ attractions that offer Rider Switch](#)



SKIP THE LINES

Here's how to Mobile Order in the app:

- Tap the + icon on the bottom of the home screen.
- Tap **Order Food**.



Lunchbox Tarts at Woody's Lunchbox, Hollywood Studios

MOBILE ORDER

Rides aren't the only thing that get long waits at Disney World. Unfortunately you'll also encounter long lines to order food and snacks, especially at peak times.

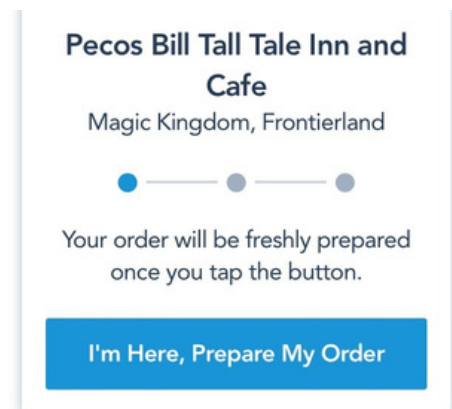
Years ago Disney released a solution to this problem - **the ability to Mobile Order food and drinks in the My Disney Experience app**.

First, Mobile Order is offered at many (but not all) counter service dining locations in the parks and resorts. These restaurants are also known as "Quick Service" dining.

INSIDER TIP

Mobile Order isn't just for restaurants - many snack locations also offer it. You don't have to wait in a long line for your Dole Whip - just order it in the app!

- At the top you can select either **As Soon As Possible** or **Schedule for Later**.
- Add items to your order and pay.
- Once your arrival window begins, you'll get a notification like this in the app:



If I am walking towards the restaurant I will tap the button because I know it take a few minutes for my food to be prepared.

When your food is ready you'll get another notification - it may indicate the window to pick up your food.

WHAT'S A VIRTUAL QUEUE?

For years now Disney has been using something it calls a “**Virtual Queue**” (VQ) for it’s newest and most popular attractions.

It is basically a way to grab a virtual spot in line and get called back to the ride when it’s your turn.

The best part - no extra cost involved!

Here’s what you need to know:

- The rides that offer Virtual Queue are listed in each park chapter.
- The VQ “**opens**” at **7 am every day**. If you want to get in, you’ll need to be ready before 7 am since spots sometimes go in a matter of seconds (no joke).
- There is a second chance to join the VQ at 10 am, but don’t rely on this since spots are limited.
- To join, find this on the home screen in the MDE app:



Request Access with Virtual Queue

- Confirm your party and be ready to tap **Refresh** the second the clock strikes 7 am, then tap **Join Queue**.
- If you get in (which you should if you do this right at 7), you’ll get assigned a **Boarding Group** number.



Sequence complete. Report for digitization.

TRON Lightcycle / Run

Magic Kingdom Park

Group 33

It's time! Head to the experience by 11:35 AM.

- When it is time for your Boarding Group to ride, you will **get a notification from the MDE app** (*make sure notifications are on!*) and will have an hour to get to the ride.
- **Here’s when Boarding Groups are typically called:**
 - 8am-noon: Group 1-50
 - Noon-4 pm: Group 50-100
 - 4 pm-Close: Groups 100+

Note that **the typical wait time once you set foot in the Virtual Queue is 30 minutes**, so plan accordingly.

C H A P T E R

4

LIGHTNING LANES

[click here to return to the main menu](#)

WHAT IS LIGHTNING LANE?

*The most powerful strategy for skipping the lines at Disney World is the **Lightning Lane** system. Here's how to master it.*

SOME BACKGROUND

25 years ago Disney introduced its first alternative to physically standing in line for rides - **FastPass**.

Since then, the system has changed names multiple times and transitioned from paper tickets (really!) to being part of the MDE app.

The concept has stayed the same, though. You're able to "reserve" a time (actually a one-hour window) to show up and enter a separate queue to **ride an attraction with minimal wait** (typically 5 minutes or less).

THE PAID PASS ERA

The FastPass system was complimentary until 2021, when Disney renamed it Genie+ and started charging for it (causing an uproar, of course).

Everything transitioned to the app, and you got access to the separate queue by tapping your ticket or MagicBand (see Chapter 9) to a Mickey icon.

In 2024 the name changed again to **Lightning Lane**. The first question you might have is - *is it worth it to pay for this service?*

My answer is (almost always) yes.

If you know how to use it (and if you read this guide, you will), the Lightning Lane system has the power to **massively improve the quality of your vacation**.

My approach is to find ways to **save money on other parts of my vacation** such as tickets, transportation, and lodging, so that I can spend it on things that improve my vacation experience, such as Lightning Lane.



Two common sights when using Lightning Lane

Here's a very brief overview of the Lightning Lane (LL) passes available at Disney World before diving into the details.



LL MULTI PASS

A paid service that allows you to skip the line on a group of attractions in each park.

You'll need to purchase Multi Pass for everyone in your travel party who wants to use it. You'll also get **free ride photo downloads** which is a nice perk.

Here are the number of attractions in each park that are included in LL Multi Pass:

- Magic Kingdom: 18
- EPCOT: 10
- Hollywood Studios: 13
- Animal Kingdom: 9

You can buy Multi Pass for your day at Magic Kingdom, but opt to not buy it for your day at Animal Kingdom.

Cost per person per day: \$16-\$35



LL SINGLE PASS

A paid service that allows you to skip the line on individual attractions in each park.

There is an *additional* cost for skipping the line for the most in-demand attractions in each park. These rides are NOT included with LL Multi Pass.

I generally try to use other strategies in this guide to ride these (more on that later).

Here are the attractions that offer LL Single Pass:

- TRON Lightcycle/Run (MK)
- 7 Dwarfs Mine Train (MK)
- Guardians of the Galaxy (EP)
- Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance (HS)
- Avatar: Flight of Passage (AK)

Cost per person per ride: \$10-\$25

There is also a very pricey Lightning Lane Premier Pass which I do NOT recommend - you won't need it thanks to what you'll learn in this chapter.

LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS

The pass that allows you to skip the line for a large group of attractions in each park is now called *Lightning Lane Multi Pass*.

When you buy Multi Pass, you can make **three advance LL selections before your visit - but then you can make MANY more the day of your visit!** Here's an example for a day at Magic Kingdom:

 Lightning Lane Multi Pass

"it's a small world"

Redeem Between

Aug 2 from 9:05 AM - 10:05 AM



 Lightning Lane Multi Pass

Haunted Mansion

Redeem Between

Aug 2 from 10:05 AM - 11:05 AM



 Lightning Lane Multi Pass

**Tiana's Bayou Adventure
– New!**

Redeem Between

Aug 2 from 11:20 AM - 12:20 PM



When you get to ***make your advance selections*** depends on whether or not you have a Disney resort reservation:

WHEN CAN I MAKE MY ADVANCE LL SELECTIONS?

If you are staying at select Disney World resorts (those that start with the word “Disney’s”, plus the Swan, Swan Reserve, Dolphin, and Shades of Green) you can make LL selections for your entire trip at **7 am EST SEVEN days before you check in for your reservation.**

If you don't have a Disney resort reservation, you can make LL selections for your entire trip at **7 am EST THREE days before the first day on your park ticket.**

MULTI PASS TIERS

Now you know that you can make three advance LL selections for each of your park days.

However, only ONE of these advance selections can be from the most popular rides.

Disney does this to keep people from grabbing up all of the most desirable rides before others even get a chance.

Each park except Animal Kingdom has what we'll call "**tiers**" for LL rides. This is how it works:

Choose up to 3 Lightning Lane experiences for your party at Magic Kingdom



Select up to 1 of your 3 from this group.

☐	Big Thunder Mountain Railroad 40in (102cm) or taller	
☐	Jungle Cruise Any Height	
☐	Peter Pan's Flight Any Height Currently Unavailable	
☐	Space Mountain 44in (112cm) or taller	
☐	Tiana's Bayou Adventure – New!	

As you can see, the app will only allow **one of your advance selections** to be from the "Tier One" rides in the park. Your other two selections can be from the rest (Tier Two rides).

Here is a list of the Tier One rides that you can choose from in each park:

TIER ONE RIDE LIST

MAGIC KINGDOM

- Big Thunder Mt Railroad
- Jungle Cruise
- Peter Pan's Flight
- Space Mountain
- Tiana's Bayou Adventure

EPCOT

- Frozen Ever After
- Remy's Ratatouille Adventure
- Test Track

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

- Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway
- Millennium Falcon: Smuggler's Run
- Rock 'n' Roller Coaster
- Slinky Dog Dash

MULTI PASS RULES

To get the most out of Lightning Lane Multi Pass (LLMP), you have to **know how the system works. To review:**

- You can make **three advance LL Multi Pass selections per day** at 7 am either three or seven days before your trip begins.
- You can **make your advance LL selections for every day you are visiting the parks at this time**, so be prepared ([use this cheat sheet](#)).
- Of your three selections per day, **only ONE can be from the “Tier 1” rides** ([listed here](#)).
- Your other two selections can be from the remaining “Tier 2” rides.

However, there are a few *more* rules:

- **All of your advance selections have to be in one park**, even if you plan to park hop later.
- Every time you use a LL on the day of your trip, you can **immediately make another selection in the app**.
- After you check in for your first LL of the day, you can **make LLs in any park**, regardless of tier.
- You can **always have three Lightning Lanes in your virtual “backpack” at all times**, until all of the LL passes have been claimed.
- You can **arrive up to 2 hours late** for your LL and it will still work! Most visitors don't know this. Pick times earlier rather than later.



Slinky Dog Dash at Hollywood Studios

WHAT'S A BURNER RIDE?

If you want to get the most value out of Lightning Lane Multi Pass, then I suggest you use the “burner ride” strategy.

Lines are typically short during the first hour the park is open and you likely won't *need* to use the LL.

However I still suggest you **make one of your advance LL selections for as early in the day as possible**. Ideally right when the park opens

The reason is once you tap in for your LL reservation **you can immediately make another “Tier One” selection** before anyone else. If a show is suggested as a burner ride, just tap in at the entrance and walk away (I promise it is fine - everyone can still see the morning show!)

MAKING LL RESERVATIONS IN THE APP

GETTING READY

Before 7 am on the day you're able to make LL reservations, you'll want to **make sure you have already done the following**:

- ☐ Created a MDE profile for everyone in your travel party
- ☐ Linked any resort or ticket reservations and make sure everyone is showing up
- ☐ Added a payment method in the MDE app

Account

 Profile

 Link to Account

 MagicBands & Cards

To add a payment method, click the hamburger menu, scroll down and tap **Profile**, then add your info.

WHAT TO BOOK FIRST

There are two LL Multi Pass rides that often get completely booked up in a matter of minutes. They are:

- **Tiana's Bayou Adventure (MK)**
- **Slinky Dog Dash (HS)**

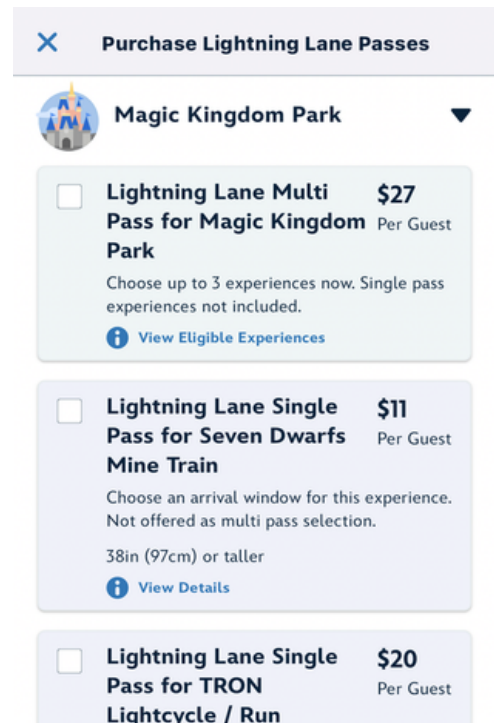
Since you can make your LL selections in any order, I suggest that you **make your selections at Magic Kingdom and Hollywood Studios FIRST**, regardless of when you are visiting.

IT'S GO TIME

Set an alarm and be sure you have printed your LL Cheat Sheet (in a few pages) and marked your selections. Before 7 am, open the app and tap **Purchase** here:



Select which day of your trip you want to make selections for first (should be the day you are visiting MK or HS), then select your park, then what passes you are buying here:



*****Note that you can and should do ALL of this before 7 am EST!**

MAKING LL RESERVATIONS IN THE APP – PART 2

Then as soon as the clock turns 7, tap **Continue**, and quickly select everyone you are buying passes for (use **Select All** if that applies):

Who's included?

Select everyone you want to include in your Lightning Lane Pass purchase.

 [Learn More](#)

☒ Select All

Your Eligible Party (1)

☒  Leah Althiser (Me)

Then you will be taken to the screen to make your LL selections. You'll pick your Tier 1 ride first:

 Selections Saved for 5 minutes

Choose up to 3 Lightning Lane experiences for your party at Hollywood Studios



Select up to 1 of your 3 from this group.

☐ **Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway**
Any Height



☐ **Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run**
38in (97cm) or taller



☐ **Rock 'n' Roller Coaster Starring Aerosmith**
48in (122cm) or taller



☐ **Slinky Dog Dash**
38in (97cm) or taller



Then make your other two Lightning Lane selections.

Next you'll be taken to a screen to review your selections. If the time of your reservations isn't what you want - **don't modify them right now.**

You can go back and modify the times later! It's more important to tap **Continue**, process the payment, and proceed to making selections for all of your park days first.

Tap **Purchase for Another Day** and repeat the process for all of your park days.

 Lightning Lane Multi Pass
"it's a small world"
 Redeem Between
Aug 2 from 9:05 AM - 10:05 AM


 Lightning Lane Multi Pass
Haunted Mansion
 Redeem Between
Aug 2 from 10:05 AM - 11:05 AM


 Lightning Lane Multi Pass
Tiana's Bayou Adventure – New!
 Redeem Between
Aug 2 from 11:20 AM - 12:20 PM


You'll see all of your LL reservations on the home screen of the MDE app (or tap the hamburger menu and see them there). Now you can **tap each one and modify the time** to earlier or later depending on your plans.

ULTRA IMPORTANT: HOW TO MODIFY

The real power of LL Multi Pass is the ability to change the timing of your selections after you make them.

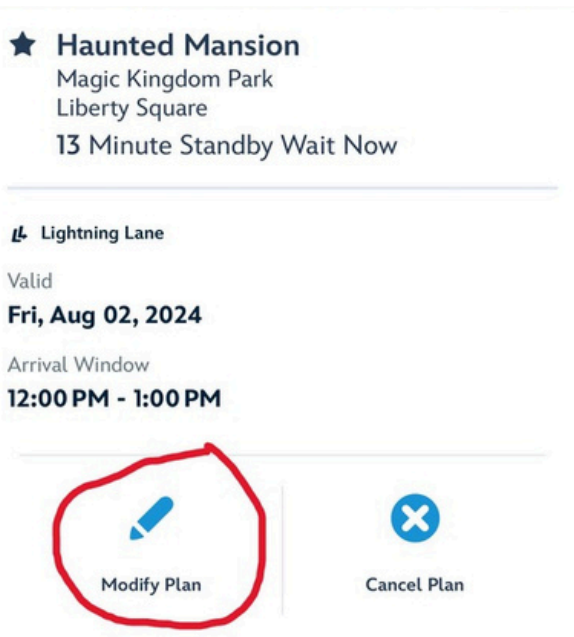
The default time the app gives you for a ride will likely NOT be the best time for your plans.

You'll want to know how to modify your selection times to make them work for you!

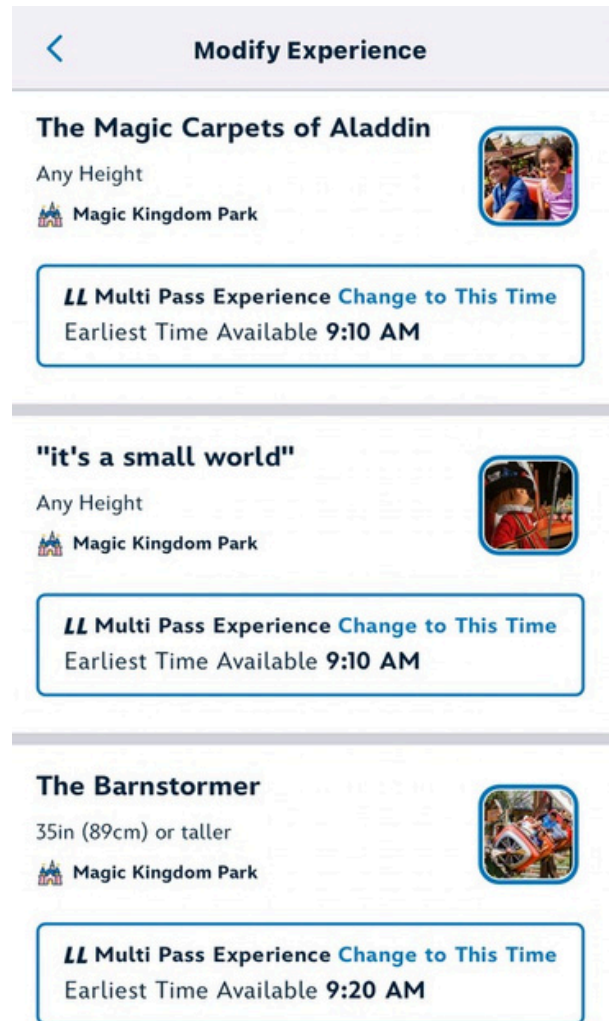
Tap on the LL reservation and select Modify Time here:



Or here:



Then you will see a screen like this:



If you want to see the available times for any attraction, click **Change to This Time** (even if it isn't a time you want). Then you will be able to see *all available return times, even those later in the day!*

This is very helpful when you are taking an afternoon break, and want to **“stack” three LLs for after you return to the park in the evening.** This trick will make Multi Pass SO MUCH more valuable.

WHAT'S STANDBY SKIPPER?

Using Lightning Lane Multi Pass not only involves significant cost, but it also involves being on your phone a LOT during your park day to make additional ride selections.

Enter Standby Skipper (SS)– a paid third-party app that helps solve the problem of being on your phone all day in the parks by **making additional Lightning Lane selections for you.**

Not only does it free you from your screen, but it can also often **snag hard-to-get rides that appear “sold out” before your visit.**

You can purchase SS for one day or a week, and it will work for up to 12 people in your party. My readers can get a \$5 off coupon code here to use when you purchase in the SS app.

You can purchase SS up to 30 days before your visit.



Success!

9:41 AM

We booked Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run for you with a return time of 11:10 AM. Enjoy!



Success!

Yesterday, 8:36 PM

We booked Peter Pan's Flight for you with a return time of 9:45 PM. Enjoy!



Success!

Yesterday, 7:03 PM

We booked Tomorrowland Speedway for you with a return time of 7:10 PM. Enjoy!

Keep in mind SS only makes LLMP selections for you *on the day of your visit* - you still have to make your three advance selections yourself.

Starting at 12:00 am on the day of your park visit, you can begin assigning searches in the SS app. I usually do this while I drink coffee or ride the bus to the parks. Standby Skipper can be a game changer for getting the most out of LLMP in the parks.

[Click here for my detailed instructions on how to use SS.](#)



LIGHTNING LANE FINDER APP

Let the Standby Skipper find Lightning Lane times that work for you!

Enjoy your vacation and stop sweating and swiping! Our users spend 80% less time on their phone while in the parks by using our app!



LIGHTNING LANE SINGLE PASS

There are some attractions that are NOT included with LL Multi Pass. These are **the most in-demand rides in the parks** and Disney has figured they can charge an additional premium to skip the line on these rides.

I tend to NOT buy Lightning Lane Single Pass (SP) for these rides and instead use other approaches to avoid long waits such as:

- Virtual Queue (if offered)
- Rope Drop/Early Entry
- Park Close
- Rider Switch

However sometimes it does make sense to spend the extra money. Here's when I suggest it.

WHEN SHOULD I BUY?

These are the five attractions that have a Lightning Lane, aren't included with Multi Pass, and require the purchase of a Single Pass to skip the line.

Here is my advice for each:

TRON Lightcycle/Run (MK) is one ride I usually buy Single Pass for. It is NOT open during Early Entry and gets a long line at park close so it is worth it to buy the Single Pass.

Seven Dwarfs Mine Train (MK) can be ridden at park close with a very short wait or during Early Entry (though the crowds at rope drop are not fun). I don't buy SP unless I can't do either of these.

Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind (EP) I only buy SP if I can't ride during Early Entry.

Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance (HS) can be ridden with a <30 minute wait during Early Entry and at park close so I don't buy SP.

Avatar: Flight of Passage (AK) If you can stay at AK until park close you can ride with a <30 minute wait. Otherwise it's worth it to buy SP.

Disney Trip Daily Plan

TODAY'S PARK/FOCUS

PARK HOURS

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

NIGHTTIME ENTERTAINMENT

RESERVATIONS

LIGHTNING LANE SELECTIONS

DATE: ____ / ____ / ____

M T W T F S S

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

06:00

07:00

08:00

09:00

10:00

11:00

12:00

1:00

2:00

3:00

4:00

5:00

6:00

7:00

8:00

9:00

10:00

ABOUT THE DAILY ITINERARIES IN THIS GUIDEBOOK

Every theme park chapter contains suggested “Touring Plan” daily itineraries for different travel parties.

Though they are backed by data and tested, they are meant as **suggestions/inspiration for your day**, NOT hard-and-fast plans. Inevitably, the following things will throw off your well-made plans:

- Rides will go down (unfortunately, this is a common occurrence)
- Lightning Lanes will unexpectedly sell out early
- Someone will need to get food or go to the restroom (again)
- A ride will have a much longer wait time than expected

I suggest staying flexible and understanding that **you likely won’t get to do everything you want to in a day** (I rarely do). If a ride is down, try to find a nearby attraction (or snack) to experience while you wait.

Remember that there is a **2-hour grace period for LLs**, so I suggest making them for earlier rather than later to have more flexibility in your day.

These age ranges are estimates and depend on the height/interests of your kids. Take these plans with a grain of salt and remember to go with the flow!

The itineraries for each park are found on these pages
(click to jump right to them):

- [Magic Kingdom: pgs 84-92](#)
- [EPCOT: pgs 106-108](#)
- [Hollywood Studios: pgs 121-123](#)
- [Animal Kingdom: pgs 134-136](#)

C H A P T E R

5

MAGIC KINGDOM

[daily itineraries](#)

[lands overview](#)

[parking](#)

[height requirements](#)

[attractions](#)

[characters](#)

[dining](#)

[extras](#)

[return to the main menu](#)

“May Walt Disney World bring joy and inspiration and new knowledge to all who come to this happy place.”

-Roy O Disney

If you are going to visit only one park in Walt Disney World, it will likely be Magic Kingdom. In fact, many people mistakenly think this park IS Disney World!

Magic Kingdom opened in 1971 and is modeled after Disneyland in California. It consists of six lands arranged in a “hub and spoke” pattern. Take a minute to study the map and get your bearings. The following pages contain an overview of what to expect in each land.





Main St USA

The first land you'll encounter when you enter Magic Kingdom.

Mostly shopping and dining, Main St USA opens an hour before the rest of the park and stays open well after "closing".

