

A Deliberate Mother's Guide to Disneyland



By April Perry



www.powerofmoms.com

For the full Disney Guide that accompanies this eBook, complete with an online, expandable version of this information, dozens of photos, videos, a trip-planning template, Cast Member Thank You Notes, and links to additional resources, please visit

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Introduction:

Welcome to your Power of Moms Disney Guide! We're here to provide you with a wealth of tips and tricks to make your visit to Disneyland a meaningful, balanced, happy time for your entire family (including you!).

You'll most likely want to skim through this eBook--focusing on the parts that specifically address your needs. Then be sure to visit our full Disney Guide Homepage at www.powerofmoms.com (you'll log in and go to "My Programs"). We've created an expandable version of this eBook, complete with lots of pictures and videos to further explain how to make the most of your time at Disneyland—plus a planning template, Character Thank You Notes, and lots of links you won't want to miss.

You have some fabulous, magical adventures in store, and we're happy to be a part of it!

Why I Wrote this Guide

The summer after I graduated from high school, I got my *dream job* as a cast member at Disneyland. (They don't have "employees." They have *cast members*, so everyone who works there is part of the show--just for you!)

Having been raised in Southern California, just 20 minutes away from The Magic Kingdom, I'd had the chance to visit the park a handful of times as a guest, and I was sure that working at Disneyland wouldn't feel like "work" at all.

I was right. Disneyland was my element.

Seven years later, when my husband completed grad school on the east coast and we moved with our three preschoolers back to Southern California, I had the chance to experience Disneyland as a mom (which was so much fun, but so much harder!).

We all loved being there, but I kept making mistake after mistake after mistake--ending up in the middle of huge crowds when my children were hungry, experiencing tantrums while

waiting in lines, leaving the park too late--when everyone was overtired--and snapping at my children when they wanted to buy all the beautiful toys and treats surrounding us. Disneyland itself was magical, but trying to enjoy the magic with *children* often felt impossible (even though they were totally cute).



Now, after having family passes on and off for eight years (when it's worked with our vacation budget and family circumstances), I feel like I've finally perfected the art of "Disneyland with Children."

I've been hesitant to talk about all the great Disney tips and tricks I've learned because I know that not everyone gets the chance to go to Disneyland. (And some people don't even *like* Disneyland, which I honestly can't comprehend.)

But because I help run an online community for moms, I have a deep love for the Disney parks, I specialize in project-planning and organization, and I want to help families maximize their family vacations, a Deliberate Mothers' Guide to Disneyland was just aching to be written.

This eBook is going to spell out my very best ideas--and lots of suggestions from members of our Power of Moms community (the link to our Facebook thread is in the online version). This is what I would tell my sisters or girlfriends if they were coming into town. This is what I personally do whenever I take my own children to the Disney parks.

There are already some excellent Disney guides on the market that will give you the complete run-down on travel tips, rides, hotels, dining, characters, and day-planning. I encourage you to read those, and understand I am not trying to replicate them with this guide.

This is going to be a different type of resource. I'm going to talk mostly about the details that will make this experience beneficial for every single family member - the kind of tips and ideas that will help you maximize the magic while minimizing the stress. No meltdowns, no exhausted, grumpy parents, and no whiney children (well, not *much* whining).

I know I'm not the expert on everything, but we have *great* experiences at Disneyland, we go on all the rides we want, we don't stand in long lines, we spend within our budget, and my kids are totally happy there.

(As a side note, I haven't yet been to Disney World, but I'm pretty sure that many of these ideas will be just as helpful at that location. Maybe I'll do a companion guide someday, but in the meantime, we'll link to additional resources on the Disney Kit Homepage.)

Parents all over the world invest significant time and money in Disney vacations because they want to build beautiful family memories. They want to see their children experience "magic," and they want the time away from their everyday activities to be spent in a lovely, safe, happy location.

My goal is to help families everywhere to have a fantastic experience at Disneyland--whether it's their first time or their 100th time.

Disney really does do an outstanding job helping create magical family vacations. When we leave the park, our relationships are stronger and our children are more thoughtful. Our eyes are opened a little more to the world, we're thinking more about other people, and we're dreaming a little bigger. It's an experience I wish every family could have.

So keep reading through this eBook, and I'll do my best to help you create those magical, family-building results for *your family*.