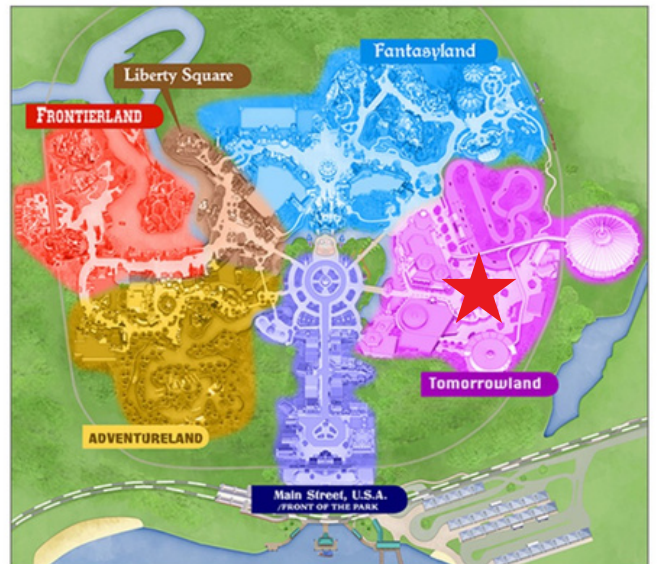
Things To Do:

1. Meet Mickey Mouse at Town Square Theater
2. Hop on the Walt Disney World Railroad for a trip to Fantasyland
3. Grab Starbucks coffee at the Main St Bakery
4. Ride the Main St Vehicles to the castle (look for bus stop signs around Town Square)
5. Shop in The Emporium, the largest gift shop in Magic Kingdom
6. Dine with Winnie the Pooh & Friends at The Crystal Palace



The Omnibus, a Main St USA Vehicle





Tomorrowland

Tomorrowland occupies the area to the right of the castle. It's a retro-futuristic land with lots of not-to-be-missed rides.

Things To Do:

1. Ride the popular "straddle" coaster TRON Lightcycle / Run
2. Let the kids drive you around the Tomorrowland Speedway
3. Experience the classic but rough ride of Space Mountain
4. Grab a Smoothie or Cold Brew Float at Auntie Gravity's
5. Take a relaxing ride around Tomorrowland on the Peppermint
6. Beat the high score on Buzz Lightyear Space Ranger Spin
7. Get incredible castle views from high up on the Astro Orbiter



Fantasyland

Fantasyland is both the largest land in MK and the one with the most attractions.

It has the most rides with no height requirement so families with small children will spend a lot of time here.



Things To Do:

1. Meet Disney Princesses including Cinderella, Tiana, Belle, and Ariel
2. Ride whimsical classics such as Dumbo, it's a small world, the Mad Tea Party, and Peter Pan's Flight
3. Grab breakfast at The Friar's Nook
4. Take kids on the perfect first coaster - Seven Dwarfs Mine Train
5. Meet Minnie, Donald & friends at Pete's Silly Sideshow
6. Take a spin on the carousel
7. Take a break in the AC to watch the 3D movie Mickey's Philharmagic





The Haunted Mansion



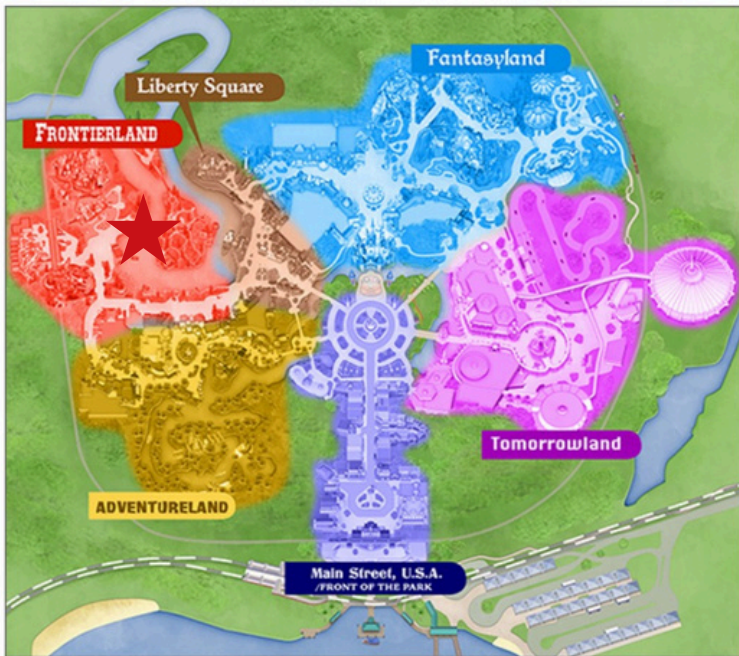
Liberty Square

Liberty Square is the smallest land with a few attractions and some excellent places to grab some food.

Things To Do:

1. Share a waffle or funnel cake covered in berries and whipped cream from Sleepy Hollow
2. Experience the “grim grinning ghosts” of the Disney classic The Haunted Mansion
3. Grab a quick lunch or dinner at Columbia Harbor House
4. Take a break (or a nap) in the AC of The Hall of Presidents
5. Enjoy a family-style American Thanksgiving dinner any day of the year at the Liberty Tree Tavern
6. Pick out a Disney ornament at Ye Olde Christmas Shop





Tiana's Bayou Adventure

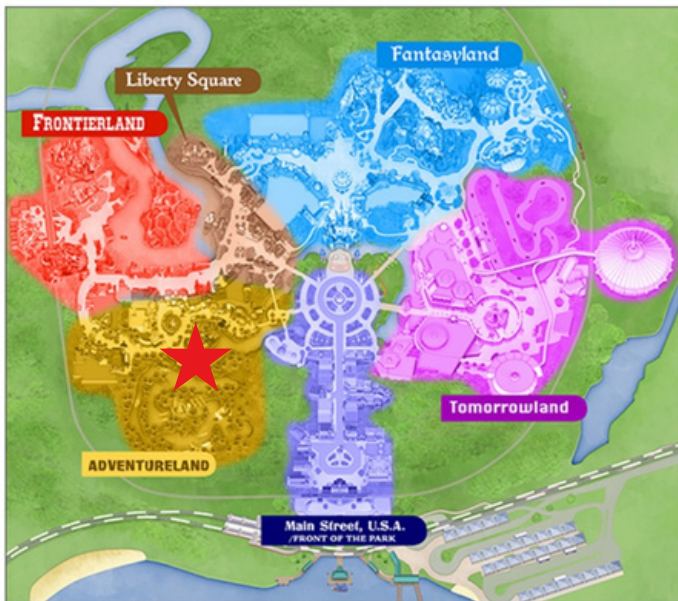
Frontierland

Frontierland is the “wild west” themed land located in the back left corner of the park. It is currently undergoing a large expansion..

Things To Do:

1. Ride Tiana's Bayou Adventure (prepare to get wet) and Big Thunder Mountain Railroad after it reopens in May 2026.
2. Don't miss the recently re-imagined Country Bear Musical Jamboree audioanimatronic show
3. Grab a quick lunch or dinner at Pecos Bill, my favorite quick service restaurant in the park
4. Hunt for unique souvenirs at the Frontier Trading Post





Magic Carpets of Aladdin

Adventureland

The land to the left of the Castle with some classic Disney World attractions.

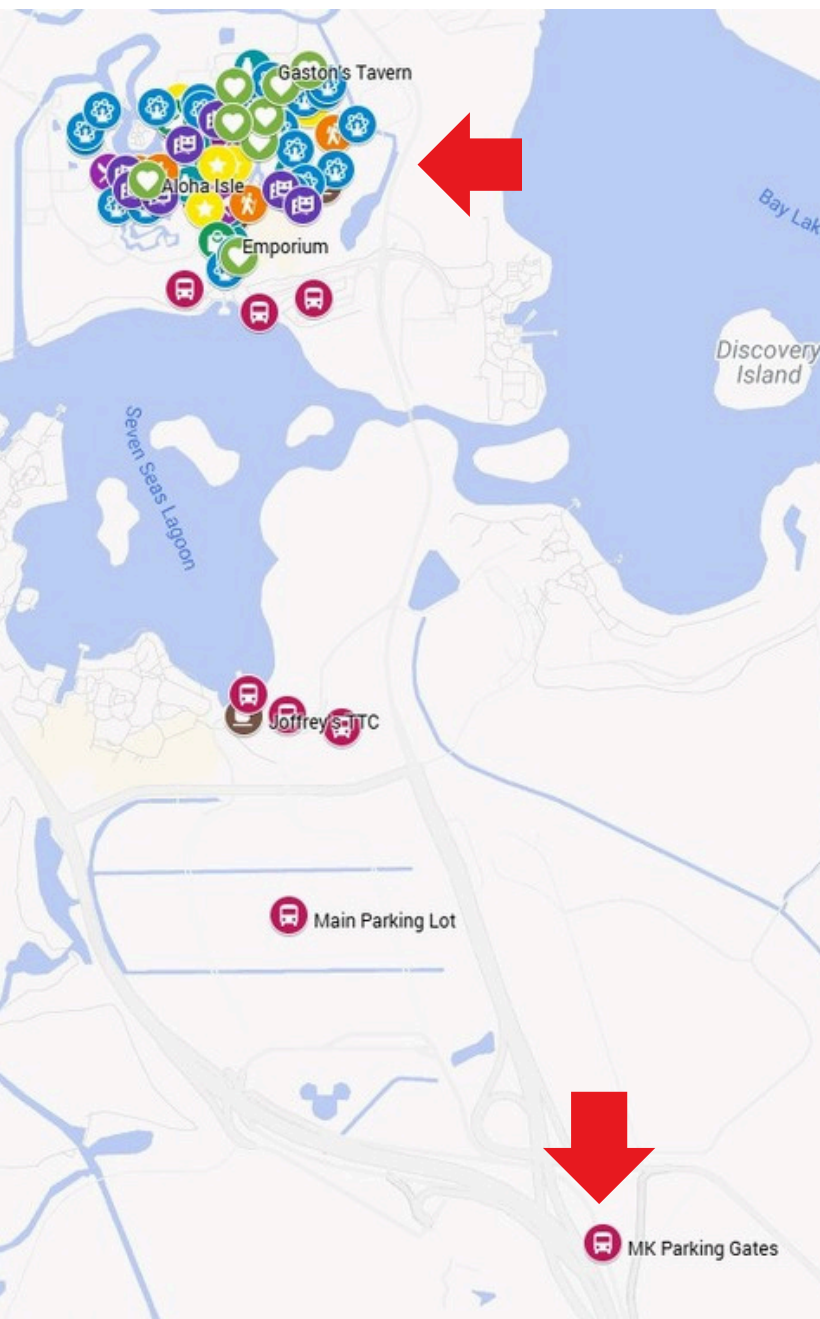
Things To Do:

1. Cool down with a Dole Whip from Aloha Isle (I recommend the pineapple-vanilla swirl)
2. Do Pirates of the Caribbean, the ride that inspired the films
3. Get your share of dad jokes on fan-favorite the Jungle Cruise
4. Meet Jasmine and Aladdin after you take a spin on The Magic Carpets of Aladdin
5. Grab a snack at the Spring Roll Cart (by the entrance sign close to the castle)



The majority of people who visit Magic Kingdom drive themselves there, and most first-time visitors have no idea what to expect.

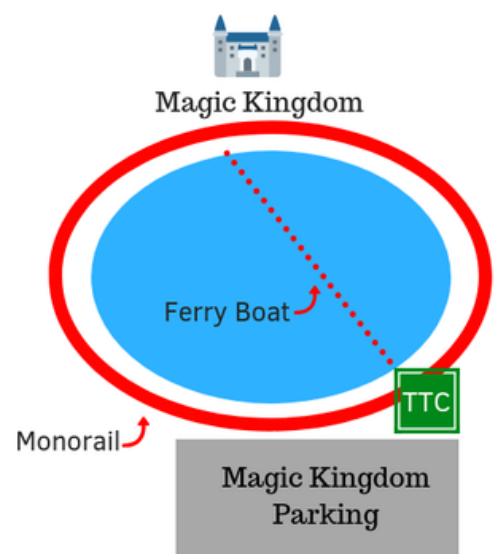
As you can see from the map below, the Magic Kingdom parking gates are VERY FAR from the attractions in the park!



When you drive to Magic Kingdom, you'll have to park across a lake from the park, walk or take a tram to the **Transportation and Ticket Center (TTC)**, then take either a monorail or ferry boat to get to the entrance to Magic Kingdom. Plan for this adding 20-30 minutes of travel time.

First-time visitors are often disappointed to learn that **rideshares (Uber & Lyft) and off-property resort shuttles also drop them off at the TTC.**

The only way to bypass the TTC entirely is to stay at a Disney-owned resort and use Disney transportation (buses, resort launches, or monorail), which drop you right at the entrance gates.





PARKING & TRANSPORTATION FAQs

If you aren't staying at a Disney resort, **here are the daily parking costs at Magic Kingdom:**

- **Standard parking:** car or motorcycle – \$35
- **Preferred parking:** car or motorcycle – \$50, \$55 or \$60
- **Oversized vehicle parking:** Camper Trailer, RV, Bus or Tractor Trailer - \$40

The parking gates open 90 minutes before the official "park opening".

Once you pay for parking for the day, **you can leave, return, and switch parks and not have to pay again** - just be sure to save your receipt.

You can pay for parking with a credit/debit card, mobile pay, cash, or even Disney gift cards.

I recommend using discounted Disney gift cards to pay for as much as possible, saving you 5-10% on many vacation costs.

You will take either a **Ferry Boat or the Monorail to get to the park entrance** (this was intentional, to make you feel like you are leaving reality behind). The ferry is slightly faster, though the monorail is arguably more fun.

Most off-property resorts' "free shuttle to the parks" depart after 9 am, well after you should arrive. Most aren't practical - I would rent a car or Uber.

Disney Transportation runs from every Disney resort to the theme parks, water parks, and Disney Springs, but NOT from resort to resort. It starts running 90 - 120 minutes before park opening every day.

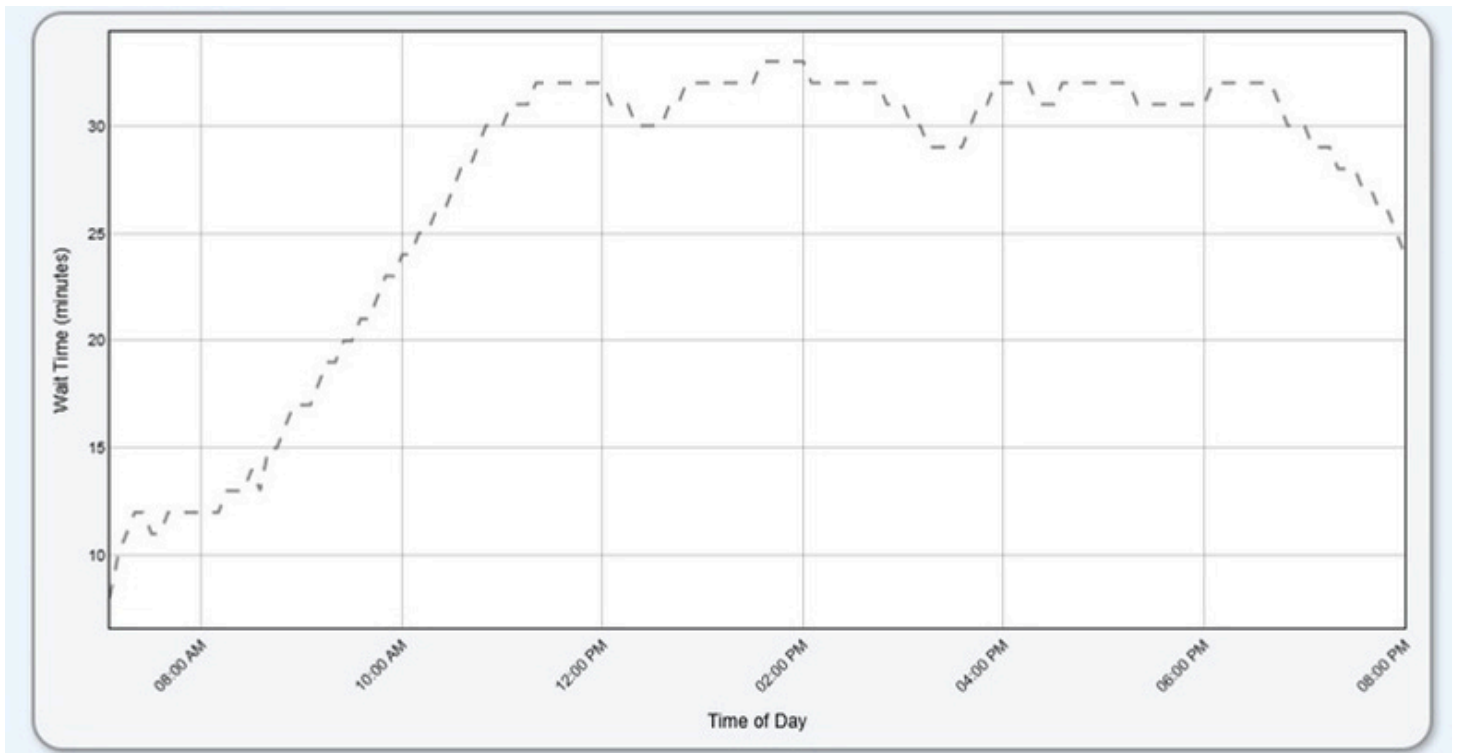


Don't miss classics like Dumbo

Magic Kingdom is both the most popular AND the smallest theme park at Disney World. This unfortunately leads to it being **the most crowded park**.

However, it is completely possible to dodge the crowds and never wait in long lines at Magic Kingdom! It does require having a plan, though. I'll start with familiarizing you with the park's "attractions" (Disney-speak for rides, shows, and character meet-and-greets).

HOW IMPORTANT IS ARRIVING EARLY?



Courtesy of [Thrill-data.com](https://thrill-data.com)

I hope this graph says it all. It is **SUPER important to arrive early** if you don't want to wait in long lines at Magic Kingdom! Wait times start low and build until around 11 am each day. Waits stay high until about 7 pm when they start to drop again.

Prioritizing an early arrival at Magic Kingdom is the key to dodging the crowds.



A REALITY CHECK

Many people think they will be able to see and do everything in Magic Kingdom in one day, not realizing this:

There are over 50 attractions in Magic Kingdom, including rides, character meet and greets, parades, and shows.

It really helps if you understand going in that even if you have two full days in Magic Kingdom, you aren't going to see and do it all.

You will have to choose and prioritize what you do there. I will give you suggested itineraries that will help you see and do more than most guests, who only get to 10 or fewer attractions in one day.

My goal is to help you experience 15-20 attractions and not feel like you are being run into the ground.

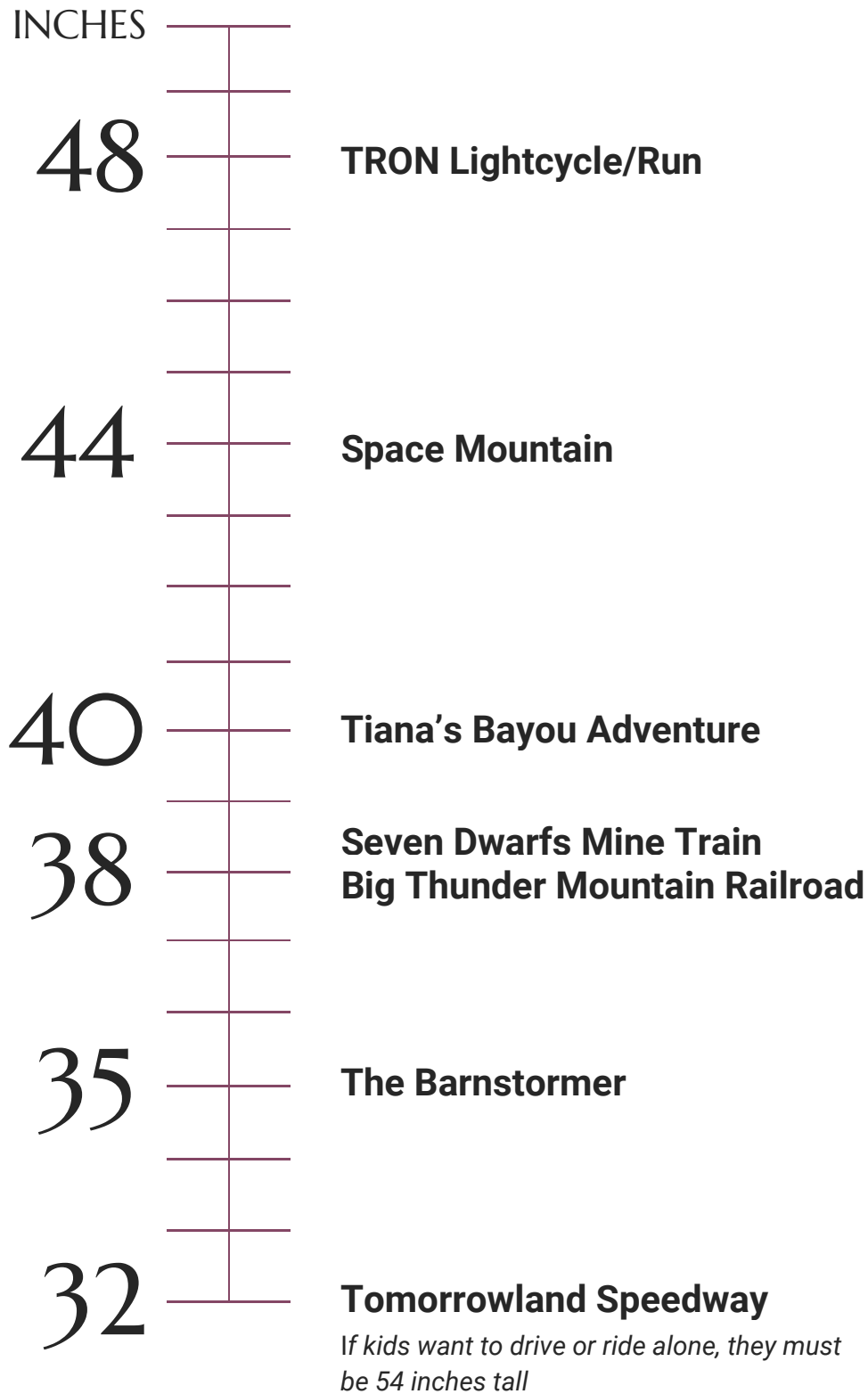
This works well as long as you understand that there will be things you will miss.

Here are my general guidelines for maximizing your time at Magic Kingdom before I dive into specifics:

- If you only have one day at Magic Kingdom, I suggest **only eating Quick Service food and snacks.** Table Service dining is a time suck (an exception follows).
- **An afternoon break is pretty much essential.** If you can't return to your resort, then eat a lengthy table service meal or ride the monorail to a resort to chill out there (the Contemporary is my favorite spot for this).
- **The evening parade and fireworks shows are outstanding.** There is no need to stake out a spot more than 15-20 minutes in advance. If you can see the projections on the castle for the fireworks, you'll get the full effect.
- **Eat a substantial breakfast before the rides open** so you don't waste time in those precious first two hours tracking down food.
- **Main Street USA opens to everyone one hour before the official park opening.** This is the ideal time for castle pictures.

HEIGHT REQUIREMENTS

Here are the seven attractions with a height requirement in Magic Kingdom. If a ride is not listed below it has no height requirement and anyone can ride.



Magic Kingdom Attractions

LL Multi Pass Attractions = 🦄

LL Single Pass Attractions = ✨

Height Requirement = HR

Fantasyland Rides

- ☐ Prince Charming Regal Carrousel
- ☐ "It's a small world" 🦄
- ☐ Peter Pan's Flight 🦄
- ☐ Seven Dwarfs Mine Train ✨ HR=38 in
- ☐ The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh 🦄
- ☐ Under the Sea - Journey of the Little Mermaid 🦄
- ☐ Dumbo the Flying Elephant 🦄
- ☐ Walt Disney World Railroad Station
- ☐ The Barnstormer 🦄
- ☐ Mad Tea Party 🦄
- ☐ Casey Jr Splash 'N' Soak Station (water play)

Fantasyland Shows & Characters

- ☐ Mickey's PhilharMagic 🦄
- ☐ Enchanted Tales with Belle
- ☐ Pete's Silly Sideshow Character Meet
- ☐ Meet Cinderella & A Visiting Princess
- ☐ Meet Tiana & A Visiting Princess
- ☐ Meet Ariel at her Grotto
- ☐ Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique (\$)

Tomorrowland Rides

- ☐ TRON Lightcycle/RUN ✨ HR=48 in
- ☐ Space Mountain 🦄 HR=44 in
- ☐ Tomorrowland Speedway 🦄 HR=32 in
- ☐ Astro Orbiter
- ☐ Tomorrowland Transit Authority PeopleMover
- ☐ Buzz Lightyear's Space Ranger Spin 🦄

Tomorrowland Shows & Characters

- ☐ Monster's, Inc. Laugh Floor 🦄
- ☐ Carousel of Progress closed for refurbishment
- ☐ Meet Stitch

Adventureland Rides

- ☐ Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse (walk through)
- ☐ Jungle Cruise 🦄
- ☐ The Magic Carpets of Aladdin 🦄
- ☐ Pirates of the Caribbean 🦄

Adventureland Shows & Characters

- ☐ The Enchanted Tiki Room
- ☐ A Pirate's Adventures - Jack Sparrow Meet

Frontierland Rides

- ☐ Big Thunder Mountain Railroad 🦄 HR=38 in

- ☐ Tiana's Bayou Adventure 🦄 HR=40 in
- ☐ Walt Disney World Railroad Station - closed thru 2026

Frontierland Shows

- ☐ Country Bear Jamboree

Liberty Square Rides

- ☐ Haunted Mansion 🦄

Liberty Square Shows

- ☐ Hall of Presidents

Main Street, USA

- ☐ Meet Mickey at Town Hall
- ☐ Festival of Fantasy Parade
- ☐ Walt Disney World Railroad Station

MAGIC KINGDOM MUST-DOS

Families
with
Toddlers

Winnie the Pooh
Meet Mickey Mouse at Town Square Theater
Dumbo
Peter Pan's Flight
Under the Sea-Journey of the Little Mermaid
Buzz Lightyear Space Ranger Spin
Walt Disney World Railroad
Tomorrowland Transit Authority PeopleMover
"it's a small world"
Jungle Cruise
Magic Carpets of Aladdin

Enchanted Tales with Belle
Meet the Princesses at Fairytale Hall
Under the Sea-Voyage of the Little Mermaid
Festival of Fantasy Parade
Meet Ariel at her Grotto
Prince Charming Regal Carrousel
Tiana's Bayou Adventure
Cinderella's Royal Table (dining)
Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique (additional cost)

Princess
Fans

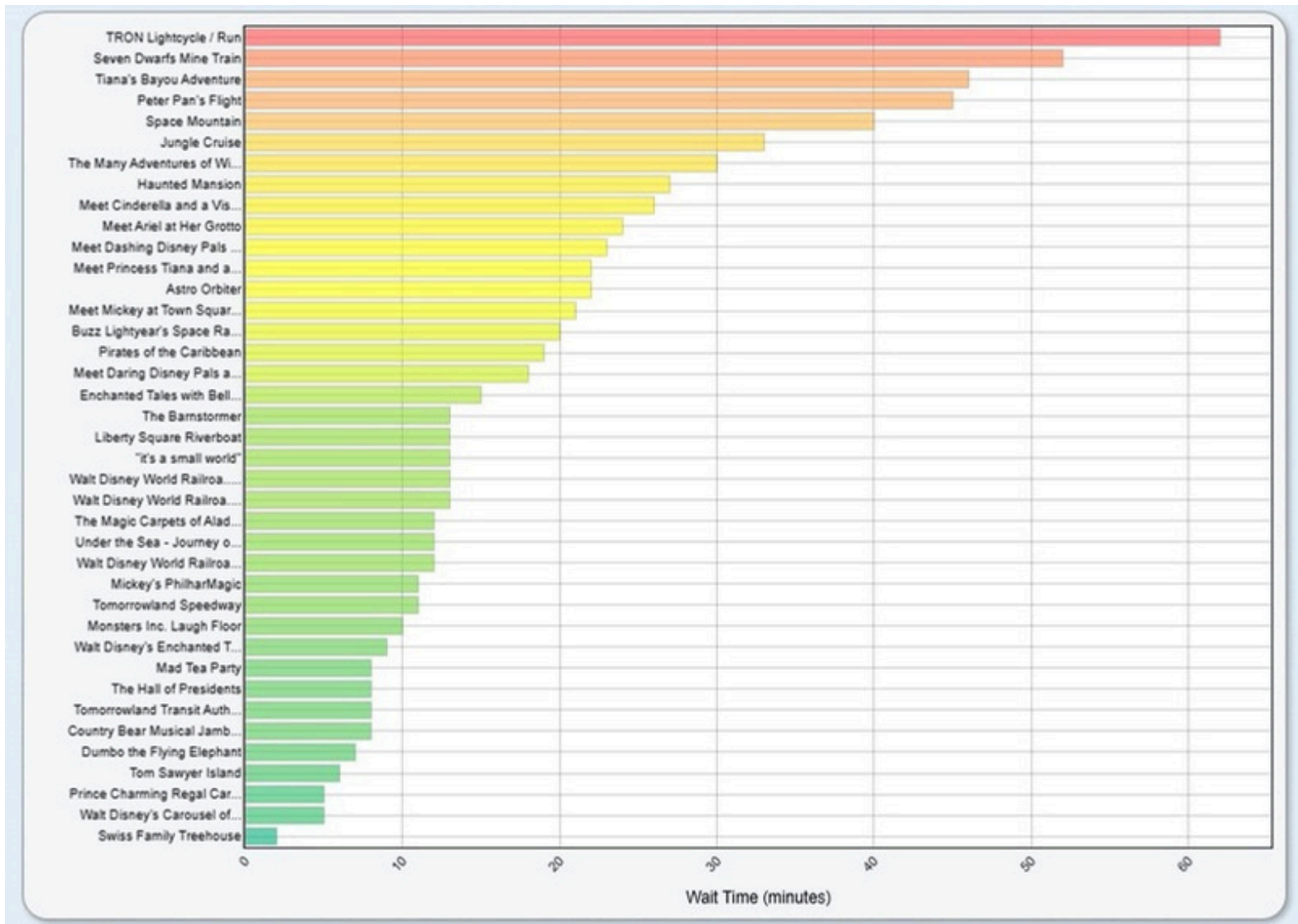
Teens
and
Adults

TRON Lightcycle/Run
Space Mountain
Tomorrowland Transit Authority PeopleMover
Big Thunder Mountain Railroad
Haunted Mansion
Pirates of the Caribbean
Peter Pan's Flight
Jungle Cruise
Country Bear Jamboree
Happily Ever After Fireworks Show

ATTRACTIONS BY POPULARITY

Here's a super useful graph of **average wait times by attraction** in Magic Kingdom from our friends over at [Thrill Data](#).

Understanding which rides usually have the longest waits will help you prioritize what you ride when (and what you may want to skip).

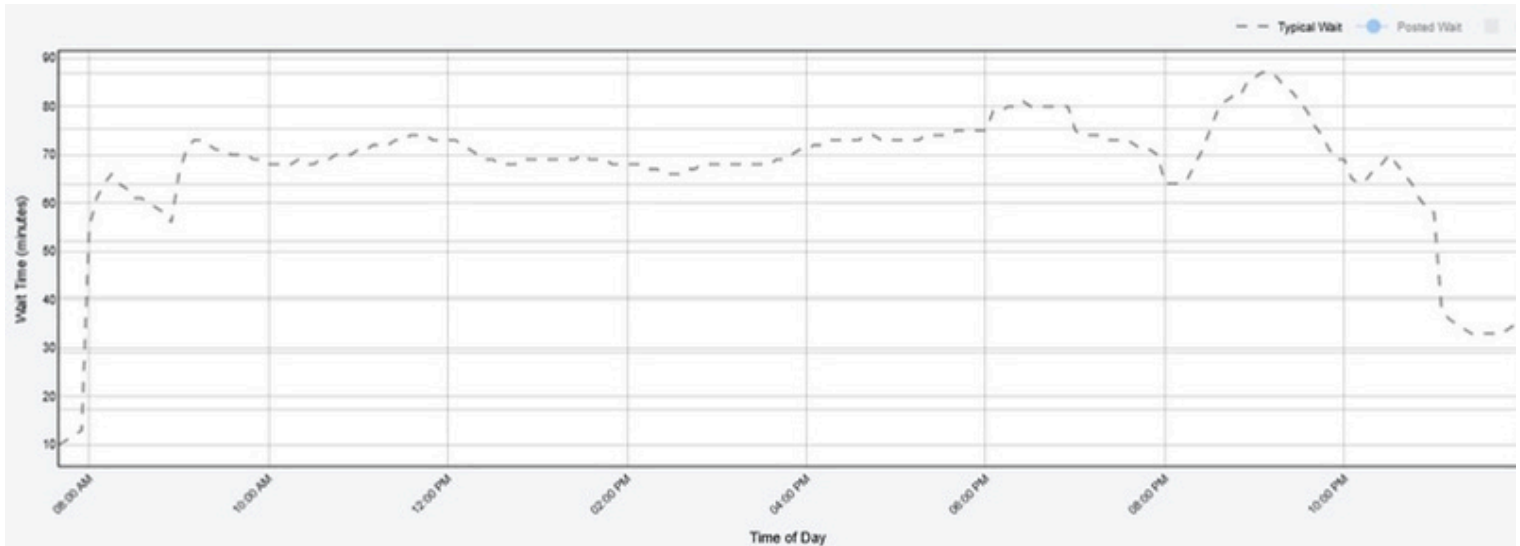


Here are the top ten most-popular attractions in Magic Kingdom:

1. TRON Lightcycle / Run
2. Seven Dwarfs Mine Train
3. Tiana's Bayou Adventure
4. Peter Pan's Flight
5. Space Mountain
6. Jungle Cruise
7. The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh
8. Haunted Mansion
9. Meet Cinderella & A Visiting Princess
10. Meet Ariel at Her Grotto

TRON LIGHTCYCLE / RUN

The ride with the longest wait every day in Magic Kingdom is TRON Lightcycle / Run. It's a fun "straddle" style coaster - your only complaint will likely be that it's too short. Many prefer to ride after dark for the lighting effects.



This graph shows that wait times build VERY quickly in the morning and stay high until after 10 pm. My advice to ride this with a short wait is to **buy Single Pass** (I like to book after dark and before fireworks). Rope dropping this is tricky - **it's not included in Early Entry**, so you'll want to arrive at least 45 minutes before park opening to get in line. If you have Early Entry, I suggest using that time to knock out a bunch of rides and buying Single Pass for TRON.

The exposure to heights and speed are what makes this ride intense (keep in mind all coasters at Disney World are tame compared to mainstream amusement parks).

The height requirement for TRON is 48 inches, the highest of all rides in the park. This is the average height of a 7-year-old, and I think that is a good gauge for the lower age limit - **UNLESS** you have an adventurous and tall 5- or 6-year-old, then I say go for it.

This ride generally doesn't cause motion sickness, but of course this varies.





SEVEN DWARFS MINE TRAIN

The second most-popular ride at Magic Kingdom is the family coaster Seven Dwarfs Mine Train. It's a smooth ride and fun for everyone.

- The height requirement is **38 inches**, which means you'll see plenty of four- and five-year-olds on this ride.
- Most kids don't find it scary, so if your child is tall enough, I say go for it.
- There are three options for riding with a short wait:
 - **Rope Drop** - if you have Early Entry and can get to the gates well before it begins, this is a good option. Get in line as early as possible.
 - **End of the night** - my preferred time to ride if you can hang.
 - **Single Pass** - though the pass isn't crazy expensive (\$9-\$12 each), I prefer to save the money and ride one of the two above times. If you haven't bought ahead of time and decide you want it the day of, fear not - more passes almost always "drop" during the day.

TIPS FOR RIDING AT NIGHT

Disney will exaggerate wait times at the end of the night to discourage people from getting in line. I have ridden Seven Dwarfs Mine Train at the end of the night when the posted wait time was 40 minutes and it was a 5-minute wait.

Since this ride is geared towards families with young kids, you'll be able to ride it with a MUCH shorter wait after 8 pm, and virtually no wait after fireworks. So if you have night owls save this ride for then!

The next most popular rides are both “Tier 1” Multi Pass selections:



TIANA'S BAYOU ADVENTURE

The Disney classic “Splash Mountain” was reborn in 2024 as Tiana's Bayou Adventure. I think the retheme only improved the ride, though the storyline is vague.

This is **the most popular Tier 1 Multi Pass selection**, so I suggest you grab it as your Tier 1 advance selection if possible. If you aren't able to fear not, many more passes are added throughout the day - [click here for times](#).

If you aren't using Multi Pass, this should be a rope drop priority (note it is NOT open during Early Entry) or in the evening after parade and fireworks.



PETER PAN'S FLIGHT

Peter Pan's Flight may be the quintessential Disney “dark ride”. This whimsical ride continues to get long wait times every day, even though it is remarkably low-tech.

It is a short but charming journey through the story of Peter Pan. If you are using Multi Pass (hopefully I have convinced you to at this point), it is easy to **grab this as your first in-park selection of the day** after you tap into your first ride.

If you aren't, this is a good option for Early Entry or for riding later in the day, either during/after the evening parade or after fireworks.



Here's the lowdown on the next six most popular attractions:

[Space Mountain](#)

This almost totally in-the-dark coaster is a rite of passage. It's easy to grab as **an additional day-of Multi Pass selection** or ride in the evening when waits have died down some.

[Jungle Cruise](#)

A boat ride with a "skipper" who will pepper you with corny jokes - a classic Disney experience. Grab as **an additional Multi Pass selection** (be quick about it during popular [Jungle Cruise](#) dates) or ride as soon as Adventureland opens.

[The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh](#)

Popular with the toddler crowd, but older kids can skip. Grab as a **Tier 2 Multi Pass advance selection**, ride during Early Entry, or ride before 10 am for the shortest standby wait.

[Haunted Mansion](#)

One of my personal favorites but can scare littles (watch a ride-through on YouTube to decide if it's too much for yours). Grab as a **Tier 2 Multi Pass advance selection** or ride as soon as it opens.

[Meet Cinderella & A Visiting Princess](#)

A must-do for princess fans. **No Lightning Lane** so I suggest doing this before 10 am if possible, before long waits ensue.

[Meet Ariel at Her Grotto](#)

The only place to meet Ariel in her mermaid form. Shortest waits are before 10 am, but rarely get above 40 minutes. **No Lightning Lane**, so it's worth waiting until later in the day to do this to prioritize attractions that get longer waits.

OTHER FAVORITE ATTRACTIONS

I've highlighted the ten attractions with the longest wait times, but there are more I'd consider fan favorites:

Pirates of the Caribbean (Adventureland) - quintessential Disney - I ride this EVERY time I'm in MK. Boat ride with audioanimatronic pirates that inspired the film franchise.



Tomorrowland Transit Authority PeopleMover (Tomorrowland) - my nostalgic favorite ride in MK. A relaxing 10-minute tour through Tomorrowland - please don't miss!

Dumbo the Flying Elephant (Fantasyland) - another classic ride. There's a fantastic indoor playground that you access via the queue - leave some time for the littles to play.



Country Bear Musical Jamboree (Frontierland) - this 12-minute audioanimatronic stage show reopened in 2024 and is now recommended - it's so much fun.

Astro Orbiter (Tomorrowland) - a fun, nostalgic spin high above Tomorrowland. No Lightning Lane but open during Early Entry, so I like to ride then.



Buzz Lightyear's Space Ranger Spin (Tomorrowland) - a fun dark ride with "laser cannons" to shoot targets to try to get the highest score.

Big Thunder Mountain Railroad (Frontierland) 40 in. - a favorite with kids and adults. A coaster-style train ride through the wild west.



Mickey's PhilharMagic (Fantasyland) - "4-D" movie with nods to lots of favorite Disney films; guaranteed to make you smile.

MEETING CHARACTERS

Character meet-and-greets no longer offer Lightning Lanes. This makes strategy and prioritizing even more important.

Be aware that meeting characters is time-consuming. If you want to do more than two meet-and-greets, plan to miss out on some rides.

CHARACTER EXPERIENCE TIPS

- The PhotoPass photographers will take pictures with your device (just ask), but only one device per party.
- Most characters sign autographs! Bring an autograph book or a photo mat for them to sign (bring a pen and Ziploc bag).

MICKEY & FRIENDS

The only place to meet **Mickey Mouse** in Magic Kingdom is at the Town Square Theater. It is immediately on your right when you enter the park. Wait times dip right after noon and again around 3:30 pm, making these good times to visit if this is a top priority for you.



You can meet **Minnie, Daisy, Donald, and Goofy** in adorable circus outfits in Fantasyland at Pete's Silly Sideshow. There's one line for Donald & Goofy and a separate line for Minnie & Daisy. If you want to meet everyone, you'll have to wait twice. They often don't start meeting guests until an hour or two after the park opens, so check the app for times.

CINDERELLA & FRIENDS

Meet Disney princesses in a royal setting in Fairytale Hall right behind the castle. There are two separate lines for two experiences. One is to Meet Cinderella and a Visiting Princess (usually Elena of Avalor), and the other line is to Meet Tiana and a Visiting Princess (usually Rapunzel). You'll have to wait twice to meet all four, so it's best to pick one pair to meet.



MEETING MORE CHARACTERS

ARIEL

Another very popular experience is to Meet Ariel at Her Grotto. This is located right next to the Little Mermaid ride. It's the only place to meet Ariel in her mermaid form, and it's very well-themed - a must-do for Ariel fans. Often doesn't open until an hour after the park opens, so check the app for times.



BELLE

One of the most unique character experiences is at Enchanted Tales with Belle. You are magically transported from Maurice's Workshop to Beast's castle - it's more of a show than a standard meet-and-greet (you can get pictures with Belle afterwards, but no autographs). I think it is a must-do for any princess fan - check times in the app because they are always changing.



OTHER CHARACTERS

Many other characters make appearances throughout Magic Kingdom. The best way to find them and what times they are meeting people is in the app in the map section. *Note that people often begin lining up for meet-and-greets as much as 30 minutes early.*



Here are the regulars and where to find them:

- Meet Mirabel at Fairytale Garden (across from Cosmic Ray's)
- Meet Winnie the Pooh & Tigger at The Thotful Spot (next to Winnie the Pooh ride exit)
- Country Bears - roaming in Frontierland
- Chip & Dale, Stitch - Buzz Lightyear Exit Courtyard
- Elena & Mulan - Town Square Theater Porch (in afternoons, some days)
- Anastasia & Drizella - Cinderella fountain behind the castle
- Meet Jasmine & Aladdin - wandering close to Flying Carpets ride
- Captain Jack Sparrow - wandering close to Pirates of the Caribbean

ENTERTAINMENT

For the first time in nearly a decade, there is a nighttime parade at Magic Kingdom. **Disney Starlight** takes place nightly as long as there isn't a holiday party - [click here for the current showtimes](#).

There's also a short afternoon parade called **Festival of Fantasy** that's fun, but not worth sticking around for if you'd rather take an afternoon break. [Click here for showtimes](#). This is a good bet for party days if you're leaving at 6.

Both parades follow the same route (see below). Disney Starlight starts on Main St USA and heads towards Frontierland, and Festival of Fantasy goes in reverse:



©Disney

I prefer to watch parades from less-crowded areas such as Liberty Square or Frontierland.

For the evening parade you might want to watch from “the hub” so you are nearby when it’s time to stake out a spot for fireworks 20-30 minutes ahead of time.

CASTLE STAGE SHOW

At scheduled times throughout the day, there is a ~20-minute live show on the stage in front of Cinderella Castle called **Mickey's Magical Friendship Faire**. It's fun to watch if you happen to catch it, but I never plan a day around it. [Click here for the current showtimes](#).



HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Magic Kingdom fireworks can be the highlight of a trip to Walt Disney World.

The current show, Happily Ever After, includes amazing projections onto both Cinderella Castle and the buildings on Main St USA.

Many people ask me for advice on fireworks viewing, so here are my tips:

- My preferred viewing location is in the hub area in front of the castle. Anywhere with an unobstructed view of the castle is great!
- During less crowded times of year, I arrive 15-20 minutes before the show. Make this 30 minutes during peak times (like Christmas).

There are other great places to view, depending on what you plan to do after the show:

- If you want to hop right in line for Seven Dwarfs, watch from behind the castle in Fantasyland (less crowded but not recommended for first timers since you'll miss the castle projections)
- If you want a quick exit from the park, watch from the middle of Main St USA.

I try to stand behind people who do NOT have little kids with them so my view doesn't get blocked when they inevitably put their kids on their shoulders.

FOOD & DINING OVERVIEW



You'll want at least a loose plan for dining in order to **avoid sticker shock and gross theme park food** (it does exist). Here are my tips:

- **Bring food along:** Unlike most tourist destinations, you ARE allowed to bring your own food and drinks into Magic Kingdom! Just no alcohol, no glass, no loose ice, and no hard-sided coolers.
- **Buy a souvenir popcorn bucket:** Get refills for only \$2.25 at any popcorn cart.
- **Bring a water bottle:** There is now (good tasting) filtered water available at refilling stations in the park - search for locations in the app's map. You can also get free ice water at any quick service dining location.
- **Eat breakfast in your hotel room** before you head to the parks. To dodge sky-high resort prices, I have groceries delivered to my resort with breakfast items such as cereal, fruit, yogurt, and pastries. [Get details on grocery delivery here.](#)
- **Eat mostly Quick Service/snacks on park days** so as to not waste time in the parks. But beware - the quality varies tremendously (see recommendations).
- **Do a Character Meal at a resort on a non-park day:** Disney resorts have great character dining and you'll have more time in the park for rides. Book the latest breakfast reservation possible and make it your big meal of the day.

SHOULD YOU GET A DISNEY DINING PLAN?

The only situation in which the Disney Dining Plan makes sense financially is **if you plan to buy an alcoholic beverage with lunch and dinner**. If that applies to you, [click here for my tips!](#)

DINING BEST BETS

PECOS BILL TALL TALE INN & CAFE ★★★★★

Quick Service - Frontierland (L,D)

Large quick service restaurant themed like an Old West Saloon that accepts Mobile Order. Close to Pirates of the Caribbean and Tiana's Bayou Adventure. Create-your-own rice bowls and nachos, plus salads and burgers. Consistent and affordable.



LIBERTY TREE TAVERN ★★★★★

Table Service - Liberty Square (L,D)

Reservations or walk-up availability required. American Thanksgiving food (turkey, beef, mashed potatoes, mac and cheese, green beans) served "family style" shared among the table. Consistent food and delicious dessert.



CRYSTAL PALACE ★★★★★

Character Dining/Bufferet - Main St USA (B,L,D)

Dine with Winnie the Pooh, Eeyore, Piglet, and Tigger in a lovely setting close to the castle. Expensive and moderately chaotic, but the buffet food is above average and character interactions very fun.



COLUMBIA HARBOR HOUSE ★★★★★

Quick Service - Liberty Square (L,D)

Large restaurant that accepts Mobile Order. Lots of upstairs seating with nice views down onto Liberty Square. Close to Haunted Mansion and Peter Pan's Flight. Seafood, chicken, and salads. Consistent and budget-friendly.