For Starters: At What Age Will My Child Enjoy Disneyland?

As I was planning this eBook, this is one of the most common questions I heard. Parents want to time it “just right,” so they’ll get the most out of their investment--which makes total sense. I would definitely recommend Disneyland for any child over the age of three, since that’s the age when children can understand what’s going on and can get really excited, but I think the “final answer” is unique for every family.

You’ll want to consider each child’s temperament, for example. Can he or she wait in lines . . . even if it’s hot outside or it’s been a long day? My fourth child, Spencer, was a “runner” and would kick and scream every time we got into one of the queues, so we didn’t get passes when he was one or two because I simply didn’t have the energy to take care of him. (My other children weren’t like that.)

Does your child nap well in a stroller? We had a nice double-jogger that reclined beautifully, and when Ethan and Grace were one and two, they would fall asleep in it very easily. This enabled us to stay at Disneyland longer and was a major factor in whether we would go or not. Even though you can go back to a hotel for naps, if you have a stroller-napper, it’s a helpful resource.

I did interview some mothers at Disneyland who were there with little babies (in addition to their older children), and they were having a terrific time. With the “Stroller Passes” that we’ll talk about later, they didn’t have to spend much time in line, and when I asked them if they would recommend that other mothers with babies come to Disneyland, they said, “Oh yes! We love Disneyland. They’ll have a great time.”

However, I have heard from mothers who took little babies when the weather was hot and the park was crowded, and they simply didn’t feel it was worth all the work. Understanding your baby as you do, you’ll need to decide when the time is right.

I personally took my oldest daughter to Disneyland for the first time (on a special Mommy-Daughter date while Grandma watched the two younger children) when she was three. Ten years later, she still remembers getting glow-in-the-dark mouse ears and meeting Eeyore. We

made some sweet memories together, and she had no problem waiting in the lines or exploring the park all day.

When I had three little ones at home, I figured out that it was more affordable to buy year-long Disney passes for the whole family than 10 months of preschool, so we got the passes and called it “Disneyland Preschool.” I went to the park at least twice a month with all of my children--spanning ages one to five. My son Ethan learned to walk in the queue for “Alice in Wonderland.”

People would look at me all alone with three children in my stroller and think I was insane, but it was still really fun for us. We had to adjust our schedule to accommodate diaper changes, naps, and bottle fill-ups, and to be quite honest, the two youngest ones hardly remember *anything* from all those hours I spent with them there, but I loved the rides, the music, the flowers, the characters, the excellent customer service, the parades, and all the special events. It was pure bliss.

Right now, my children are between the ages of 5 and 13, and Disneyland has taken on a whole new definition of fun. We can ride the “big” rides together, we can stay late, and we can actually talk and joke together while we’re waiting in line. It’s wonderful, but my girls don’t dress up like Cinderella or Snow White anymore, and no one is as inclined to just “soak in the magic,” since everyone is anxious to get to “the next ride.” I kind of miss the way it used to be when they were younger.



But it's great now in a different way.

So I guess what I'm saying is that while ages three and up are ideal for Disneyland, there is magic to be found for children of every age. And since Walt Disney purposely designed the parks to be fun for the parents *and* the children, if *you* want to go, and if you think your children will be happy there, then do it.

An Additional Consideration: Height Requirements

One afternoon, my job at Disneyland was to measure all the children getting in line for Indiana Jones to make sure they were tall enough to ride. It broke my heart to send children away crying. So before you plan your trip, it would be helpful for you to measure your children and compare their heights with the requirements for each ride just to make sure there won't be any major let-downs once you get there. (The Disneyland website will fill you in on all the details. Links are also in the online version.) You also might want to check to see which rides are going to be closed during your visit. (Check the park calendar page, click the date of your visit, and then scroll to the bottom for a list of rides being refurbished. Preparation is everything.)

I've found that as long as children know in advance which rides they can ride and which ones they cannot, it won't be a big deal, but getting turned away at the ride itself is *traumatic*.

If there are specific rides your children are dying to go on (like Space Mountain, Thunder Mountain, Splash Mountain, Star Tours, or Indiana Jones), it might be wise to take your trip when those who *really* want to ride those rides are tall enough.

Should I Buy Single-Day Tickets, Multi-Day Tickets, or Season Passes?