SLEEPY HOLLOW ★★★★★

Quick Service/Snacks - Liberty Square (B,L,D)

Small window with Mobile Order, outdoor seating only with excellent castle views. Serves all-day waffles with various toppings, corn dogs, and funnel cakes. Waffle with berries and cream is a favorite.





WHERE TO AVOID

Yes, there is gross and overpriced food at Magic Kingdom. But if you stick with my recommendations, you'll avoid it! Places I skip are:

- **Be Our Guest** - very expensive for mediocre food, only go for the setting (if you must)
- **Pinocchio Village Haus** - dodge the sad pizza and fries
- **Cosmic Ray's** - below average burgers and chicken
- **Skipper Canteen** - inconsistent quality and overpriced
- **Cinderella's Royal Table** - some people adore it, but I just can't stomach the price tag (dinner for a family of four can push \$400)
- **Tony's Town Square** - average Italian food, probably better in your hometown

BEST SNACKS

Magic Kingdom shines in the snack department! Here are some favorites:

- **Dole Whip:** Aloha Isle, Adventureland
- **Creme Brulee Croissant:** Gaston's Tavern, Fantasyland
- **Mini Corn Dogs & Loaded Fries:** Casey's Corner, Main St USA



Cheshire Cat Tail



Dole Whip

- **Waffles with Toppings:** Sleepy Hollow, Liberty Square
- **Rice Crispy Treats, Candy Apples:** Big Top Souvenirs, Fantasyland
- **Pizza or Hamburger Spring Rolls:** Spring Roll Cart, Adventureland
- **Cold Brew Float & Smoothies:** Auntie Gravity's, Tomorrowland
- **Cheshire Cat Tail:** Cheshire Cafe, by Mad Tea Cups, Fantasyland

COFFEE & BREAKFAST

Find good coffee at the **Main St Bakery** and the **Joffrey's Kiosk** in **Tomorrowland**. Grab a huge breakfast sandwich at **The Friar's Nook** in Fantasyland or waffles at **Sleepy Hollow**.

QUICK SERVICE DINING CHEAT SHEETS

These pages list every restaurant in Magic Kingdom with a link to the current menu (just click on the restaurant name).

Quick Service (aka Counter Service) dining at Disney World mostly involves ordering at a counter and picking up your own food. At some locations, you order at a counter and the food is delivered to your table (tipping is not expected).

* An asterisk denotes that the location accept [Mobile Ordering](#).

Highlighted locations are my personal favorites

QUICK SERVICE DINING

Restaurant Name	Location	Meals	Menu
Pecos Bill *	Frontierland	L,D	Southwest and burgers
Gaston's Tavern	Fantasyland	B,L,D	Sandwiches, snacks, pastries
Pinocchio Village Haus *	Fantasyland	L,D	Italian
The Friar's Nook *	Fantasyland	B,L,D	Breakfast, hot dogs, mac & cheese
Columbia Harbor House *	Liberty Square	L,D	American, seafood & chicken
Liberty Square Market	Liberty Square	L,D	Turkey Legs, snacks
Sleepy Hollow *	Liberty Square	B,L,D	Waffles, sandwiches
Main Street Bakery	Main Street	B,L,D	Starbucks
Casey's Corner *	Main Street	L,D	Hot Dogs
Cosmic Ray's *	Tomorrowland	L,D	Burgers, hot dogs, chicken
Tomorrowland Terrace *	Tomorrowland	L,D	Burgers & chicken
(open seasonally)			
The Lunching Pad *	Tomorrowland	L,D	Hot dogs & roast beef sandwiches

TABLE SERVICE DINING CHEAT SHEETS

Table service restaurants at Magic Kingdom include:

- Character Dining at Crystal Palace, Cinderella's Royal Table, and Be Our Guest (The Beast meets guests at dinner only)
- Meals served "family style" with platters of food shared among the table at Liberty Tree Tavern and Diamond Horseshoe
- Typical table service restaurants where you order off a menu

The last column indicates how many credits are required on the Disney Dining Plan.

Highlighted locations are my personal favorites

TABLE SERVICE DINING

Restaurant Name	Location	Meals	Menu	DDP
Cinderella's Royal Table	Fantasyland	B,L,D	Upscale American with Disney princesses	2
Be Our Guest	Fantasyland	L,D	French-inspired American	2
Jungle Navigation Co. Skipper's Canteen	Adventureland	L,D	Eclectic international	1
Liberty Tree Tavern	Liberty Square	L,D	Family-style American Thanksgiving	1
Diamond Horseshoe	Liberty Square	L,D	Family-style American Thanksgiving	1
Plaza Restaurant	Main Street	L,D	Sandwiches, comfort food	1
Crystal Palace	Main Street	B,L,D	Buffet with Pooh & friends	1
Tony's Town Square	Main Street	L,D	Italian	1

MICKEY'S VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS PARTY



The Magic Kingdom Christmas party takes place from 7 pm to midnight on select nights in November and December.

Similar to the Halloween party, it involves:

- Special stage shows
- Character meet-and-greets (in their holiday attire)
- Mickey's Once Upon A Christmastime parade
- Special holiday fireworks, and
- Complimentary treats (Christmas cookie and hot chocolate stations around the park).

It is also more expensive, with tickets ranging from \$169-\$219.

Similar to the Halloween party, the cheaper dates fall earlier in the season.

Though I love Christmas, I prefer the Halloween party to this one. It costs significantly more, and I feel there is less added value.

There are so many things to do around Disney World for holiday fun (many of which are free) that I find the additional cost of the party isn't worth it for me.



INSIDER TIP

Magic Kingdom tends to be significantly LESS crowded during the day on party days because it closes at 6 pm to non-party-goers. If you don't mind missing the fireworks and ending your day early, head to Magic Kingdom on party days for lower crowd levels.

MICKEY'S NOT-SO-SCARY HALLOWEEN PARTY

The Magic Kingdom Halloween party has become so popular is now begins in August. It runs from 7 pm - 12 pm on select nights during spooky season.

Even though the official festivities don't start until 7 pm, **you can enter Magic Kingdom as early as 4 pm with just a party ticket** (regular admission not required). People will begin lining up in front of the gates starting at around 3:30 pm.

You'll be given a special wristband to identify you as a party guest. Those without a wristband will be escorted to the gates at 6 pm when the park closes to day guests.



This party is popular for good reason - it is a lot of fun. There are **trick or treating stations** around the park - you'll get SO MUCH CANDY.

It features special stage shows, a Halloween parade (featuring the Headless Horseman), special "Boo To You" fireworks, attraction overlays, as well as some very popular character meet and greets.

Also, the party is the only time adults are allowed into Magic Kingdom in costume. The people watching is excellent!

It is pricey at \$111-\$198 per person, but since **you're able to arrive early and enter the park at 4 pm with your ticket**, you'll get up to 8 hours in the park. The cheapest dates are those in August and September.

ENCHANTING EXTRAS

Disney groups many “add-on” experiences into a category called **Enchanting Extras**. These require reservations which can be made 60 days prior (+10 days in with a resort reservation). .



BIBBIDI BOBBIDI BOUTIQUE

A special princess makeover experience that takes place inside of Cinderella Castle. Recommended for ages 5-10.

The least expensive option is \$99 plus tax and requires that you bring a dress from home. Dress packages start at \$199.

This is one of the most difficult reservations to get in all of WDW. Consider getting help from Add More Magic to secure a reservation. Doing this after 11 am is best in order to take advantage of low morning crowds in the parks.



FIREWORKS DESSERT PARTIES

Several different parties offer a chance to enjoy the Happily Ever After fireworks show with all-you-can-eat desserts.

There are many places to stand to get great views of the fireworks at no additional cost. For that reason I don't recommend these parties.

If you want to try one, I suggest the Sweets & Seats Party. You'll get dedicated seating for the show plus beer and wine. Reservations are VERY difficult to snag, so be ready as soon as your window opens.

ABOUT THE TOURING PLANS IN THIS GUIDEBOOK

Every theme park chapter contains suggested “Touring Plan” itineraries for different travel parties.

Though they are backed by data and tested, they are meant as **suggestions/inspiration for your day**, NOT hard-and-fast plans. Inevitably, the following things will throw off your well-made plans:

- Rides will go down (unfortunately, this is a common occurrence)
- Lightning Lanes will unexpectedly sell out early
- Someone will need to get food or go to the restroom (again)
- A ride will have a much longer wait time than expected

I suggest staying flexible and understanding that **you likely won't get to do everything you want to in a day** (I rarely do). If a ride is down, try to find a nearby attraction (or snack) to experience while you wait.

Remember that there is a **2-hour grace period for LLs**, so I suggest making them for earlier rather than later to have more flexibility in your day.

These age ranges are estimates and depend on the height/interests of your kids. Take these plans with a grain of salt and remember to go with the flow!



LIGHTNING LANES: KIDS UNDER 5 YEARS OLD

*Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with any **kids >32 inches and <38 inches tall**. Assumes you qualify for **Early Theme Park Entry**.*

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Peter Pan - 12 pm
- 2) Winnie the Pooh - 11 am
- 3) Dumbo or Barnstormer: as early as possible

LIGHTNING LANE SINGLE PASS: Seven Dwarves Mine Train - after lunch



EARLY ENTRY & EARLY MORNING

- Arrival: Ride **Main Street Vehicles** and get pictures
- Early Entry: Tomorrowland for **Astro Orbiter**, **Buzz Lightyear & Tomorrowland Speedway**
- Fantasyland: **Barnstormer**, **Dumbo** (make new LL for it's a small world after 11) **Little Mermaid**, **Tea Party**

REMAINDER OF MORNING

- Meet **Princesses** at **Fairytale Hall**, **Disney Pals** at **Silly Pete's**, **Ariel**, or **Enchanted Tales with Belle** (check time in app)
- Use LLs for **Winnie the Pooh** and **"it's a small world"** (make new LLs for Jungle Cruise and Pirates of the Caribbean for after 5 pm)
- Ride **Prince Charming Regal Carrousel**



LUNCH & AFTERNOON BREAK

- Eat lunch at **Columbia Harbor House**
- Use LL for **Peter Pan** (book LL for Magic Carpets for after 6 pm)
- Use LL Single Pass for **Seven Dwarfs Mine Train**
- Head to exit. On your way out of the park, **Meet Mickey at Town Hall Theater** if wait is under 30 minutes
- Take Disney transportation to your resort for nap/pool



RETURN FOR DINNER & MORE

- Use Disney transportation to return to Magic Kingdom by 5 pm.
- Eat dinner at **Pecos Bill** in Frontierland and use LLs for **Pirates of the Caribbean**, **Jungle Cruise**, and **Magic Carpets of Aladdin**.
- If time permits, take in **Country Bears**, **Enchanted Tiki Room**, **Monsters Inc. Laugh Floor** and/or **the Peppermover**
- Watch parade from **Liberty Square** then get spot for fireworks 20 minutes early - anywhere with view of castle is great



LIGHTNING LANES: KIDS 5 TO 9 YEARS OLD

*Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids >38 and <48 inches**.
Assumes you qualify for **Early Theme Park Entry**.*

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Big Thunder Mountain or Tiana's Bayou Adventure - earliest possible
- 2) Haunted Mansion - 11 am
- 3) Burner ride: Mickey's Philharmagic

LIGHTNING LANE SINGLE PASS: Seven Dwarfs Mine Train - 1 pm

EARLY ENTRY & EARLY MORNING



- Arrival: Ride **Main Street Vehicles** (if running) and get pictures
- Early Entry: **Astro Orbiter**, **Buzz Lightyear**, and **Tomorrowland Speedway**.
- Tap into Mickey's Philharmagic (immediately book LL for Big Thunder or Tiana's or Peter Pan) ride **Journey of the Little Mermaid**, **Dumbo**, **Tea Party**, and/or **it's a small world** standby

REMAINDER OF MORNING



- Meet **Princesses at Fairytale Hall**, **Disney Pals at Silly Pete's**, **Ariel**, or **Enchanted Tales with Belle** (check time in app)
- Ride **Prince Charming Regal Carrousel**
- Use LL for **Haunted Mansion**. Book LL for Peter Pan (asap) or Jungle Cruise after 5 pm

LUNCH & AFTERNOON



- Eat lunch at Columbia Harbor House
- Use LL Single Pass for **Seven Dwarfs Mine Train**
- Use any LLs (book Pirates for after 5 pm and Space Mountain for after 7 pm next)
- **Meet Mickey at Town Hall Theater** (if wait is <30 minutes)
- Take Disney transportation to your resort for nap/pool

RETURN FOR DINNER & FIREWORKS



- Use Disney transportation to return to Magic Kingdom by 5 pm.
- Use remaining LLs and eat dinner at Pecos Bill in Frontierland
- Ride **Pirates** with LL or standby if needed.
- If time permits catch the **Country Bear Jamboree** and **Tiki Room**.
- Go to Tomorrowland to ride **Space Mountain** and **PeopleMover**.
- Watch parade from Liberty Square then find a spot for fireworks 20 minutes early with view of castle

LIGHTNING LANES: AGE 10 TO ADULT

Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids taller than 48 inches and adults**. Assumes you are staying at a Disney resort that offers **Early Entry**.

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Big Thunder Mountain or Tiana's Bayou Adventure -earliest possible
- 2) Haunted Mansion - 11 am
- 3) Burner ride: Mickey's Philharmagic

SINGLE PASS: TRON (after dark/before fireworks)



MORNING

- Early Entry: Get in line for **Seven Dwarfs Mine Train** immediately
- Ride Big Thunder Mountain or Tiana's immediately at 9 am
- Tap into Mickey's Philharmagic (book LL for Peter Pan ASAP) then ride **Dumbo, Mad Tea Party, Journey of the Little Mermaid**, and/or **it's a small world**
- **Meet Princesses at Fairytale Hall, Disney Pals at Silly Pete's, Ariel, or Enchanted Tales with Belle** (check opening time in app)
- Use LL for **Haunted Mansion** (book LL for Jungle Cruise)
- If time permits before lunch: **Carrousel & Mickey's Philharmagic**



LUNCH & AFTERNOON

- Eat lunch at Columbia Harbor House (use Mobile Order)
- Use any LLs (book Pirates for after 5 pm and Buzz Lightyear for after 7 pm)
- **Meet Mickey at Town Hall Theater** (if wait is under 30 minutes)
- Take Disney transportation to your resort for nap/pool by 2 pm



RETURN FOR DINNER & FIREWORKS

- Use Disney transportation to return to Magic Kingdom by 5 pm.
- Use remaining LLs (book Space Mountain next) and eat dinner at Pecos Bill's in Frontierland (use Mobile Order)
- Watch **Country Bear Jamboree** (if time permits)
- Use LL for **Pirates of the Caribbean** or ride standby
- Tomorrowland: **Peppermover, Space Mountain, Buzz Lightyear**, and **TRON**
- Watch parade from anywhere then find a spot for fireworks 20 minutes before with view of castle. Ride anything you missed after fireworks.



LIGHTNING LANES: HOLIDAY SEASON

Here's a plan of action when you're visiting during the holiday season with **kids >40 and <48 inches**. Assumes you qualify for **Early Theme Park Entry**.

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Big Thunder Mountain or Tiana's Bayou Adventure - earliest possible
- 2) Jingle Cruise - 11 am
- 3) Burner ride: Mickey's Philharmagic

SINGLE PASS: TRON (after dark/before fireworks) & **Seven Dwarfs Mine Train** (5 pm)

MORNING



- Early Entry: Get in line for **Peter Pan's Flight** immediately
- Tap into Mickey's Philharmagic (book LL for Big Thunder Mountain/Tiana's or Haunted Mansion ASAP) then ride **Dumbo, Mad Tea Party, Journey of the Little Mermaid, and it's a small world**
- **Meet Princesses at Fairytale Hall, Disney Pals at Silly Pete's, Ariel, or Enchanted Tales with Belle** (check opening time in app)
- Use LL for **Jingle Cruise** (book LL Haunted Mansion)
- If time permits before lunch: **Carrousel & Mickey's Philharmagic**



LUNCH & AFTERNOON

- Eat lunch at Columbia Harbor House (use Mobile Order)
- Use LLs (book LL for Buzz Lightyear for after 7 pm)
- **Meet Mickey at Town Hall Theater** (if wait is under 30 minutes)
- Take Disney transportation to your resort for nap/pool



RETURN FOR DINNER & FIREWORKS

- Use Disney transportation to return to Magic Kingdom by 5 pm.
- Use LLs (book Space Mountain after 7 pm and Pirates next) and eat dinner at Pecos Bill's in Frontierland (use Mobile Order)
- Ride **Pirates** with LL or standby
- Watch **Country Bear Jamboree** (if time permits)
- Tomorrowland: **Peppermover, Space Mountain, Buzz Lightyear, TRON**
- Watch parade then find a spot for fireworks 30 minutes before with view of castle. Ride anything you missed after fireworks.



NO EARLY ENTRY: UNDER 40 INCHES

Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **the under 40 inches crowd**. Assumes you are **NOT** eligible for Early Entry and **ARE** buying Lightning Lanes.

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Peter Pan (earliest possible)
- 2) Winnie the Pooh - 11 am
- 3) Burner ride: Mickey's Philharmagic

SINGLE PASS: Seven Dwarfs Mine Train (5 pm)



MORNING

- Tap into Mickey's Philharmagic (book LL for Big Thunder ASAP) then ride **Dumbo, Mad Tea Party, Journey of the Little Mermaid, and it's a small world**
- Meet Princesses at Fairytale Hall, Disney Pals at Silly Pete's, Ariel, or Enchanted Tales with Belle (check opening time in app)
- Use LL for Winnie the Pooh (book LL for Jungle Cruise)
- If time permits before lunch: Carrousel & Mickey's Philharmagic



LUNCH & AFTERNOON

- Eat lunch at Columbia Harbor House (use Mobile Order)
- Use any LLs (book Pirates for after 5 pm and Buzz Lightyear for after 7 pm)
- **Meet Mickey at Town Hall Theater** (if wait is under 30 minutes)
- Take Disney transportation to your resort for nap/pool by 2 pm



RETURN FOR DINNER & FIREWORKS

- Use Disney transportation to return to Magic Kingdom by 5 pm.
- Ride Seven Dwarfs and use remaining LLs (make LL for Tomorrowland Speedway if available) and eat dinner at Pecos Bill's in Frontierland (use Mobile Order)
- Watch **Country Bear Jamboree** (if time permits)
- Use LL for **Pirates of the Caribbean** or ride standby
- Tomorrowland: **Peppermint Patty, Tomorrowland Speedway, Buzz Lightyear, and Monsters Inc.** (if time permits)
- Watch parade from Liberty Square then find a spot for fireworks 20 minutes before with view of castle.



NO EARLY ENTRY: 48 INCHES AND UP

Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **the 48 inches and taller crowd**. Assumes you are **NOT** eligible for Early Entry and **ARE** buying Lightning Lanes.

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Tiana's Bayou Adventure or Big Thunder Mountain (earliest possible)
- 2) Haunted Mansion - 11 am
- 3) Burner ride: Mickey's Philharmagic

SINGLE PASS: TRON (after dark/before fireworks) & Seven Dwarfs Mine Train (5 pm)



MORNING

- Tap into Mickey's Philharmagic (book LL for Big Thunder Mountain/Tiana's or Peter Pan ASAP) then ride **Dumbo, Mad Tea Party, Journey of the Little Mermaid**, and **it's a small world**
- Meet Princesses at Fairytale Hall, Disney Pals at Silly Pete's, Ariel, or Enchanted Tales with Belle (check opening time in app)
- Use LL for Haunted Mansion (book LL for Peter Pan or Jungle Cruise)
- If time permits before lunch: Carrousel & Mickey's Philharmagic



LUNCH & AFTERNOON

- Eat lunch at Columbia Harbor House (use Mobile Order)
- Use any LLs (book Jungle Cruise for after 5 pm and Buzz Lightyear for after 7 pm)
- **Meet Mickey at Town Hall Theater** (if wait is under 30 minutes)
- Take Disney transportation to your resort for nap/pool by 2 pm



RETURN FOR DINNER & FIREWORKS

- Use Disney transportation to return to Magic Kingdom by 5 pm.
- Use remaining LLs (book Space Mountain and Pirates next) and eat dinner at Pecos Bill's in Frontierland (use Mobile Order)
- Watch **Country Bear Jamboree** (if time permits)
- Use LL for **Pirates of the Caribbean** or ride standby
- Tomorrowland: **Peppermover, Space Mountain, Buzz Lightyear, and TRON**
- Watch parade from Liberty Square then find a spot for fireworks 20 minutes before with view of castle. Ride anything you missed after fireworks.



NO MULTI PASS: KIDS UNDER 7

*Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids <40 inches**. Assumes you are NOT eligible for Early Entry and aren't buying Lightning Lane Multi Pass. A Single Pass For Seven Dwarfs Mine Train is recommended.*



ROPE DROP & EARLY MORNING

- Arrive at the gates a half hour before opening to ride **Main Street Vehicles** and get pictures.
- Ride **Jungle Cruise** and **Pirates of the Caribbean** in the first hour.
- At the start of the second hour, get in line for **Big Thunder Mountain Railroad** (wait should be <50 minutes) or **The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh**.



REMAINDER OF MORNING

- Spend the rest of the morning in Fantasyland. Meet either **Princesses at Fairytale Hall**, **Disney Pals at Silly Pete's**, **Ariel**, or **Enchanted Tales with Belle** (check open time in app) and ride as many of these as possible before lunch: **Dumbo**, **Barnstormer**, **Mad Tea Cups**, **Journey of the Little Mermaid**, "it's a small world".



LUNCH & AFTERNOON

- Eat lunch at Columbia Harbor House (use Mobile Order)
- Ride **Prince Charming Regal Carrousel** and any other Fantasyland must-dos that you missed in the morning.
- Experience **Mickey's PhilharMagic**, **Country Bear Jamboree**, **Enchanted Tiki Room**, and/or **Haunted Mansion** (all in the AC) or take an afternoon hotel break.
- Use Single Pass for **Seven Dwarfs Mine Train** if riding.



EVENING

- Eat dinner at Pecos Bill, Crystal Palace, or Liberty Tree Tavern
- Ride **Magic Carpets of Aladdin**
- Head to Tomorrowland to ride the **Peppermint Patty**, **Tomorrowland Speedway**, and **Buzz Lightyear** (if time permits)
- Watch parade from Liberty Square then find a spot for fireworks 20-30 minutes before with view of castle
- If possible after fireworks ride **Peter Pan** and **Tiana's Bayou Adventure**. Get in line up to the minute before the park "closes".

NO MULTI PASS: AGES 7 AND UP

Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **the 44 inches and taller crowd**. Assumes you are **NOT** eligible for Early Entry and aren't buying Lightning Lane Multi Pass. Purchasing Single Pass for TRON or Seven Dwarfs is recommended.

ROPE DROP & EARLY MORNING



- Arrive at the gates a half hour before opening to ride **Main Street Vehicles** and get pictures.
- Ride **Jungle Cruise** and **Pirates of the Caribbean** in the first hour.
- At the start of the second hour, get in line for **Big Thunder Mountain** or **Tiana's Bayou Adventure** (wait should be <50 minutes).

REMAINDER OF MORNING



- Spend the rest of the morning in Fantasyland. Meet either **Princesses at Fairytale Hall**, **Disney Pals at Silly Pete's**, **Ariel**, or **Enchanted Tales with Belle** (check open time in app) and ride as many of these as possible before lunch: **Dumbo**, **Barnstormer**, **Mad Tea Cups**, **Journey of the Little Mermaid**, "it's a small world".