There are lots of great options available to those who want to spend some quality time at Disneyland. I'm not going to spend a ton of time going through all the options, but basically, you can choose anything from a "one-day ticket at one park" to a season pass that will let you into both the Disneyland and California Adventure parks every single day for a year.

When I first took my three-year-old daughter, we got the “one day, one park” option, and it was a fantastic experience.

However, that was before California Adventure became so amazing (that’s the new park adjacent to Disneyland). If I were to do my “first time” trip again, I would want to spend one day in each park. And personally, I think trying to do a single day park-hopper is simply spreading yourself too thin. Staying an extra day and paying the added admission fee is well worth it. (And Disney is not compensating me to say this. . . .)

If you are traveling from quite a distance and really want to “soak up the Disney magic,” the three-day passes will probably be your best option.

I’ve heard *lots* of families make this same recommendation:

“Because we have a wide range of ages, we love California Adventure as well. We do park hopper tickets and have found the perfect amount of days, for us, is three. One day at CA Adventure and two at Disneyland.”

Now this is where I wish everyone could live in Southern California. Season passes are *the best*. The prices have been going up a bit each year, but as far as I’m concerned, if you live near Orange County and you’re going to go to Disneyland at all, it’s better to save up and get passes. Going just two or three times will make it worth the cost--and it just takes the pressure off.

We can go to the parks for a few hours, and if it’s crowded or if the children are having a difficult day, we can just go home and try again another time. I take my children to Disneyland for a few hours after school sometimes, and we go as a family on Friday nights or weeknights occasionally.

I have friends who live out of the area, but they also choose to buy annual passes because they take two or three trips to Southern California each year, and they use their passes enough to make it worth the investment.

We personally get the most basic pass, which blocks us out on weekends, holidays, and peak seasons, but that works out well for us because we don't want to be there on the most crowded days, and our work schedules are flexible enough that we can take advantage of the open days.

One tip that might be helpful is this: You can always upgrade your pass. If in doubt, purchase a one-day pass and then see how your day goes. If you feel like you got enough out of the day to last you a year (or more), then you go home and call it good. But if you decide you'd like to apply that day's ticket to a multi-day pass or an annual pass, you just go to the ticket booth and pay for the upgrade. Disney has *excellent* customer service, and they're happy to work with you on making this decision.

When Should We Go?

There isn't a "perfect" answer to this--because sometimes the park is crowded when you think it won't be--and sometimes it's empty when you think it shouldn't be, but here are the basic guidelines:

- If you check the Disneyland website and review the Southern California Select Block-Out dates, those are the busiest times at the park (weekends, holidays, summer time, spring break, etc.).
- On days the park closes at 8:00 p.m., there are usually very light crowds. You don't have as many hours to spend in the park, but you'll breeze through the lines, and your children will most likely be in a better mood when you're not running around after their bedtime.
- Most of my friends recommend late January, early February, late April (after Spring Break), after Labor Day/before Columbus Day, and right before and after Thanksgiving break - and I agree with them.

The fall is a favorite for me. Disney decorates with lots of beautifully-carved, Disney-themed pumpkins, the weather is cool, and I just love it.



Getting there in early December before the crowds hit for the holidays is also wonderful. There are lots of holiday “extras” to enjoy, but if your children mainly want to ride the attractions and see Mickey, I would go in February or late September.

As far as the *day* of the week to go, practically everyone I know suggests you go on a Tuesday or Wednesday and I’ve also found that these days are good days to go.

If you find that the only time you can make it to Disneyland is during a peak time, you can still have a great experience, but you’ll probably want to stay for more than one day, get into the parks early, plan lots of breaks, and do your best not to end up “going with the crowd,” which is what I’ll detail throughout the rest of this eBook.

If there is any way you can manage it, I strongly recommend you take off work or school and plan your trip during the off-season. Your overall experience will be much less stressful. But either way, we’ll do our best to help make the trip wonderful.

Where Should We Stay?