LUNCH & AFTERNOON



- Eat lunch at Columbia Harbor House (use Mobile Order).
- Ride any other Fantasyland must-dos that you missed in the morning.
- Experience **Mickey's PhilharMagic**, **Country Bear Jamboree**, **Enchanted Tiki Room**, and/or **Haunted Mansion** (all in the AC) or take an afternoon hotel break.
- Use Single Pass if applicable.

EVENING



- Eat dinner at Pecos Bill, Crystal Palace, or Liberty Tree Tavern.
- Head to Tomorrowland to ride the **Peppermint Patty**, **Space Mountain**, and **Buzz Lightyear** (if time permits).
- Watch parade from Liberty Square then find a spot for fireworks 20-30 minutes before with view of castle.
- If possible after fireworks ride **Peter Pan** and/or **Tiana's Bayou Adventure/Big Thunder Mountain**. Get in line up to the minute before the park "closes".

FAMILIES WITH LITTLES DAY 1

*Here's day one of a two-day plan of action when you're visiting with **kids <35 inches and do not qualify for Early Entry.***

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Peter Pan's Flight - early evening
- 2) Winnie the Pooh - late morning
- 3) Dumbo - morning



EARLY MORNING

- Arrive at park by 8:30 am and ride **Main Street Vehicles** and get pictures
- Rope drop: **Meet Princesses at Fairytale Hall**
- Fantasyland: **Mad Tea Party, Barnstomer** (if 35 inches), use LL for **Dumbo** (make after-lunch LL for "it's a small world")

REMAINDER OF MORNING

- **Meet Disney Pals at Silly Pete's** (opens at 10 am) or snack break
- Ride **Under the Sea - Journey of the Little Mermaid**
- **Enchanted Tales with Belle** (usually opens at 10:30)
- **Prince Charming Regal Carrousel**
- Use LL for **Winnie the Pooh** (make after lunch LL for Tomorrowland Speedway)

LUNCH & AFTERNOON

- Eat lunch at Columbia Harbor House
- Use LL for **"it's a small world"** (book LL for Monster's Inc Laugh Floor for evening)
- Experience **Mickey's Philharmagic**
- Use LL for **Tomorrowland Speedway**
- Afternoon break

RETURN FOR DINNER & FIREWORKS

- Return to Magic Kingdom by 5 pm
- Grab dinner at Casey's Corner or Crystal Palace
- Use LLs for **Peter Pan's Flight, Buzz Lightyear, and Monster's Inc**
- Ride the **Tomorrowland Transit Authority Peoplemover**
- Watch parade from Liberty Square then find a spot for fireworks 20-30 minutes before with view of castle



FAMILIES WITH LITTLES DAY 2

*Here's day two of a two-day plan of action when you're visiting with **kids <35 inches and do not qualify for Early Entry.***

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Jungle Cruise - afternoon
- 2) Pirates of the Caribbean - morning
- 3) Magic Carpets of Aladdin - as early as possible

EARLY MORNING



- Arrive at park by 9 am
- Rope drop: **Meet Mickey Mouse at Town Square Theater**
- Use LL for **Magic Carpets of Aladdin** (make LL for Haunted Mansion for after lunch)
- Experience the Enchanted Tiki Room

REMAINDER OF MORNING



- Use LL for **Pirates of the Caribbean** (make LL for after lunch for any ride you want to repeat from day 1)
- Watch **Country Bear Jamboree**
- Take launch to **Tom Sawyer's Island**
- Ride the **Walt Disney Railroad** around the park

LUNCH & AFTERNOON



- Eat lunch at Columbia Harbor House
- Use LL for **Haunted Mansion**
- Use LL for **Jungle Cruise**
- If time permits, check out **Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse** and/or **Liberty Square Riverboats**
- Watch the 3 pm **Festival of Fantasy** parade from anywhere in Liberty Square
- Head out of the park

C H A P T E R

6

EPCOT

[daily itineraries](#)

[attractions](#)

[dining](#)

[return to the main menu](#)

"But the most exciting and by far the most important part of our Florida project... will be our Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow. We call it E.P.C.O.T."

- Walt Disney, 1966

Walt Disney had a vision of EPCOT being an actual working city dedicated to future technology. When it opened in 1982 (well after his death in 1967) it was more like a permanent World's Fair. It's been my favorite theme park since I first visited as a kid in 1986 and it continues to delight millions to this day.



EPCOT is essentially two different theme parks in one. Here are highlights of both parks.

FUTURE WORLD

Most people enter EPCOT through the main entrance in what was formerly called Future World. This part of the park has been renamed as three different sections - **World Nature**, **World Celebration**, and **World Discovery** to better reflect the themes of the pavilions found here. It includes a wide variety of attractions from thrill rides such as **Guardians of the Galaxy** to slow-moving cult classics such as **Living With The Land**. The icon of the park is here - the huge “golf ball” that is **Spaceship Earth** - as well as the new walk-through attraction **Journey of Water, Inspired by Moana**.



Spaceship Earth, Future World

WORLD SHOWCASE

The other half of EPCOT highlights the cultures of 11 different countries. Each has a dedicated pavilion around the World Showcase lagoon. It offers three rides (including kid-favorites **Remy's Ratatouille Adventure** and **Frozen Ever After**), movies, character meet and greets, live performances, and LOTS of shopping and food. World Showcase has its own entrance between the UK and France pavilions. It hosts four festivals throughout the year which feature sample-sized portions of food and drinks plus additional entertainment.



EPCOT MUST-DOS

Families
with
Toddlers

Turtle Talk with Crush
The Seas with Nemo & Friends
Living with the Land
Journey Into Imagination with Figment
Journey of Water Inspired by Moana
Club Cool
Meet Mickey & Friends
Remy's Ratatouille Adventure
Frozen Ever After
Kidcot Fun Stops

Pink Grapefruit Hefeweizen (Germany)
Any dessert from Les Halles Boulangerie & Patisserie (France)
Tacos from La Cantina de San Angel (Mexico)
Pizza slice from Pizza al Taglio (Italy)
Grand Marnier Slush from Les Vins des Le Chefs de France (France)
Caramel Shortbread from Karamell-Kuche (Germany)
EPCOT International Food & Wine Festival

Foodies

Teens
and
Adults

Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind
Test Track
Soarin'
Living with the Land
Mission Space
Journey of Water Inspired by Moana
Remy's Ratatouille Adventure
Club Cool
Beauty & the Beast Singalong
Frozen Ever After
Luminous (nighttime show)

Epcot Attractions

LL Multi Pass Attractions = 
Single Rider option = SR

LL Single Pass Attractions =  Height Requirement = HR

Former Future World

World Celebration

- ☐ Spaceship Earth 
- ☐ Club Cool
- ☐ Journey Into Imagination with Figment 
- ☐ Disney & Pixar Short Film Festival  (show)
- ☐ Disney Visa Cardmember Photo Op
- ☐ Communicore Hall (walk through)
- ☐ Mickey & Friends (characters)

World Nature

- ☐ Soarin'  HR=40in
- ☐ Living with the Land 
- ☐ Awesome Planet (show)
- ☐ The Seas with Nemo & Friends 
- ☐ Turtle Talk with Crush  (interactive show)
- ☐ Journey of Water, Inspired by Moana (interactive walk through)

World Discovery

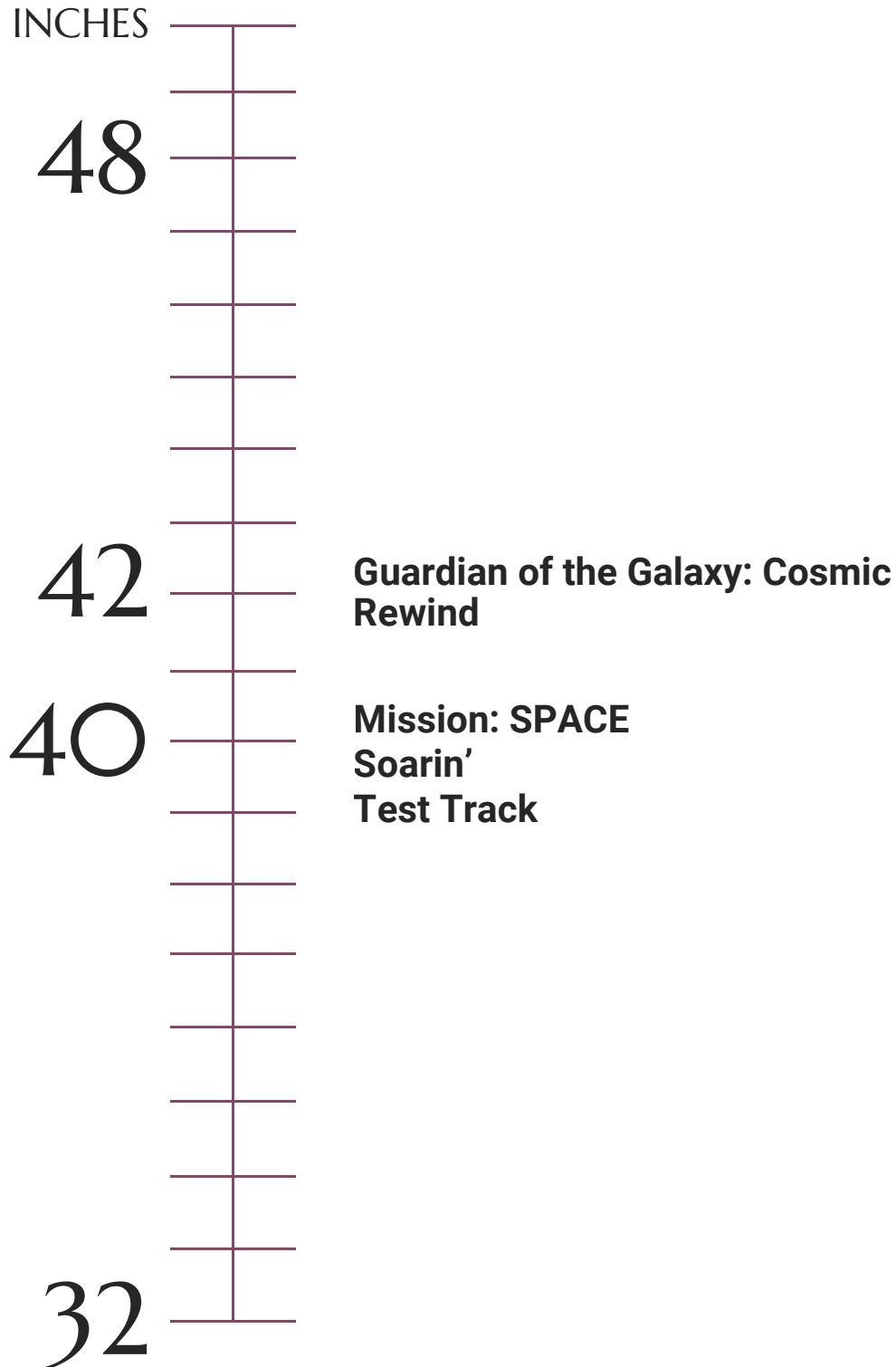
- ☐ Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind  HR=42in
- ☐ Test Track  HR=40in SR
- ☐ Mission: SPACE  HR=40in

World Showcase

- ☐ Luminous: The Story of Us (nighttime show)
- ☐ Kidcot Fun Stops (interact with cast members in each country)
- ☐ Gran Fiesta Tour Starring the Three Caballeros
- ☐ Frozen Ever After 
- ☐ Meet Anna & Elsa at Royal Sommerhus (characters)
- ☐ Reflections of China (show)
- ☐ The American Adventure (show)
- ☐ Remy's Ratatouille Adventure  SR
- ☐ Beauty and The Beast Sing-Along (show)
- ☐ Impressions de France
- ☐ Canada Far and Wide in Circle-Vision 360 (show)

HEIGHT REQUIREMENTS

There are four attractions with a height requirement in EPCOT. If a ride is not listed below it has no height requirement and anyone can ride (even infants).



TOURING THE PARK

While not technically the largest park (Animal Kingdom has that honor), EPCOT is the park at which you will walk the most. It is not uncommon to walk 20,000 steps in a day there thanks to how spread out everything is.

Because of EPCOT's size you'll want a good plan for tackling the surprising number of things to see and do here.



Frozen Ever After



World Showcase has a fireworks show - **Luminous The Symphony of Us** - every night at park close (usually 9 pm). You can view it from anywhere around World Showcase Lagoon, just try not to stand right behind a tree. It's a fun show but nothing you can't miss. The shows at MK & HS are a higher priority for me.

EPCOT has a few attractions that offer a **Single Rider Line** so I'll explain how it works below.

SINGLE RIDER LINE

Utilizing the Single Rider Line (even when visiting as part of a group) is another useful trick to have up your sleeve - waits are MUCH shorter using this queue.

The Single Rider Line is offered on popular attractions that often have an extra seat available because of the ride configuration. Kids must be at least 7 years old and mature enough to be separated from their party to use this.

At EPCOT consider using the Single Rider Line for **Test Track** and **Remy's Ratatouille Adventure** if waits are long and you are ok riding separately.



EPCOT

Soarin' is another not-to-be-missed EPCOT attraction. It's a hang-glide simulator ride over some world-famous locations.

When my daughter was under 5, we spent hours in The Seas with Nemo & Friends pavilion. There's a great slow-moving dark ride, playground, gorgeous aquariums, and possibly the best thing to do with kids in EPCOT: **Turtle Talk with Crush**.

EPCOT FAVORITES

It's not possible to see and do everything at EPCOT in one day so it's best to pick some must-dos before your visit.

Exploration is the name of the game at EPCOT. Leave time to investigate an alleyway in Morocco or check out all of the aquariums at The Seas pavilion.

Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind is my favorite ride in all of the parks. However people who experience motion sickness should take precautions or avoid - there is some high-speed spinning involved.

Ride Guardians with Lightning Lane Single Pass or via a standby queue.

Do not miss **Remy's Ratatouille Adventure** in the France pavilion. It's best to ride at rope drop or with LL Multi Pass. If you are staying at an EPCOT area resort or on the Skyliner Line, arrive early at the back entrance to rope drop this popular ride.

Test Track has reopened after a year-long refurbishment. It's a fantastic futuristic car ride that's the fastest ride in all of Disney World.

Frozen Ever After is a must-do for Frozen fans. It gets long waits so is best for rope drop or LL Multi Pass.





Grapefruit beer in Germany & Connections Eatery



EPCOT DINING

You are spoiled for choice with food at EPCOT - most food is above average here. There are still some places you should avoid and some shining stars.

Best Quick Service Dining

- La Cantina de San Angel (Mexico)
- Connections Eatery (World Celebration)
- Les Halles Boulangerie & Patisserie (France)
- Katsura Grill (Japan)
- Pizza al Taglio (Italy)



Tacos in Mexico



France Bakery

Table Service Dining

There are 19 different Table Service restaurants in EPCOT and picking just one can feel impossible. Some offer unique (although pricey) experiences:

- **Space 220**: "Travel" 220 miles above Earth to dine in a space station; perfect for space obsessed kids with decent food
- **Akershus Royal Banquet Hall**: Dine in a Norwegian Castle with princesses; unique food options
- **San Angel Inn Restaurante**: Dine along a river in front of a Mayan pyramid (inside the Mexico pavilion); solid Mexican fare



Akershus Royal Banquet Hall

Space 220



DRINKING AROUND THE WORLD

An adult "challenge" at EPCOT is to have a drink in every country in World Showcase. Very few people actually do this and it likely won't impact your trip - it's just a good thing to be aware of.

EPCOT DINING BEST BETS

LA CANTINA DE SAN ANGEL

Quick Service - Mexico (L,D)



Popular quick service restaurant with consistently good tacos, empanadas, margaritas, and churros. Outside seating overlooking the lagoon and some "hidden" indoor seating. Eat at less popular time to avoid long lines. No mobile order.



AKERSHUS ROYAL BANQUET HALL

Character Dining - Norway (B,L,D)



Dine with the princesses with unique Norwegian-inspired food served family-style. Great character interaction. Breakfast offers the best value both out-of-pocket and on the Dining Plan (only 1 credit vs 2 at other times).



CONNECTIONS EATERY

Quick Service - World Celebration (L,D)



Huge indoor quick service restaurant with above average burgers, pizzas, and salads everyone will like. Use mobile order to avoid long lines. Has unique seasonally-inspired desserts and there's always somewhere to sit.



SPACE 220

Table Service - World Discovery



Unique dining experience "220 miles above earth". Not on the Dining Plan. Expensive fixed price meal - food is fine but you're really paying for the experience. Can order ala carte at the Space 220 Lounge - reservations are very difficult to get.



SAN ANGEL INN RESTAURANTE

Table Service - Mexico



Above average Mexican food in fun setting. Dine "under the stars" next to the Three Caballeros boat ride with a pyramid and erupting volcano in the background. Great place to take an afternoon break while in World Showcase.





FESTIVALS AT EPCOT

EPCOT hosts four international festivals during the year:

Festival of the Arts: mid-January through February

Flower & Garden Festival: March through May

Food & Wine Festival: September through November

Festival of the Holidays: December

If you are visiting during one of these, you'll be treated to extra fun. All of the festivals now feature sample-sized portions of food and drinks sold at booths around the park. They are great for snacks and sharing.

Each festival also has nightly concerts in the American Garden Theater which are included with park admission (though seats can be hard to come by). Various additional activities happen during the festivals such as art displays, gardens, playgrounds, plus free and paid seminars.

Pick up a free festival guidebook as soon as you enter the park for details.

CHARACTERS & LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

Character meet and greets no longer are included in any "Skip the Line" passes. This makes strategy and prioritizing even more important.

EPCOT has many meet and greet spots all over the park. It's best to spend some time exploring them in the MDE app before your visit and making note of the times and locations.

MICKEY & FRIENDS

Mickey has a new indoor meet and greet location in World Celebration officially called **Meet Beloved Disney Pals at Mickey & Friends**.

Meet Mickey, Goofy, and Minnie here. Wait times are typically lowest in mid-afternoon making this a great thing to do to beat the heat.



THE DISNEY PRINCESSES

EPCOT is actually a great place to meet princesses. Elsa and Anna have a themed indoor location in Norway. All others meet people at various locations in World Showcase - Belle and Aurora in France and Snow White in Germany, for example. Find times in the MDE app.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

EPCOT has the most live entertainment of any park and it's part of the fun atmosphere here. There are stage shows throughout the day as well as street performer style entertainment.

Be sure to stop and take in some live entertainment as you are walking by. My favorites are the Taiko drummers in Japan, Encanto stage show in World Celebration, and the nightly concerts during festivals at the American Gardens Theater.



ABOUT THE TOURING PLANS IN THIS GUIDEBOOK

Every theme park chapter contains suggested “Touring Plan” itineraries for different travel parties.

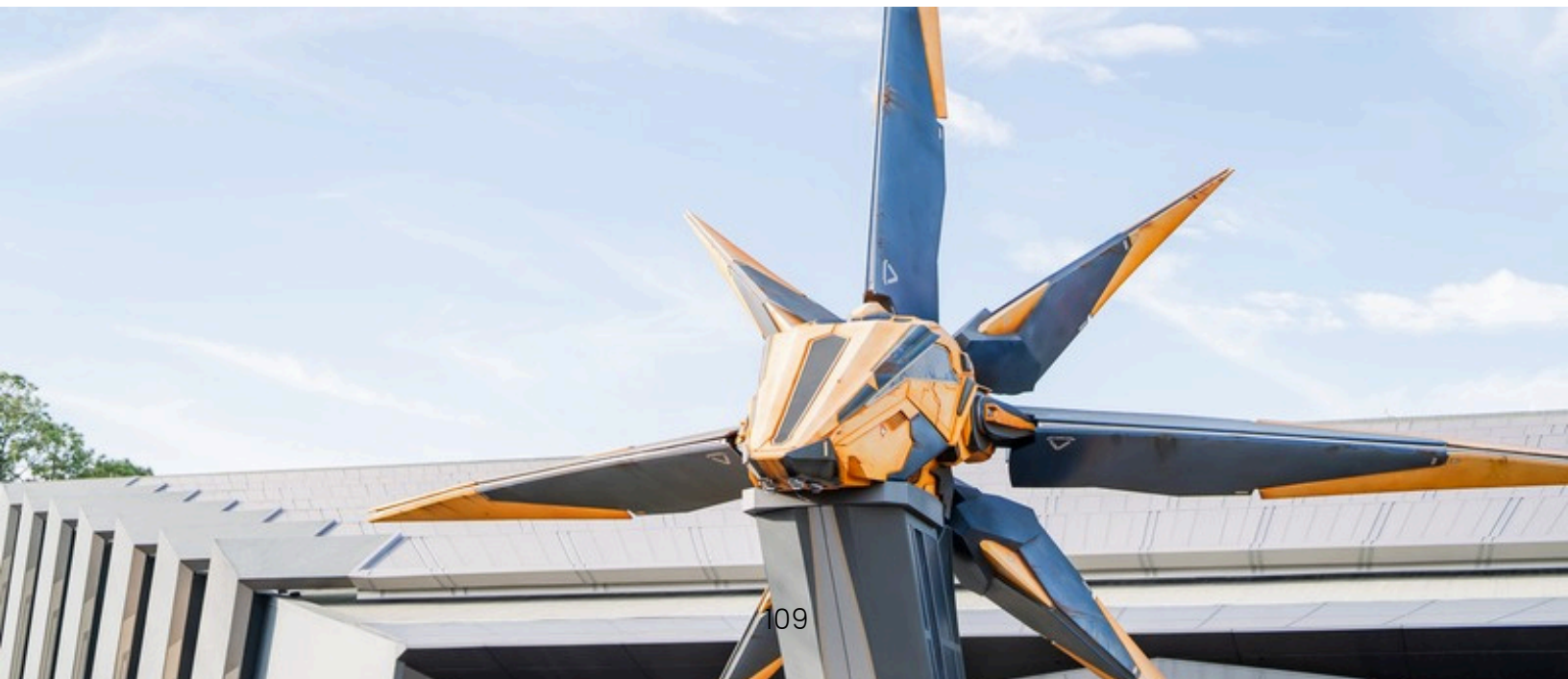
Though they are backed by data and tested, they are meant as **suggestions/inspiration for your day**, NOT hard-and-fast plans. Inevitably, the following things will throw off your well-made plans:

- Rides will go down (unfortunately, this is a common occurrence)
- Lightning Lanes will unexpectedly sell out early
- Someone will need to get food or go to the restroom (again)
- A ride will have a much longer wait time than expected

I suggest staying flexible and understanding that **you likely won't get to do everything you want to in a day** (I rarely do). If a ride is down, try to find a nearby attraction (or snack) to experience while you wait.

Remember that there is a **2-hour grace period for LLs**, so I suggest making them for earlier rather than later to have more flexibility in your day.

These age ranges are estimates and depend on the height/interests of your kids. Take these plans with a grain of salt and remember to go with the flow!



TOURING PLAN: FAMILIES WITH LITTLE KIDS

Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with kids <40 inches tall.

*Assumes you qualify for **Early Theme Park Entry**.*

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Remy's Ratatouille Adventure for after 5 pm
- 2) Burner ride: Pixar Short Film Festival (as early as possible)
- 3) Living with the Land (around 11 am - 12 pm)

LL SINGLE PASS: Guardian of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind (adults only)

EARLY ENTRY & MORNING



- Early Entry: **Frozen Ever After**
- Use LL for **Pixar Short Film Festival** (immediately make another LL for adults for Soarin' or Test Track) and ride **Journey Into Imagination With Figment**
- Ride **The Seas with Nemo & Friends**, catch a show of **Turtle Talk with Crush**, and explore aquariums in Seas pavilion
- Use LL for **Living with the Land** (adults use LL for Soarin')
- Walk through **Journey of Water Inspired by Moana**

LUNCH & AFTERNOON



- Any time: take turns riding **Guardians of the Galaxy** or **Test Track** while other adult takes kids to **Space Base Playground** (access via exit of Mission Space) and/or **Club Cool**
- **Eat lunch at Connections Eatery or at Mexico pavilion**
- Explore Mexico pavilion and ride **Gran Fiesta Tour Starring the Three Caballeros**
- **Meet Anna and Elsa** and/or **Mickey & Pals** before leaving for afternoon break/nap by 2 pm

RETURN FOR DINNER & MORE



- Use Disney transportation to return to Epcot by 5 pm.
- Use LL for **Remy's Ratatouille Adventure**
- Eat dinner in France or Japan pavilion
- Explore World Showcase countries
- Meet **Mickey & Pals** if you didn't earlier; head out or stick around for fireworks at 9 pm

TOURING PLAN: OLDER KIDS TO ADULTS

Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids >40 inches and adults**. Assumes you are staying at a Disney resort that offers **Early Theme Park Entry**.

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Remy's Ratatouille Adventure (5 pm)
- 2) Soarin' (around 1 pm)
- 3) Burner ride: The Seas with Nemo & Friends (as early as possible)

LL SINGLE PASS: Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind around 11 am

EARLY ENTRY & MORNING



- Early Entry: **Test Track**
- Use LL for **The Seas with Nemo & Friends** (grab LL for Frozen Ever After around noon if possible), catch **Turtle Talk with Crush** and explore aquariums
- **Meet Beloved Disney Friends at Mickey & Pals** around 10 am
- Walk through **Journey of Water Inspired by Moana**
- Visit **Club Cool** then ride **Guardians of the Galaxy**

LUNCH & AFTERNOON



- Eat lunch at Connections Eatery or at Mexico pavilion
- Explore Mexico pavilion and ride **Gran Fiesta Tour Starring the Three Caballeros** (if the wait is under 15 minutes)
- Use LL for **Frozen Ever After** (grab LL for Living with the Land for as early as possible)
- Use LLs for **Soarin'** and **Living with the Land** (grab LLs for Mission Space for 5 pm if interested in riding)
- Take afternoon break

RETURN FOR DINNER & MORE



- Use Disney transportation to return to Epcot by 5 pm
- Use LL for **Mission Space** (if interested in riding)
- Use LL for **Remy's Ratatouille Adventure**
- Eat dinner in France or Japan pavilion
- Explore World Showcase countries, **Meet Anna and Elsa** if time permits
- Watch **Luminous** over World Showcase Lagoon at 9 pm

TOURING PLAN: NO EARLY ENTRY

*Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids >40 inches and adults**. Assumes you do NOT have Early Entry and are buying Lightning Lanes.*

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Test Track - as early as possible
- 2) Mission Space - 11 am ideally
- 3) The Seas With Nemo & Friends - as early as possible

LL SINGLE PASS: Guardians of the Galaxy - 11 am-12 pm ideally or anytime

EARLY ENTRY & MORNING



- Rope drop **Soarin' Across America & Living with the Land**
- Use LL for **The Seas with Nemo & Friends** (grab LL for Remy's Ratatouille Adventure)
- **Meet Beloved Disney Friends at Mickey & Pals**
- Walk through **Journey of Water Inspired by Moana**
- Ride **Mission Space** (grab LL for Frozen Ever After if available), **Guardians of the Galaxy**, and visit **Club Cool**

LUNCH & AFTERNOON



- Eat lunch at Connections Eatery or at Mexico pavilion
- Explore Mexico pavilion and ride **Gran Fiesta Tour Starring the Three Caballeros** (if the wait is under 15 minutes)
- Use any LLs (grab LL for Spaceship Earth)
- Take afternoon break

RETURN FOR DINNER & MORE



- Use Disney transportation to return to Epcot by 5 pm
- Use any remaining LLs
- Eat dinner in France or Japan pavilion
- Explore World Showcase countries (can use standby queue for Frozen Ever After or Remy's but the wait will be long)
- Watch **Luminous** over World Showcase Lagoon at 9 pm

TOURING PLAN: NO MULTI PASS

*Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids >40 inches**. Assumes you aren't eligible for Early Entry and aren't buying LL Multi Pass.*

Even if you aren't buying Lightning Lane Multi Pass I strongly suggest purchasing a LL Single Pass for anyone interested in riding **Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind**. It will make your day so much easier.

EARLY ENTRY & MORNING



- Rope drop **Frozen Ever After** or **Remy's Ratatouille Adventure**
- Ride **Soarin'** and **Living with the Land**
- Walk through **Journey of Water Inspired by Moana**
- After 11 am: ride **Test Track** (use single rider line for much shorter wait) and **Mission Space**
- *Anytime: Use LL Single Pass or Standby Queue for anyone interested in riding Guardians of the Galaxy*

LUNCH & AFTERNOON



- Eat lunch at Connections Eatery or La Cantina de San Angel
- Explore Mexico pavilion and ride **Gran Fiesta Tour Starring the Three Caballeros**
- **Meet Anna and Elsa** or any other World Showcase characters if interested
- Work your way around World Showcase

DINNER & MORE



- Eat an early dinner in France or Japan pavilion
- Do **Nemo & Friends** and **Turtle Talk With Crush**
- Ride **Journey Into Imagination with Figment** and watch **Pixar Short Film Festival** (if time permits - not a priority)
- **Meet Beloved Disney Pals at Mickey & Friends**
- Watch **Luminous** over World Showcase Lagoon at 9 pm

C H A P T E R

7

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

[daily itineraries](#)

[attractions](#)

[dining](#)

[return to the main menu](#)

""We welcome you to a Hollywood that never was - and always will be."

The third most-visited park in Disney World is Hollywood Studios. It opened as "Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park" in 1989.

The park is themed to an idealized version of Hollywood, California, and celebrates the imagined worlds of film, television, music and theater. It is home to two wildly popular areas: Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge & Toy Story Land.





The most popular attractions at Hollywood Studios are clustered in these three sections of the park:

Sunset Boulevard

After you enter the park and walk down Hollywood Boulevard, you'll see a street that leads to your right - that's Sunset Boulevard. At the end you'll find three attractions with huge draws - **The Hollywood Tower of Terror**, **Rock 'n' Roller Coaster**, and the entrance for the nighttime show, **Fantasmic**. **Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway** is close by at the end of Hollywood Boulevard.

Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge

Occupying the entire back left section of the park is Galaxy's Edge. It's not-to-be-missed for anyone, Star Wars Fan or not. The theming is incredible and just wandering through the marketplace and winding paths here is fun. Includes two rides (**Rise of the Resistance** and **Millenium Falcon**) as well as a quick service restaurant, free roaming characters, the cantina bar, several food and drink stands, and lots of shopping (including locations where you can build a droid or lightsaber).

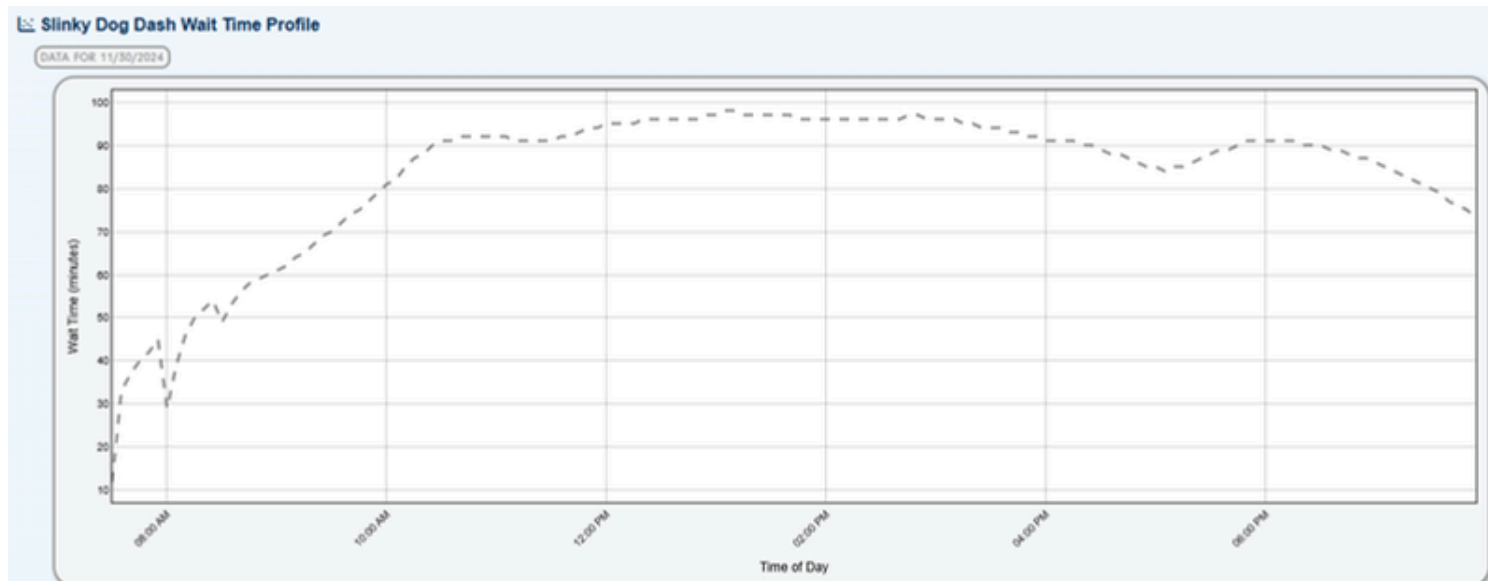
Toy Story Land

The back center of the park is where you will find Toy Story Land. It includes three attractions with low height requirements (**Slinky Dog Dash**, **Toy Story Mania**, **Alien Swirling Saucers**) character meet and greets, quick service dining, and a newer table service restaurant. The narrow paths here get VERY crowded in the middle of the day, so I suggest avoiding it then and visiting before 10 am or after 6 pm.

SLINKY DOG DASH

Hollywood Studios has **the most in-demand ride in the theme parks: Slinky Dog Dash**. The wide appeal and low height requirement leads to it being the most difficult to get an Advanced Lightning Lane Multi Pass for.

If you are not able to secure a LL for Slinky Dog Dash, then your best bet is to arrive early and rope drop it.



Courtesy of [Thrill-data.com](https://thrill-data.com)

This graph shows wait times on a day when the park officially opened at 8 am. If you have Early Entry, **arrive at least 15 minutes before EE begins** to get in line. You should then have a less than 10 minute wait once you are let in.

A separate line for those without early entry starts building 30 minutes before the park opens. If you arrive right at park opening, know that *there will be thousands in front of you* and you will likely wait an hour. **Arriving early is the key to rope dropping this attraction!**

One person can leave the line to go grab coffee and breakfast while the rest of the group waits.





OTHER HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS HITS

These are the other headliner attractions and shows at Hollywood Studios:

- **Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance** is a cutting-edge attraction that will leave you wondering “how did they do that?” The best ways to avoid a long wait is to either rope drop, buy a LL Single Pass, or get in line right before park closing (my preferred method to ride with no wait).
- **Rock ‘n’ Roller Coaster** is the only coaster that goes upside down in Disney World and is lots of fun. Ride with LL Multi Pass, use the Single Rider line (but be warned that this sometimes is a long wait) or ride right at park close.
- **The Hollywood Tower of Terror** has excellent theming and still gives me the chills after riding countless times. Use LL Multi Pass or ride in the first hour the park is open for shorter waits.
- **Mickey & Minnie’s Runaway Railway** is the only attraction in all of Walt Disney World to feature Mickey Mouse. It’s fun for all ages and shouldn’t be missed. Ride in the first hour the park is open or use LL Multi Pass.

FANTASMIC!

The nighttime show at Hollywood Studios - Fantasmic! - is excellent. It often has two nightly showings with the first being more popular. It takes place in a huge outdoor amphitheater but it does fill up - arrive at least 20 minutes early. Some parts of the show can be scary for younger kids so if you are worried I suggest previewing it on YouTube ahead of time.



There are now **six different stage shows** at Hollywood Studios. If you are trying to do most of the rides, you'll have to pick a few. Here's a quick guide.

Disney Villains: Unfairly Ever After

This new indoor show is about 15 minutes long and is a fun tribute to the characters we love to hate. Located behind Rockin Roller Coaster.

The Little Mermaid - A Musical Adventure

A 20-minute indoor stage show located behind Runaway Railway. Only recommended for those with little ones and die-hard fans. Otherwise a skip - there are better shows.

Beauty & The Beast Live On Stage

An outdoor 25-minute tribute to the tale as old as time. Fun for fans but uncomfortable seating not in AC so I tend to skip.

For the First Time In Forever - A Frozen Singalong

A 30-minute indoor show that is fun for kids and adults. Surprisingly well done and most people enjoy this, especially if they like the films.

Indiana Jones Stunt Spectacular

A throwback 30-minute show in a covered outdoor theater. Hokey but impressive show that's fun for fans of the films and those into action scenes and stunts.

Mickey Mouse Clubhouse Live!

A 20-minute indoor show featuring characters from Disney Jr. Mickey Mouse Clubhouse. A must-do with toddlers since there isn't much else made just for them in this park.

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS MUST-DOS

Families
with
Young
Children

Toy Story Mania!
Mickey Mouse Clubhouse Live!
Magic of Disney Animation
Alien Swirling Saucers (32 inch minimum)
Slinky Dog Dash (38 inch minimum)
Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway
For the First Time in Forever: A Frozen Sing-Along Celebration
Meet Disney Stars at Red Carpet Dreams
Meet Olaf at Celebrity Spotlight

Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance
Millenium Falcon: Smugglers Run
Star Tours - The Adventures Continue
Drink Blue Milk from the Milk Stand
Docking Bay 7 (quick service dining)
Oga's Cantina (lounge)
Build a droid at Droid Depot and/or build a lightsaber at Savi's Workshop (additional cost)
Meet roaming characters in Galaxy's Edge

Star
Wars
Fans

Teens
and
Adults

Rock 'n' Roller Coaster
Twilight Zone Tower of Terror
Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance
Millenium Falcon: Smugglers Run
Star Tours - The Adventures Continue
Toy Story Mania!
Indiana Jones Stunt Spectacular
Beauty & the Beast: Live on Stage
Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway
Fantasmic! (evening show)

Hollywood Studios Attractions

LL Multi Pass Attractions = 🦋 LL Single Pass Attractions = ✦ Height Requirement = HR
Single Rider option = SR

- ☐ Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway 🦋
- ☐ Wonderful World of Animation (Projection Show)
- ☐ For The First Time in Forever: A Frozen Sing-Along Celebration 🦋 (show)
- ☐ Vacation Fun - An Original Animated Short with Mickey & Minnie (movie)
- ☐ Meet Disney Stars at Red Carpet Dreams
- ☐ Meet Olaf at Celebrity Spotlight
- ☐ Indiana Jones Epic Stunt Spectacular! 🦋 (show)
- ☐ Star Tours 🦋 HR=40in

- ☐ Beauty and the Beast: Live on Stage 🦋 (show)
- ☐ Fantasmic! (nighttime show)
- ☐ Rock 'n' Roller Coaster Starring the Muppets 🦋 HR=48in SR
- ☐ The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror 🦋 HR=40in
Disney Villains: Unfairly Ever After (show)
- ☐ The Little Mermaid - A Musical Adventure 🦋 (show)
- ☐ Magic of Disney Animation
- ☐ Disney Jr. Mickey Mouse Clubhouse Live! 🦋
- ☐ Walt Disney Presents (walk through)

Toy Story Land

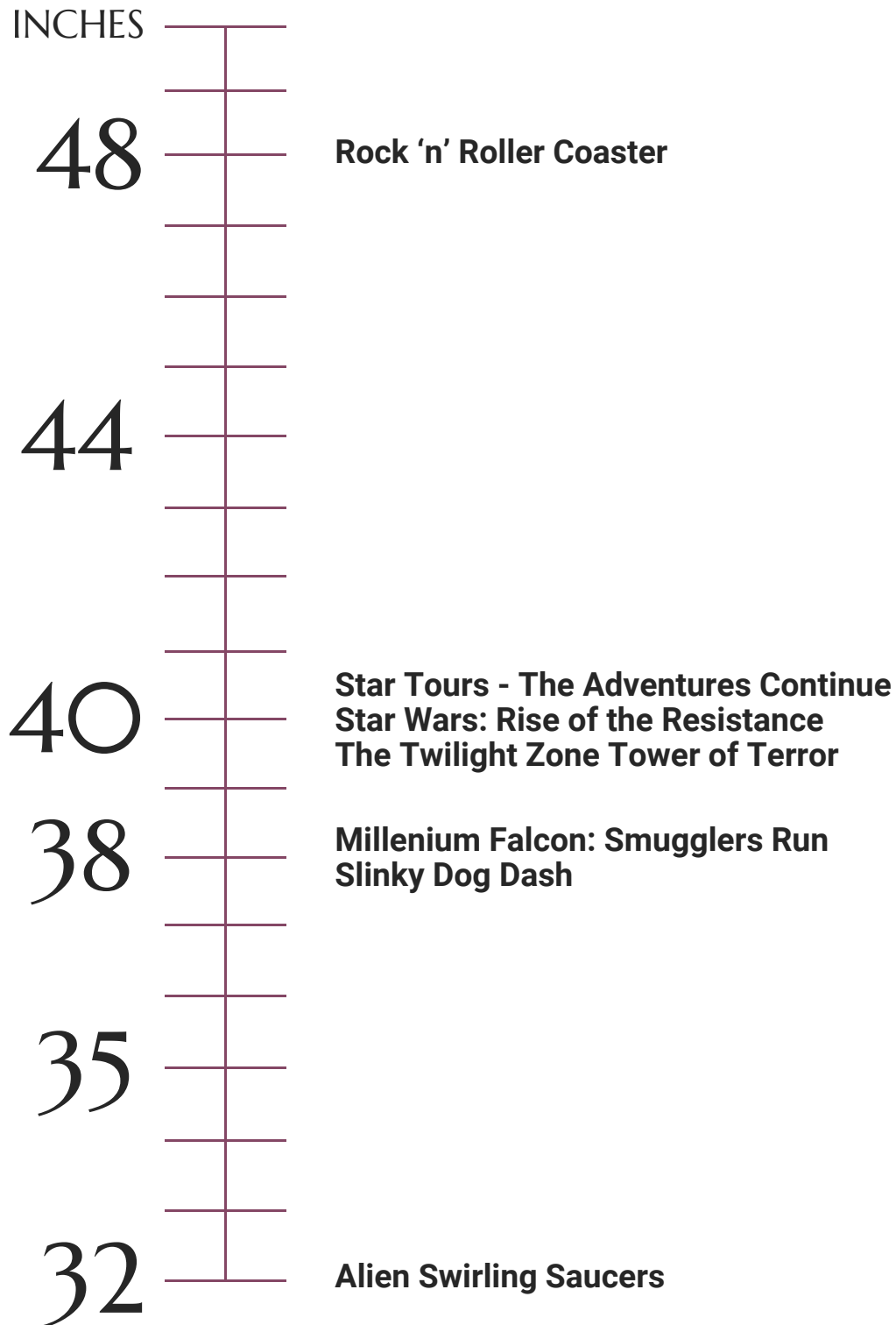
- ☐ Alien Swirling Saucers 🦋 HR=32in
- ☐ Toy Story Mania! 🦋
- ☐ Slinky Dog Dash 🦋 HR=38in

Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge

- ☐ Millennium Falcon Smugglers Run 🦋 HR=38in SR
- ☐ Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance ✦ HR=40in SR
- ☐ Savi's Workshop (\$)
- ☐ Droid Depot (\$)

HEIGHT REQUIREMENTS

Here are the seven attractions with a height requirement in Hollywood Studios. If a ride is not listed below it has no height requirement and anyone can ride (even infants).





Sci-Fi Dine-In Theater Restaurant

Quick Service Recommendations:

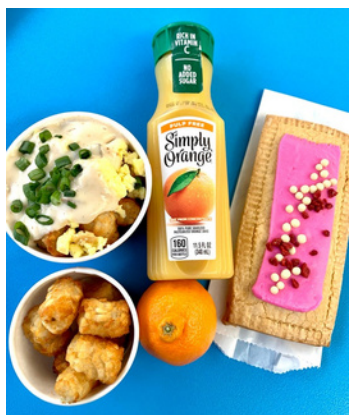
- **Docking Bay 7 (Galaxy's Edge)** has pricey but delicious and creative food in a highly themed setting. I eat here on every trip!
- **Woody Lunch Box (Toy Story Land)** has a limited menu but everything is good. Don't miss the Lunch Box Tarts, possibly my favorite snack in all of the parks.

FOOD & SNACKS

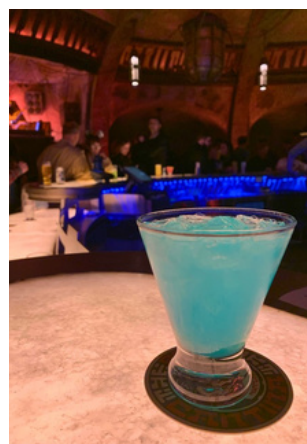
Hollywood Studios sadly has the worst food offerings of any park. There are a few standouts, but the quality drops off steeply after these.

Mobile Order is VERY helpful at these recommended quick service dining locations which get very long lines throughout the day (probably because they are the only decent food in this park).

One area in which the Studios shines is lounges. These don't require a reservation (with one exception) and have small plates or allow you to order off of the full restaurant menu.



Woody's Lunchbox & Docking Bay 7



Oga's Cantina & Brown Derby Lounge

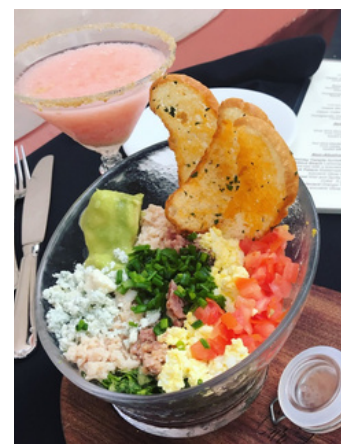


Table Service/Lounge Recommendations:

- **Oga's Cantina (Galaxy's Edge)** pricey but fun cocktails in an incredible setting - reservations required but takes walk-ups.
- **Sci-Fi Dine-In** has a fun setting where you eat in cars in a mock drive-up movie theater. Decent food.
- **Baseline Tap House** has great drinks and some appetizers - a fan favorite.
- **Hollywood Brown Derby Lounge** is a hidden gem. Order off the full menu of the Brown Derby without a reservation. Outdoor seating only.

MEETING CHARACTERS IN HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

Character meet and greets no longer are included in any "Skip the Line" passes. This makes strategy and prioritizing even more important.

Nowadays you will have to pick and choose which characters are most important and if you want to do more than two meet and greets, plan to miss out on other attractions.

MICKEY & FRIENDS

Mickey & Minnie meet guests at Red Carpet Dreams. You can also meet Minnie and friends during lunch and dinner at Hollywood & Vine. Daisy and Pluto can be found on Grand Avenue throughout the day - check the app for times.



STARS WARS CHARACTERS

Characters from the newest Star Wars trilogy walk around frequently in Galaxy's Edge. There are also meet-and-greets with the Mandalorian and others - search for the times in the MDE app.

TOY STORY CHARACTERS

These are some of the most in-demand characters in all of the parks. Expect 40+ minute waits on most days. Find times in the app and line up before the meet starts for the shortest waits.