I went to our Power of Moms community for help with this, since I’ve always lived within driving distance or had family close to Disneyland. Here’s what they recommend:

- “We love to stay at the Desert Palms Hotel on the corner of Katella. That way we can walk to Disneyland and not bother with parking. They also have a shuttle, which is great. We get the Escalante suite, which has room for all of us. On the second day, we come back for a rest and naps, and I bring my crock pot and have a meal ready in our room. (SO easy to make a frozen crockpot meal and just throw it in when you leave for Disneyland that morning.) They also have a full continental breakfast and a pool, so it’s money saving and fun!”
- “The Albertson’s closest to Disneyland will deliver food to your hotel room. You can order ahead lunch stuff. Stay at Parkview across the street and walk. Eat breakfast at the hotel, go early, come back for lunch (with or without swimming), then go back.”
- “If one is looking for a reasonable rate at a clean hotel with a pool and restaurant, you can’t go wrong with The Annabella (and lower floors have hardwood floors!).”

I’ve personally stayed at the Disneyland Hotel, and it was lovely. The pool, fitness center, and koi pond were wonderful, and by jumping on the monorail, we were able to land right in Tomorrowland. If you can fit it into your budget, I highly recommend it.

Where Should We Park?

If you are driving a car to Disneyland, there are several different parking lots where you can park, but I would strongly recommend the large “Mickey and Friends” parking structure. (I searched around online, and from what I can tell, most of the other “regulars” at Disneyland agree with me.)

Your car will be covered, which is great in case it’s rainy or hot, the traffic flow is pretty quick getting in and out, and the parking lot trams are simple to board, especially if you have a stroller and heavy bags.

What Should I Pack?

Our Power of Moms Community had lots of great suggestions for this, so I'm going to start out with quotes from them, and then I'll include my personal packing list.

- “My sister-in-law told me to make a whole loaf of peanut butter sandwiches everyday, and it saved us! Then when anyone is hungry, you just give them half a sandwich, and they can even eat in line.”
- “I go to Little Caesar's pizza the night before and get a \$5 Hot and Ready pizza. When it cools down, I slice each slice into 3 little finger-like slices and put them in a big Zip-lock bag. When people get hungry or cranky in line, we eat a slice or two. This keeps us from needing to eat a sit-down lunch and saves time and lots of money.”
- “I love that Disneyland will let you bring in any snacks food, drinks, etc. that you want to. We pack a backpack FULL of healthy Trader Joe's snacks, to offset the churros and fried food we may eat. I get Ziploc bags and make smaller bags of everything, so I can just dole them out as needed. Pretzels, applesauce, trail mix, dried fruit, jerky, rice crackers, small carrots, apples, grapes, etc. My husband wears the snack pack! We fill the bottom of the stroller with many frozen bottles of water and put all the hoodies on top. In SoCal it is always good to bring a hoodie! The nights cool off fast. Bring a light blanket to cover a sleepy child. I also put a change of clothes for my little one, plenty of wipes, my essential oil first aid kit and homemade hand sanitizing spray, extra batteries for the camera, etc.”
- “Wear comfortable shoes. The first year I thought my feet would fall off. I was wearing \$100 tennis shoes! The second year, painful again, and I was wearing expensive earth shoes! We started noticing that the people in flip flops were sprinting around as if barefoot! We started asking people if flip flops were comfortable. A resounding yes! So I invested in a \$20 pair of Teva flip flops and my feet love me for it. I wear them every year! I wear a small across-the-body shoulder bag with necessities in it: money, camera, essential oils, lip gloss, bandaids, etc. It never leaves my body, and that way we can park the stroller and run to get in line.”

- “Water bottles. You can easily get dehydrated. There are actually tons of water fountains, and you can get ice water, but it takes time to stand in line. Just have a few water bottles and fill up whenever you use the restroom.”
- “Don’t forget toothbrushes and toothpaste!”
- “In the car, you’ll want blankets, pillows, and pajamas. It’s so much easier.”
- “Always bring a change of clothes for the kiddos, a bjorn or similar carrier for a baby-- along with a stroller, and lots of baby stuff (even if you leave it in the car), as well as PJs if you’re planning on staying late.”
- “One of my kids’ favorite things is that I made their Disneyland Autograph books. I didn’t know you could make your own but I got ideas from Pinterest, and they turned out so cute! And they were free! (Just used cardstock, ribbon, and stickers that I already had.) Bring along a sharpie for the characters to use when they sign.”
- “Buy T-shirts ahead of time at the Disney store or Target. They’re about 1/3 of the price.”

Lots of great suggestions there, don’t you think?

The main thing you want to be careful with is that you don’t pack any glass in your bags. That’s what the cast members will ask about when they do a bag search. As long as you have mainly plastic bottles and containers, it won’t be a problem. You also can’t bring any coolers or luggage on wheels. (Check the official Disney websites if you have additional questions.)