DISNEY JUNIOR & OTHERS

The new Magic of Disney Animation provides a chance to meet many characters in one place (check the app for who is meeting there currently). You can meet Disney Junior Friends at breakfast only at Hollywood & Vine. Olaf has a dedicated space in the Echo Lake area.

ABOUT THE TOURING PLANS IN THIS GUIDEBOOK

Every theme park chapter contains suggested “Touring Plan” itineraries for different travel parties.

Though they are backed by data and tested, they are meant as **suggestions/inspiration for your day**, NOT hard-and-fast plans. Inevitably, the following things will throw off your well-made plans:

- Rides will go down (unfortunately, this is a common occurrence)
- Lightning Lanes will unexpectedly sell out early
- Someone will need to get food or go to the restroom (again)
- A ride will have a much longer wait time than expected

I suggest staying flexible and understanding that **you likely won't get to do everything you want to in a day** (I rarely do). If a ride is down, try to find a nearby attraction (or snack) to experience while you wait.

Remember that there is a **2-hour grace period for LLs**, so I suggest making them for earlier rather than later to have more flexibility in your day.

These age ranges are estimates and depend on the height/interests of your kids. Take these plans with a grain of salt and remember to go with the flow!



TOURING PLAN: FAMILIES WITH LITTLE KIDS

*Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids >32 inches and <40 inches tall**. Assumes you qualify for **Early Theme Park Entry**.*

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Slinky Dog Dash (any time except nap time)
- 2) Toy Story Mania (modify to time close to Slinky Dog if possible)
- 3) Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway (as early as possible)

EARLY MORNING UNTIL LUNCH



- Arrival: **Meet Mickey & Minnie** or **Meet Olaf** (could use Rider Switch to allow parents to do nearby rides in Galaxy's Edge)
- Use LL for **Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway** (immediately book another LL for Alien Swirling Saucers)
- Take in **Mickey Mouse Clubhouse Live!**, **Magic of Disney Animation**, and **For The First Time in Forever: A Frozen Sing-Along Celebration** (search in app for showtimes)

LUNCH & AFTERNOON BREAK



- Eat lunch at Woody's Lunchbox or Docking Bay 7
- If applicable, use LLs for **Alien Swirling Saucers**, **Toy Story Mania**, and **Slinky Dog Dash** OR take in **Beauty & the Beast: Live on Stage**
- Head back for afternoon break at hotel

RETURN FOR DINNER & MORE



- Return to park by 5 pm
- Eat Dinner at Woody's Lunchbox or Docking Bay 7
- Use LLs for rides if you haven't already (consider making more LL selections for any rides adults want to do and use Rider Switch) or Beauty & the Beast stage show
- Take in **The Little Mermaid Show** and/or **Vacation Fun: An Original Animated Short with Mickey & Minnie**
- Get seats for first showing of **Fantasmic!** (if your kids can hang that late and won't be frightened by it)

TOURING PLAN: TWEENS TO ADULTS

*Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids taller than 48 inches and adults**. Assumes you qualify for **Early Theme Park Entry**.*

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Slinky Dog Dash - early as possible
- 2) Toy Story Mania - as early as possible
- 3) Burner ride: Star Tours as early as possible

OPTIONAL LIGHTNING LANE SINGLE PASS: Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance (if you don't want to ride during Early Entry or at park close)

EARLY MORNING UNTIL LUNCH



- Early Entry: **Rise of the Resistance**
- Use LL for **Star Tours** (book LL for Rock 'n' Roller Coaster)
- Meet any characters that interest you now
- Take in **Frozen Sing-Along** and/or **Indiana Jones Stunt Spectacular**
- Use LLs for **Toy Story Mania** and **Rock 'n' Roller Coaster** (book LLs for Runaway Railway and Tower of Terror)

LUNCH & AFTERNOON BREAK



- Eat lunch at Woody's Lunchbox or Docking Bay 7
- Use LLs for **Runaway Railway** (book Millennium Falcon next), **Tower of Terror**, and **Slinky Dog Dash** OR take in **Beauty & the Beast: Live on Stage**
- Head back for afternoon break at hotel

RETURN FOR DINNER & MORE



- Return to park by 5 pm
- Eat Dinner at ABC Commissary or Docking Bay 7
- Use LLs for rides if you haven't already
- Choose from **Beauty & the Beast: Live on Stage**, **Magic of Disney Animation**, and/or **Disney Villains Show**
- Get seats for first showing of **Fantasmic!**
- Get in line for **Rise of the Resistance** right before park close (if you haven't earlier and it doesn't interfere with Fantasmic)

TOURING PLAN: NO EARLY ENTRY

Here's a plan when you're visiting with those **>48 inches and adults**. Assumes you do NOT qualify for **Early Entry** and ARE buying **Lightning Lanes**.

IDEAL ADVANCED LIGHTNING LANE MULTI PASS SELECTIONS

- 1) Slinky Dog Dash or Rock 'n' Roller Coaster
- 2) Toy Story Mania or Tower of Terror
- 3) Burner ride: For the First Time In Forever Frozen Singalong

LIGHTNING LANE SINGLE PASS: Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance

EARLY MORNING UNTIL LUNCH



- At 9:00 am: Tap into LL for Frozen Singalong but do NOT enter the theater (book next LL for Slinky Dog/Rock 'n' Roller Coaster/Tower of Terror/Toy Story Mania)
- Ride **Star Tours**
- Ride **Millenium Falcon** using Single Rider or Standby Queue
- Meet any characters that interest you now
- Use any LLs (book LL for Runaway Railway)
- Take in **Frozen Sing-Along** and/or **Indiana Jones Stunt Spectacular** before lunch



LUNCH & AFTERNOON BREAK

- Eat lunch at Woody's Lunchbox or Docking Bay 7
- Use LLs OR take in a stage show: **Indiana Jones, Beauty & the Beast: Live on Stage** and/or **Disney Villians**
- Head back for afternoon break at hotel

RETURN FOR DINNER & MORE



- Return to park by 5 pm
- Eat Dinner at ABC Commissary or Docking Bay 7
- Use LLs for rides if you haven't already, visit **Magic of Disney Animation**, or view stage shows
- Get seats for first showing of **Fantasmic!** 30 minutes before the show (check time in app)
- Get in line for anything you haven't ridden yet right up until the park "closes"

TOURING PLAN: NO MULTI PASS

Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids >48 inches**. Assumes you aren't eligible for Early Entry and aren't buying Lightning Lane Multi Pass.

If both Slinky Dog Dash and Rise of the Resistance are must-dos, I suggest buying Single Pass for RotR so you can ride Slinky Dog at park close.

EARLY MORNING UNTIL LUNCH



- Enter the park at least 30 minutes before opening and head straight to your first ride: choose two from **Tower of Terror**, **Rock 'n' Roller Coaster**, or **Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway** to ride in the first hour the park is open.
- Head to Galaxy's Edge and ride **Millenium Falcon** (use Single/Double Rider line if feasible and wait is over 30 minutes).
- Meet any characters you're interested in and/or catch the **Indiana Jones Stunt Spectacular** before lunch.

LUNCH & AFTERNOON



- Eat lunch at Woody's Lunchbox or Docking Bay 7
- Experience **Disney Villains show**, the **Frozen Sing-Along**, **Beauty & the Beast Live on Stage**, and/or **Magic of Disney Animation**
- Take afternoon break in the air conditioning at a quick service or table service restaurant
- Ride **Star Tours** anytime after 4 pm

DINNER & MORE



- Eat Dinner at Woody's Lunchbox or Docking Bay 7
- Get an after dinner drink at Oga's Cantina (check for walk-up availability in the app)
- After 7 pm the wait times start to drop for **Toy Story Mania** and **Alien Swirling Saucers** so ride them then.
- Catch a showing of **Fantasmic!** (if there are two shows the second will be much less crowded)
- Get in line for **Rise of the Resistance** or **Slinky Dog Dash** right before park close.

C H A P T E R

8

ANIMAL KINGDOM

[daily itineraries](#)

[attractions](#)

[dining](#)

[return to the main menu](#)

"To get lost is to learn the way."

- African proverb

Disney's Animal Kingdom opened in 1998 and though it has the fewest rides of any park it offers an incredible full-day experience for families.

Animal Kingdom is a place to wander and even get a little lost - it's so much more than a zoo. You'll find rides, shows, great food, and the most beautiful environment of all of the Disney World theme parks.



ANIMAL KINGDOM HIGHLIGHTS

An Animal Lovers Dream

Animal Kingdom offers an unparalleled experience for animal lovers. The rides and walk-through attractions are designed to give you up-close-and-personal viewing opportunities. It's an AZA-accredited zoo with world class animal welfare which makes it even more enjoyable.

Don't miss **Kilimanjaro Safaris** and the two main animal viewing areas - **Maharajah Jungle Trek** and **Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail**. There are also lots of animal viewing areas around the **Tree of Life** and a unique petting zoo at **Conservation Station**.



Plenty of Other Thrills

Animal Kingdom features Pandora - The World of Avatar, an immersive land with floating islands, excellent food, and two popular attractions. **Avatar Flight of Passage** is a thrilling simulator ride and **Na'vi River Journey** is a slow-moving boat ride for all ages.

Other can't-miss rides include **Expedition Everest**, a highly themed coaster, and **Kali River Rapids**, a whitewater raft ride. There are also four excellent shows at the park - **Festival of the Lion King**, **Finding Nemo**, **Zootopia: Better Zoogether!**, and **Feathered Friends in Flight**.

The new **Bluey's Wild World** experience is a must-do for any Bluey-obsessed kids.

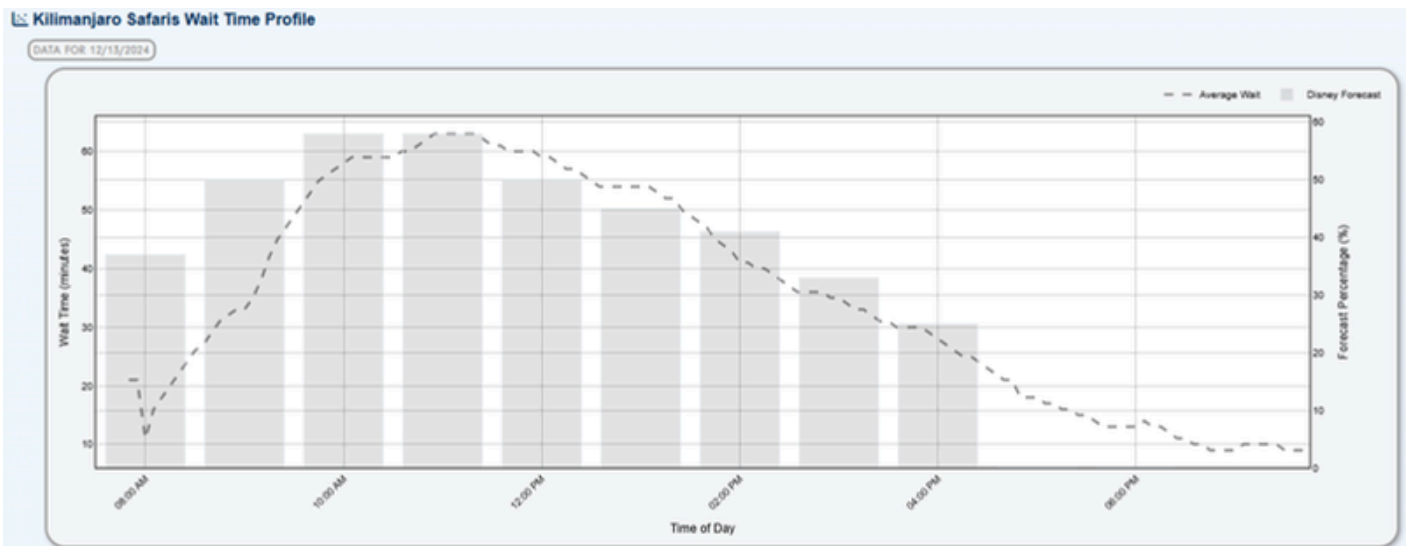




DO I NEED LIGHTNING LANE HERE?

Animal Kingdom is the one park where I usually don't recommend buying Lightning Lane Multi Pass if you are on a limited budget. Unless you are visiting during peak times (think major holidays), there are only a few rides that have sustained long wait times during the day: **Flight of Passage** and **Na'vi River Journey**.

Also, Animal Kingdom opens earlier than other parks and most people don't want to get to the parks early. So if you're willing to get there before the crowds you won't have to buy Multi Pass to avoid long waits.



As an example, here is the wait time profile for **Kilimanjaro Safaris**. Wait times stay under 30 minutes for the first hour the park is open, then drop below 30 minutes again after 3 pm. The same pattern holds for most rides since many people mistakenly think this is a “half day” park and leave by mid-afternoon.

CHANGES COMING TO ANIMAL KINGDOM

2026 comes with lots of closures and changes at Animal Kingdom.

Dinoland USA closed February 2 to begin construction on a new “Tropical Americas” land with Encanto attractions, an Indiana Jones ride, and new animal exhibits, but not until 2027.



The area serviced by the Wildlife Express Train now hosts a new Blueey interactive show, walk-through Kangaroo exhibit, and more new features.

Flight of Passage queue



FLIGHT OF PASSAGE STRATEGY

The simulator ride **Avatar: Flight of Passage** usually has the longest wait times of any ride in Disney World; waits hover around 80 minutes all day long. This is because it has lower capacity than most rides and is the headliner in a park with few other thrill rides.

For these reasons I almost always buy a Lightning Lane Single Pass for this ride. This especially makes sense if you are forgoing Multi Pass here. If you don't buy Single Pass, your best bet is to rope drop or get in line 5 minutes before park close.

ANIMAL KINGDOM MUST-DOS

Families
with
Young
Children

Meet Disney Pals at Adventurer's Outpost
Wildlife Express Train
Bluey's Wild World
Kilimanjaro Safaris
Festival of the Lion King
Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail
Maharaja Jungle Trek
Wilderness Explorers Activity
Finding Nemo: The Big Blue... and Beyond!
Na'vi River Journey
Feathered Friends in Flight

Kilimanjaro Safaris
Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail
Feathered Friends in Flight
The Oasis Exhibits
Discovery Island Trails and Exhibits
Maharajah Jungle Trek
The Animal Experience at Conservation Station

Animal
Lovers

Teens
and
Adults

Avatar: Flight of Passage
Expedition Everest
Kali River Rapids
Kilimanjaro Safaris
Festival of the Lion King
Finding Nemo: The Big Blue... and Beyond!
Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail
Maharajah Jungle Trek
Feathered Friends in Flight
Na'vi River Journey
Zootopia: Better Zoogether!

Animal Kingdom Attractions

LL Multi Pass Attractions = 🦁
Single Rider option = SR

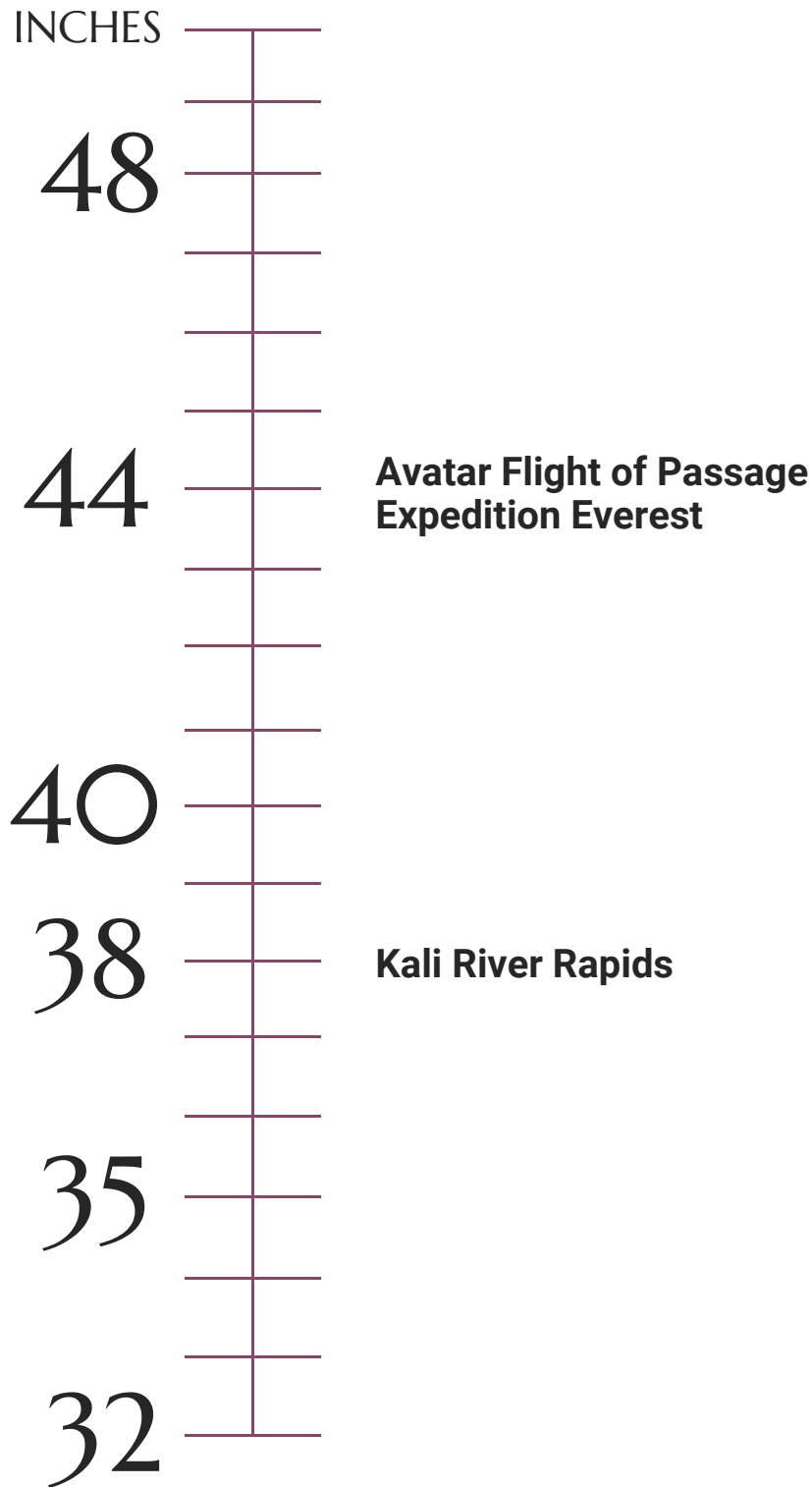
LL Single Pass Attraction = ✦

Height Requirement = HR

- Zootopia: Better Zoogether! 🦁 (interactive show)
- Discovery Island Trails (walk through)
- Meet Disney Pals at Adventurer's Outpost (Mickey & Minnie meet)
- Finding Nemo: The Big Blue... and Beyond! 🦁 (show)
- Expedition Everest 🦁 HR=44in SR
- Kali River Rapids 🦁 HR=38in
- Mahajarah Jungle Trek (walk through)
- Feathered Friends in Flight 🦁 (show)
- Kilimanjaro Safaris 🦁
- Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail (walk through)
- Festival of the Lion King 🦁 (show)
- Wildlife Express Train
- Animal Care at Conservation Station
- Jumping Junction (walk through)
- Bluey's Wild World
- Avatar Flight of Passage ✦ HR=44in
- Na'vi River Journey 🦁

HEIGHT REQUIREMENTS

Here are three attractions with a height requirement in Animal Kingdom. If a ride is not listed it has no height requirement and anyone can ride (even infants).



DINING BEST BETS

There's some great Quick Service food in Animal Kingdom, but stick with these recommendations or you will be disappointed by below-average fare.

Quick Service Recommendations:

- **Flame Tree Barbecue** has the best ribs at Disney World as well as great chicken, coleslaw, baked beans, and cornbread. Outdoor seating only with nice views.
- **Satuli Canteen** in Pandora is one of the best themed dining locations in the parks. Exotic looking create-your-own bowls with lots of variety.
- **Harambe Market** - generally only open for lunch, serves rice bowls and salads in an open-air market.



Satuli Canteen and
Flame tree Barbecue



There's a popular character meal in Animal Kingdom that is a great choice on the Disney Dining Plan - **Tusker House**. I suggest eating lunch here to get out of the heat while lines are the longest. Meet Mickey, Donald, and other friends.



Nomad Lounge



Animal Kingdom has arguably the best lounge inside a theme park: **Nomad Lounge**. It is attached to Tiffin's, the signature dining located on the path towards Pandora, and has it's own menu of small plates and signature drinks. Great food and both indoor and outdoor seating.

COFFEE & BREAKFAST

Find good coffee at **Creature Comforts** (Starbucks) on the way to Africa from the Tree of Life. Breakfast items can be found here and at **Satuli Canteen** (Pandora) and **Kusafiri Coffee Shop & Bakery** (Africa).

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- Rides will go down (unfortunately, this is a common occurrence)
- Lightning Lanes will unexpectedly sell out early
- Someone will need to get food or go to the restroom (again)
- A ride will have a much longer wait time than expected

I suggest staying flexible and understanding that **you likely won’t get to do everything you want to in a day** (I rarely do). If a ride is down, try to find a nearby attraction (or snack) to experience while you wait.

Remember that there is a **2-hour grace period for LLs**, so I suggest making them for earlier rather than later to have more flexibility in your day.

These age ranges are estimates and depend on the height/interests of your kids. Take these plans with a grain of salt and remember to go with the flow!



TOURING PLAN: FAMILIES WITH LITTLE KIDS

*Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids <38 inches tall**. Assumes you qualify for **Early Theme Park Entry**.*

This plan doesn't utilize Multi Pass. If adults want to ride Flight of Passage, I suggest buying Single Pass. This is the one park where I try to get the kids to nap in the stroller and not take a hotel break.

EARLY MORNING UNTIL LUNCH



- Early Entry: Head to Pandora and ride **Nav'vi River Journey**
- Walk to **Meet Favorite Disney Pals at Adventuere's Outpost** to meet Mickey and Minnie
- Parents take turns riding Expedition Everest with the single rider line (if desired)/ get your **Wilderness Explorer's** handbook
- Explore the **Maharajah Jungle Trek**
- Catch a late morning showing of **Finding Nemo: The Big Blue... and Beyond!**



LUNCH & EARLY AFTERNOON

- Eat lunch at Flame Tree Barbecue or Satuli Canteen
- Walk through the **Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail**
- Take the **Wildlife Express Train** to **Conservation Station** for **Bluey's Wild World** and more
- Catch an afternoon showing of **Festival of the Lion King**

LATE AFTERNOON TO PARK CLOSE



- Ride **Kilimanjaro Safari**
- Catch the 4:30 showing of **Feathered Friends in Flight** (it is ok to arrive a little late)
- Catch **Zootopia: Better Zoogether!** if interested
- Head back to Pandora to use your Single Pass for **Flight of Passage** if interested
- Eat dinner in park or elsewhere

TOURING PLAN: TWEENS TO ADULTS

*Here's a plan of action when you're visiting with **kids >44 inches tall**. Assumes you qualify for **Early Theme Park Entry**.*

This plan doesn't utilize Multi Pass. If you want to ride Flight of Passage, I suggest buying Single Pass for the last hour the park is open or getting in line 5 minutes before park close.