Now here's my general packing list:

- Each person:
 - Comfortable shoes
 - Comfortable clothes
 - A light jacket or sweatshirt

- Umbrella stroller

- One small fleece blanket--because someone might end up wet or extra cold, or you could sit on it during a parade or show

- An extra pair of shorts/pants/underwear and a t-shirt that you can put on a child who ends up wet or dirty for one reason or another.

- Small purse or backpack that I keep with me the entire day, which includes:
 - My smartphone
 - A charger for my smartphone (you can usually find a spot to recharge for a moment)
 - Our digital camera
 - Ear plugs (I'll explain that later . . . it's for nap time)
 - Notes for the Cast Members (explained later)
 - Ballpoint pens for writing personal messages on the notes for the Cast Members
 - Cash (maybe \$20 in small bills for vending items--but you can almost always use a credit card and there are plenty of ATMs there)
 - Credit Cards and I.D. (fortunately they always check)
 - Disney Passes

- Two backpacks full of snacks and food for meals. You're actually walking quite a bit--sometimes around 10 miles in a day, so you'll want to bring more food than you would normally eat because your children will have hearty appetites.



If I'm going for a whole day, I pack enough food for each person to have a nice lunch and three or four snacks, and then I plan to buy a nice dinner there at the park. Here are some examples of things I would pack:

- One water bottle per person (sometimes I bring less because there are plenty of drinking fountains where you can refill)
- One Capri Sun per person (partially frozen)
- OR one can of soda per person (I find it calms them down a bit to have a special drink we don't normally have at home. Then they don't feel bad that we're not buying a lot of extra drinks at the park.)
- Fresh fruit in large Ziploc bags (oranges and apples--bananas get too squishy)
- Fresh fruit in snap-lock containers (grapes)
- Baby carrots and a container of ranch dressing or hummus
- Sliced vegetables (bell peppers, cucumbers)
- Candy (M&Ms, jelly beans, etc. These are great for the middle of a long line)
- Granola bars
- Crackers
- Pretzels
- Air-popped popcorn
- Energy balls (homemade from rolled oats, peanut butter, honey, chocolate chips, and coconut)
- Homemade muffins or cookies

- Almonds, pistachios, or other nuts for healthy quick energy
 - Sandwiches (typically peanut butter and jelly or simple cold cuts, stacked in a disposable plastic container so they don't squish together)
 - Baked potatoes wrapped in tin foil (we eat these fairly quickly once we get to the park)
 - Frozen pizzas--baked, then cooled and stored in Ziploc bags
- Toothbrushes and toothpaste (in the backpacks, so we can brush our teeth at the restroom of the parking lot structure before we get to our car)
 - Pajamas, blankets, and pillows in the car
 - When I had babies, I also packed our large double-jogging stroller, bottles of milk, diapers, wipes, a change of clothes, extra blankets, and extra milk in a cooler in the car.

I divide the food fairly evenly between the two backpacks, and then we carry one backpack with us while leaving the other one with the stroller.

One note I need to include is that when you take a stroller or backpack to Disneyland, there is a slight possibility that it will be stolen. Disney is not liable for any items you bring into the park, so if you have a choice, bring supplies that you wouldn't mind losing.

I left our beautiful double-jogger in Adventureland for too long one day, and it was stolen--complete with my kids' Mickey ears, Ethan's light sabers, our nice backpacks, and our favorite jackets. So sad. Now we just take a very simple umbrella stroller and two of our oldest backpacks.

I'm not trying to scare anyone, but it's just smart to consider the fact that there are dishonest people out there--even at Disneyland.

Okay, now just one more thing about the stroller. Even if you have children who could possibly walk all day without a stroller, I love bringing one as a "portable locker." Many

families like renting lockers on Main Street, which is great if you don't want to run back to your car for jackets, blankets, extra snacks, etc. But when we put our jackets into the bottom of our umbrella stroller and hang our backpacks on it, we can park it strategically as we go through Disneyland, and we always have our things with us. And there's always someone (even our 9- or 10-year-olds) who would like to sit in a stroller on the way back to the parking structure. So I'll be taking our umbrella stroller with me as long as I possibly can.

Should We Create an Itinerary or Just “Go With the Flow”?

Such a good question.