EARLY MORNING UNTIL LUNCH



- Early Entry: Head to Pandora and ride **Nav'vi River Journey**
- Take path to Africa from Pandora and ride **Kilimanjaro Safaris**
- Walk through the **Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail**
- Catch a showing of **Festival of the Lion King**
- Ride **Kali River Rapids** if there is time before lunch and the wait is under 30 minutes

LUNCH & EARLY AFTERNOON



- Eat lunch at Harambe Market or Flame Tree Barbecue
- Catch a showing of **Feathered Friends in Flight**
- Catch a showing of **Finding Nemo: The Big Blue... and Beyond!**
- Explore the **Maharajah Jungle Trek**

LATE AFTERNOON TO PARK CLOSE



- Ride **Expedition Everest** (option to use Single Rider Line if there is still a long wait)
- Ride **Kali River Rapids**
- Explore the trails and animal areas around the back side of the **Tree of Life** as you make your way back to Pandora and experience **Zootopia: Better Zoogether!**
- End of day: Ride **Flight of Passage** and have dinner at Satuli Canteen or Nomad Lounge

GREATEST HITS + NO EARLY ENTRY

This plan doesn't utilize Multi Pass. If you want to ride Flight of Passage without a long wait, I suggest buying Single Pass or getting in line right before park close.



EARLY MORNING UNTIL LUNCH

- Rope Drop: Head to Pandora and ride **Nav'i River Journey**
- Walk to **Meet Favorite Disney Pals at Adventurers Outpost** to meet Mickey and Minnie
- Ride Expedition Everest (Single Rider option) and/or get your **Wilderness Explorer's** handbook
- Explore the **Maharajah Jungle Trek**
- Catch a late morning showing of **Finding Nemo: The Big Blue... and Beyond!**



LUNCH & EARLY AFTERNOON

- Eat lunch at Harambe Market or Flame Tree Barbecue
- Catch a showing of **Feathered Friends in Flight**
- Catch a showing of **Festival of the Lion King**
- Walk the **Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail**



LATE AFTERNOON TO PARK CLOSE

- Ride **Kilimanjaro Safari**
- Ride **Kali River Rapids** (weather permitting)
- Catch **Zootopia: Better Zoogether!** show
- Explore the trails and animal areas around the back side of the **Tree of Life** as you make your way back to Pandora
- End of day: Ride **Flight of Passage** and have dinner at Satuli Canteen or Nomad Lounge

C H A P T E R

9

RESORT DAYS

[return to the main menu](#)



WHY TAKING DAYS OFF IS ESSENTIAL

There's no denying the theme parks of Walt Disney World are incredible. **However they are also expensive and exhausting!** I always take days off between park days on vacation. Here's why:

- **Save money:** In years past adding a day to your ticket after the 3-day mark was inexpensive, but in 2025 the difference between three- and four-day tickets for a family of four is \$500. Save that or put it to better use.
- **Save your feet:** It is common to have over 20,000 steps in a park day at Disney World. Day after day of this will leave your feet screaming for a day off. Give them a break so you can enjoy the next park day!
- **Avoid meltdowns:** Staying up late for fireworks and waking up early the next morning for rope drop is a recipe for meltdowns - even in kids who you thought were past this. Let them get some sleep and some unstructured time so everyone can enjoy vacation.
- **The rest of Disney World is amazing:** The best restaurants are found outside of the theme parks. The resorts, water parks, Disney Springs, and other activities are just as impressive as the theme parks but are cheaper or free.

THINGS TO DO ON RESORT DAYS

*Most visitors have no idea how much there is to do at Walt Disney World OUTSIDE of the theme parks. **Important note:** while you can visit other resorts, you can only swim in the pool if you are paying to stay there.*

CHARACTER DINING

Resorts days are my recommended time to dine with the characters! You aren't paying to be in the parks and missing out on rides and you'll be less rushed. Some of the best character dining is found at the Disney resorts.



MAXIMIZING YOUR RESORT

Most guests never take advantage of the amenities at their Disney resorts because they are spending all of their time in the theme parks. Resorts at all levels have great pools, playgrounds, arcades, daily free activities, and more.

DISNEY SPRINGS

The massive shopping, dining, and entertainment complex at Disney World is a go-to destination for resort days. You'll be surprised by how many affordable things to do and restaurants there are here.



VISITING OTHER RESORTS

My favorite activity on resort days is to check out other resorts. There are places to eat, photo opportunities, as well as free activities.

LOW COST THINGS TO DO

Disney resort guests get free admission to a Disney Water Park on check-in day in 2025, making this a perfect activity. I also like miniature golf and renting bikes for fun activities on resort days.



RECOMMENDED CHARACTER DINING



CAPE MAY CAFE

Breakfast only at Beach Club Resort with Minnie, Daisy, Donald, and Goofy. Buffet with plenty of options.



TOPOLINOS TERRACE

Breakfast only at Riviera Resort. Order from menu with excellent food. Meet Mickey, Minnie, Daisy, and Donald.



CHEF MICKEY'S

Iconic meal at Contemporary Resort with Fab Five. Average family-style food in fun setting on monorail line.



1900 PARK FARE

Breakfast and dinner buffet with Cinderella, Mirabel, Tiana, and Aladdin at the Grand Floridian on the monorail line.



MAXIMIZE YOUR RESORT



Most guests never even scratch the surface of all the things there are to do at Disney resort hotels:

- Free nightly **marshmallow roasting** (check activity guide for times)
- Free **poolside movie** most nights
- Daily free **pool party** led by cast members with games and prizes (weather permitting)
- Resort **scavenger hunts**
- **Arcades** with games, massaging chairs for adults, and toy machines
- **Gift shops** with unique merchandise
- Highly **themed pools**, some with waterslides, water play areas, and hot tubs
- **Playgrounds** at most resorts

INSIDER TIP

Look for signboards around the resort with the Activity Guide. They will have a QR code to scan so you can have it handy on your phone for reference.



DISNEY SPRINGS

There is enough shopping and dining at Disney Springs to make your head spin. Here are some of my personal favorite things to do:

- **Eat at The Polite Pig:** Centrally-located quick service dining by local chef with excellent food and drinks.
- **Visit the LEGO Store:** You may have to wait in a short line just to enter but worth it for the opportunity for kids to play for free. Get pictures with giantic LEGO statues around the building.
- **Grab a treat:** There are several upscale bakeries including Amorette's Patisserie and popular Gideon's Bakehouse (uses a virtual queue). Or visit the cupcake ATM at Sprinkles for a memorable treat.
- **Shop at Disney Store and Uniqlo:** The largest gift shop on property and the Japanese clothing store are popular shopping destinations.
- **Enjoy a relaxed sit down meal:** Now's the time to enjoy a meal without feeling rushed to get on the next ride. Favorites include The Boathouse, Homecomin', Terralina Crafted Italian, and Summer House on the Lake.
- **Get a rooftop view:** Visit the top floor of the Coca-Cola store for a birds-eye view of Disney Springs - no purchase is required.



Art of Animation Cars Area

RESORT HOPPING

Visiting other resorts to eat, explore, and take pictures might be my favorite resort day activity.

Disney buses only go from resorts to the parks, not resort-to-resort. You'll have to go to a park first or use a rideshare to get to another resort.

The easiest resorts to visit are those on the Monorail or Skyliner lines:

Monorail resorts: Contemporary, Polynesian, Grand Floridian

Skyliner resorts: Boardwalk, Beach/Yacht Club, Riviera, Caribbean Beach, Art of Animation

Take a bus to Magic Kingdom and hop on the Monorail or take a bus to Hollywood Studios for the Skyliner.

WATER PARKS & MORE

In 2025 every guest at a Disney resort will get **free admission to a Water Park on their check-in day**. The two Disney World water parks are:

- Typhoon Lagoon
- Blizzard Beach

Only one is open at a time and they have incredible theming and slides. Lines get long so if you can get there early you'll have the best experience.

Other activities at Disney World that we enjoy on resort days are

- Renting a surrey bike for a spin around the Boardwalk
- Miniature golf (two fun and highly themed 18-hole courses)
- Visit Tri-Circle D Ranch at Fort Wilderness (take a boat from Magic Kingdom to get here)

Typhoon Lagoon



SAMPLE RESORT DAY ITINERARY

Every month I share a new Resort Day Itinerary inside my VIP membership, **Neverland Travel Club**. Here's a sample and [click here to join for only \\$7/month](#).

Beach Club Brunch & Boardwalk Fun

If possible make an Advance Dining Reservation (ADR) for brunch at Cape May Cafe. If you aren't able to secure an ADR there will likely be walk up availability in the My Disney Experience App.

1. Take a bus from your resort to Hollywood Studios (15-30 minutes)
2. Take the FriendShip Boat from Hollywood Studios to the Beach Club (10-15 minutes)
3. Arrive at the Beach Club and enjoy brunch (last seating is at 11:30 am) at Minnie's Beach Bash Breakfast at Cape May Cafe taking advantage of the Disney Rewards Visa discount if you have the card.
4. Walk (or take a FriendShip Boat across the lake) to the Boardwalk Inn and rent a 2- or 4-person Surrey Bike for a fun spin around the Lake. Use your Disney Rewards Visa for a discount here, too!
5. Take an Uber or Lyft back to your resort from the Boardwalk or take Disney Transportation back to your resort: walk or take the boat back to Hollywood Studios OR ride the Skyliner from the back entrance of Epcot all of the way back to Hollywood Studios for a return bus.
6. Spend the afternoon at your resort pool, napping, or exploring your resort (be sure to check the Activity Guide posted around the resort for all of the things to do).
7. Get dinner at your resort or take a bus to Disney Springs.

C H A P T E R

10

OTHER VACATION DETAILS

[return to the main menu](#)



WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

There are many other moving parts to a Disney World vacation and things you **COULD** spend money on. When trying to get the most bang for your buck you need expert help to decide what's worth it and what isn't!

Here are some topics I'll cover in this chapter to help you be completely prepared for your trip:

- Strollers
- Souvenirs
- Magic Bands
- Resort refillable mugs
- Airport transfers
- PhotoPass & Memory Maker
- Enchanting Extras
- Grocery delivery
- Standby Skipper

“

I'm able to visit Disney World four+ times per year because I know exactly where to spend and where to save.

”



PHOTOPASS & MEMORY MAKER

The PhotoPass service at Disney World refers to both ride photos and live photographers at character meet and greets and stationed around the parks.

There are several options for taking advantage of the PhotoPass service:

- You'll get **free downloads of all ride photos** if you purchase LL Multi Pass for the day. This is a great perk and we always get a kick out of our photos. You'll get notifications in the app when there's a photo to view.
- PhotoPass photographers will **take pictures with your own device** - just politely ask and they are happy to do this.
- If you want to offload taking pictures on your trip, you can purchase a **Memory Maker package** that will give you unlimited access to all PhotoPass pictures. Many people share the cost since you'll get downloads for up to 25 people linked in your MDE account.
- **Individual PhotoPass downloads** are \$17 each. This makes sense if you just want one or two professional photos from your trip.

ACCESSIBILITY AT DISNEY WORLD

Disney World is committed to providing an inclusive environment and accessible experiences for guests. [Click here for an overview of all the services they offer.](#)



May Remain in Wheelchair/ECV

Review a list of attractions that allow Guests to remain in their wheelchair or Electric Conveyance Vehicle (ECV).



Must Transfer from ECV to Wheelchair

Review a list of certain attractions Guests may be required [to transfer from their ECV to a wheelchair, or from their ECV to a wheelchair and then to a ride vehicle.](#)



Must Transfer from Wheelchair/ECV to Ride Vehicle

Review a list of certain attractions Guests must transfer from their wheelchair or ECV, either by themselves or with assistance from someone in their party.



Must Be Ambulatory

Review a list of attractions that require Guests to walk by themselves or receive assistance from members of their party while enjoying an experience.

Rides are divided into four different categories based on how guests with mobility devices access the ride - [click here for more details](#). Many guests opt to rent a motorized scooter (ECV) to get around the parks. You can [rent ECVs for just inside the parks from Disney](#) or for your entire vacation (you park and charge it at your hotel room) [from a private company such as ScooterBug](#).

For neurodivergent guests, Disney has [this 22-page guide planning guide](#) that is very helpful. They also have a [Disability Access Service \(DAS\)](#) to support guests who, due to a developmental disability like autism or similar, are unable to wait in a conventional queue for an extended period of time. There have been recent changes to who qualifies for DAS so be sure to [get the latest guidelines here](#).

Disney World excels at accommodating those with special dietary requests, including those with common food allergies or intolerances. There are special "Allergy-Friendly" menus available at most restaurants. [Click here for more information on visiting with special dietary requests.](#)

STROLLERS

Since you will likely walk 5-8 miles per day, you'll find that kids who have long outgrown strollers at home will want one on this vacation.

I've found that a lightweight, easy to fold stroller brought from home works best. Kids can even take turns riding in it.

Other options are to rent a stroller there, but the strollers at the parks are hard plastic (i.e. uncomfortable) and expensive. Your best bet is to rent from a company that delivers to your resort, such as Kingdom Strollers.



T-SHIRTS & EARS

I love a cute pair of Minnie Mouse ears, but the headbands sold at Disney World are expensive (\$35+) and heavy, which means they sometimes give me a headache.

Also, buying t-shirts for a family of four at Disney World will set you back at *least* \$150.

I always buy these vacation essentials at Target, Etsy, or Amazon before my trip. This saves hundreds of dollars and you'll be more comfortable to boot.





MAGICBANDS

MagicBands are adjustable, waterproof wristbands that have a small radio frequency (RF) chip inside. While they aren't necessary, they are convenient and fun.

When you are at Disney World, you can use a MagicBand to:

- Unlock your resort hotel room
- Use your park tickets to enter the theme parks (as long as you've purchased a ticket, of course)
- Use your Lightning Lane reservations
- Charge purchases and dining back to your resort hotel
- Link Disney PhotoPass pictures to your account
- Redeem your credits on the [Disney Dining Plan](#)

You tap the Mickey symbol on your MagicBand to a receiver on your room door, at the turnstiles, at checkout registers, etc. to use your band.

MagicBand+ interacts with rides and shows in the parks by lighting up and vibrating.

The MagicMobile feature in the MDE app has made it possible to essentially use your phone as a MagicBand. [Click here to learn how to set it up.](#)

For this reason, **I only suggest purchasing a MagicBand for kids who don't have their own device.** Keep in mind that the bands need recharged each night to light up but always have basic functions such as acting as your park ticket.





RESORT REFILLABLE MUGS

Disney Resort refillable mugs are **hard plastic 16-oz travel mugs with a handle and lid**. They have an RFID-enabled chip in their base that allows **unlimited drink refills at any Disney World resort hotel** of coffee, tea, soft drinks, iced tea, and hot chocolate. The mugs work for 14 days at resorts only - not in the theme parks.

They are not cheap (currently \$23+tax) but if you are staying at Disney World for 4+ days and use them for coffee and one other drink daily they will definitely pay for themselves. They're also a fun souvenir.

INSIDER TIP

You can take your mugs with you when visiting other resorts and use them for free drinks there.

If I'm going to grab lunch at a quick service restaurant at another resort I bring my mug along so I don't have to buy another drink.

A mug refill station



ENCHANTING EXTRAS

*Disney groups many “add-on” experiences into a category called **Enchanting Extras**. These require reservations which can be made 60 days prior (+10 days in with a resort reservation). Here are some examples.*

BUILD A LIGHTSABER OR DROID

These two Star Wars merchandise experiences in Hollywood Studio’s Galaxy’s Edge are wildly popular. After [building a droid](#) (\$119+) you can use them in a droid playground. The lightsaber experience (\$249+) at [Savi’s Workshop](#) is much loved by die hard fans. Get reservations ASAP.



BIBBIDI BOBBIDI BOUTIQUE

A princess makeover experience inside of Cinderella Castle. Best for ages 6-9. The least expensive option is \$99 plus tax and requires that you bring a dress from home. Dress packages start at \$199. One of the most difficult reservations to get in all of WDW. [Click here for details.](#)

BACKSTAGE TOURS

A fun way to “plus” your visit, only recommended for return visitors. Excellent value from low-cost tours such as [Behind the Seeds](#) at Epcot and [Caring for Giants](#) at Animal Kingdom. The [Keys to the Kingdom](#) tour at Magic Kingdom is also a hit.



FIREWORKS DESSERT PARTIES

These pricey add-ons offer desserts and a reserved viewing area for the evening entertainment. Not recommended due to the cost and fact that you can get equally good views from many places in the park.

INSIDER TIP

You can get a 15% discount on some Enchanting Extras when you pay with a Disney Reward Visa. [Click here for more information.](#)



Private airport transportation with Away We Go

AIRPORT TRANSFERS

Since the Orlando airport is a 25-30 minute drive from Disney World, you'll have to figure out how to get back and forth if you are flying.

Here are your four main options:

- **Uber/Lyft:** most affordable (\$35-\$45 each way), ok for parties of up to 4 (it will be cramped)
- **Private transport:** Best for groups, can take you directly to the parks, best experience & fastest. I highly recommend Away We Go which has vans with multiple car seats that hold up to 11 people and will stop for a grocery pickup.
- **Mears Connect:** shared coach bus that stops at multiple resorts, not recommended due to cost and time involved. Use rideshare or private transport instead.
- **Rental Car:** I only recommend this if have free parking at your resort. Parking fees will cancel out any potential savings otherwise.

RENTING A CAR

Another option for getting around Orlando is renting a car. This especially makes sense if you are also visiting Universal.

I have rented a car MANY times in Orlando so here are my tips:

- Use AutoSlash to search for the lowest rates.
- Always pick up on airport. Don't be fooled by lower prices off-airport - the shuttles are unreliable and frustrating.



- Decline the rental company's toll package and use Visitor Toll Pass to save money on your rental.
- Join the rental company's loyalty program and link your account to your reservation. This will often let you bypass long lines at the counter and go right outside.
- Pay for your rental with a credit card that offers primary insurance such as my favorite travel card.



Our dogs with a Trusted Housesitter

OTHER DETAILS

GROCERY DELIVERY

Convenience and breakfast items are horribly overpriced at the Disney resorts, so I get a grocery order delivered to my resort at the start of each trip.

I use DoorDash for grocery delivery because I get complimentary DashPass as a benefit of having this card in my wallet.

Other good options are Instacart, Walmart+, or a free trial of Amazon Fresh for Whole Foods delivery.

HOUSE & PET SITTING

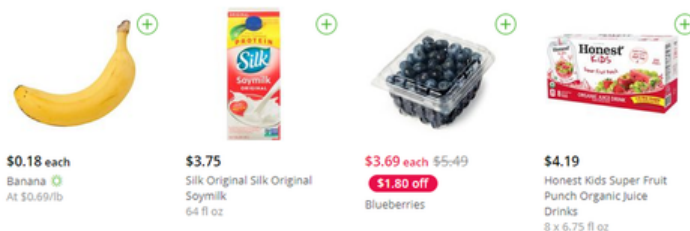
One huge obstacle to travel for is our menagerie of pets (we have five at our house: three dogs, two cats, and a guinea pig).

The solution I have used for going on five years now is a membership in TrustedHousesitters.

It's an online platform connecting pet owners with trustworthy sitters who care for pets in their own homes. When you join as a pet owner, you create a profile of your home and pets, then list the dates you'll be traveling.

Pet sitters apply for the sit, and you choose one to come and take care of your pets - no money changes hands since you are offering a free place to stay in exchange for caring for your pets.

This saves us thousands of dollars in pet sitting costs each year - [click here to read my full review](#).



Here's what I regularly order:

- Fruit for breakfast
- Granola or cereal
- Milk or yogurt
- Protein bars
- Hard boiled eggs
- Individually wrapped snacks to take in your park bag
- Bottled water or gallon jugs of spring water for refilling water bottles
- Beer/wine
- Snack food for poolside
- Spray sunscreen

Here are two other popular add-ons to Disney World vacations that can potentially help you avoid crowds and long wait times.



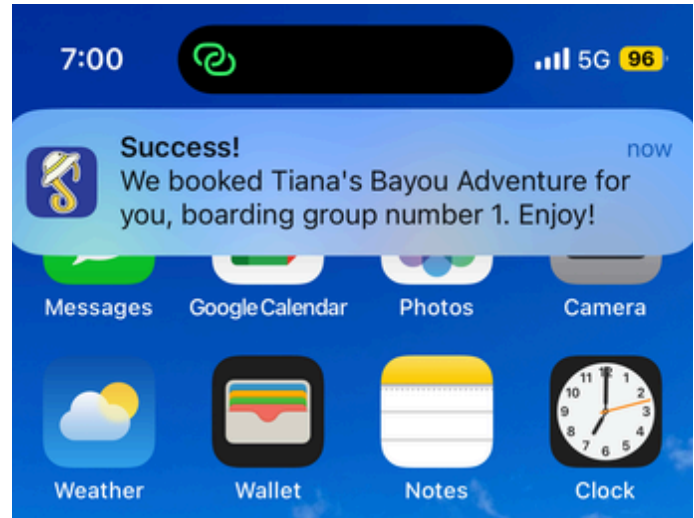
AFTER HOURS EVENTS

Free and paid opportunities to be in the parks after hours with much lower wait times.

A huge perk of staying at a Disney Deluxe Resort is **Extended Evening Theme Park Hours**. You'll get an additional two hours in the park after it closes to everyone else at no additional cost - check the daily schedule in MDE for parks/dates. You even get free access when you rent DVC points - [click here for info!](#)

Disney After Hours is a paid way to stay in Magic Kingdom, Epcot, and Hollywood Studios after they close to others. You get three additional hours but you'll pay - anywhere from \$155 to \$185 per person.

It's probably obvious that I suggest the free option here.



STANDBY SKIPPER

A third party app that makes Lightning Lane and Virtual Queue reservations for you.

I have become a huge fan of anything that keeps me off of my phone while in the parks. **Standby Skipper** is a third-party service that does just that.

After you check in for your first LL Multi Pass selection, it begins making more selections for you one at a time. It is able to secure VERY hard-to-get selections and all without you having to go into the MDE app.

The service costs \$25 for one-day or \$45 for up to 7 days, however it is good for up to 12 people. I think the price is worth it.

RESOURCES

General Tips

[The Best Dates to Visit Walt Disney World + Free Printable Calendar](#)

[15 Tips For Disney World First Timers](#)

[Disney Magic Bands 101: Everything You Need To Know](#)

[Disney World Reservation Date Calculator](#)

[My #1 Favorite Travel Card](#)

[Chase Disney Visa Pros and Cons](#)

[Guide to Visiting Disney World at Christmas](#)

Visiting The Theme Parks

[Disney Lightning Lane Ultimate Guide & Cheat Sheet](#)

[How To Make Lightning Lane Reservations](#)

[Where to Get the Cheapest Disney World Tickets](#)

[What To Pack In Your Disney World Park Bag](#)

[Disney World Halloween Guide](#)

Food & Dining

[How To Use Mobile Order at Disney World + Tips](#)

[Disney World Grocery Delivery Guide](#)

[Disney Dining Plan 101](#)

[Disney Dining Plan Tips & Tricks](#)

[Best of Disney World Quick Service Dining](#)

Accommodations

[How To Rent DVC Points to Save Thousands at Walt Disney World](#)

[What to Expect at the Disney Value Resorts](#)

[Best & Worst of the Disney Value Resorts](#)

[Rooms That Sleep 5 at Disney World](#)

[How to Save up to 40% at Disney World With Priceline](#)

[The Best & Worst of the Disney Moderate Resorts](#)

THANK YOU!

I truly hope you found this guide helpful. Thank you so much for supporting my efforts to help families experience all of the magic of Disney World while staying within their budget.

If you have any feedback or questions, please don't hesitate to contact me - I love hearing from readers. Email me at Leah@thebudgetmouse.com or find me over on Instagram - I'm [@thebudgetmouse](https://www.instagram.com/thebudgetmouse).

I hope you have an incredible vacation!

XO, Leah