There are a few different ways you can look at your trip to Disneyland.

If you've invested a lot of time and money to go “just one time,” you're probably going to want a specific itinerary to make sure you get to go on the rides you're most excited about and see the parades and shows that matter most to you. Take time to discuss this with your children so you know what they are especially excited about seeing and doing.

There are a *lot* of “serendipity” moments at Disneyland, however, and if you're too structured, you might miss out on a random “ring-around-the-rosy” with Alice and the Mad Hatter, or you might be in a grumpy mood the whole day while you're trying to “conquer the park,” and your children will wonder why on earth you brought them along.

This, actually, is one of the reasons I wanted to write this eBook. As a cast member, I saw so many parents who were angry with their children, exhausted from so much walking, and determined to “get their money's worth” at the park. From my perspective, these parents were missing the whole point--which to me is to build family memories and strengthen your family relationships.

I also saw *lots* of other parents who really understood the power of Disneyland. Their eyes lit up with their children's eyes, they smiled and waved as they rode Dumbo, they were friendly to others in line, and they took plenty of breaks to make sure that their children were rested, fed, and happy. It was a thrill to work with those kinds of parents.

So here's what I would suggest:

- Set up an "ideal" itinerary, using any of the books or resources out there that have Disneyland down to a science (like the Unofficial Disney Guides or Ridemax).
- Identify the top one or two rides that each of your children would most like to experience and, if they're hard to remember, make a separate list that you can refer to throughout the day--just to make sure you get to them.
- Figure out when your nap times or rest periods would most likely fit in.
- Think about when and where you'll eat.
- Incorporate the shows and parades that mean the most to you.
- Then explain to your family that the main goal is to have a great time and to enjoy the experience as a family. If you don't get to do everything, that's okay. The important thing is that you are happy, kind, and appreciative of this wonderful opportunity to be at Disneyland.

If your children want to go on the same ride 100 times (which they might), I would suggest you let them ride it two or three times (if the line is short) and then keep them moving. They could happily stay in the same place all day, but they'll be excited when they see everything else that's waiting for them.

All right, now with all that said, here are some additional ideas from our Power of Moms Community and some other suggestions of my own:

- "Arriving at Disneyland a little before it opens is always so special. When they open the gates, all the crew and staff members come out and line the streets with huge Mickey gloves on and welcome you to Disneyland! They give everyone High Fives and dance

with them around Main Street! It is a great way to start off your special day at Disneyland!”

- Use FASTPASSES. They let you “hold your place in line” while you go on other rides, shop, or eat. You can only have one FASTPASS at a time (the computer system will monitor this), but you won’t have to wait in line as long, and it’s definitely worth it. Get a FASTPASS first thing in the morning, and then continue to get them throughout the day. (Send one family member ahead to get them while the rest of the family is in another line.)
- Use Stroller Passes (also known as Child-Switch Passes). One adult waits in line while the other is with the baby/child who doesn’t meet the height requirement. Then the parent who was with the baby can go through the exit and get right on without waiting in line again. *This is genius.* Two people can ride with a Stroller Pass, so if you have an older child with you, he or she can ride twice. Check your Disney Guide (that they give you when you arrive) for more details on which rides have Stroller Passes.
- “Have an itinerary. Even if it doesn't work out exactly, it saves you a lot of time and energy when you at least know where you want to head next! If you eat in the park, include this in your itinerary and reserve with Disney Dining whenever possible. They even take reservations on the same day”.
- “Ridemax.com was the best \$15 I ever spent on a family trip, and it made it fun to prepare and plan with the kids. It offered details about each ride so I could judge if it was OK for my kids or too scary, etc.” *(As a side note, there is also an attractions list on the Disney website that will tell you about each ride.)*
- “Get up early, hit the park when it opens, then nap in the early afternoon when everything is at its busiest. The Magic Mornings are TOTALLY worth the early start -- no lines in Fantasyland for about an hour and a half!”

- “Be really careful not to exhaust yourself. You will be tired the next day, if you’ve walked a lot or stayed the whole day. Make sure you have breaks built in. If you stay late one night, you probably won’t go in early the next day. Or if you’ve done a full day at Disneyland, don’t plan another park the very next day (like Sea World or Universal Studios). It’s just nice to have a bit of a break. It’s a BIG thing. We always have a ‘Disneyland recovery day’ built in.”
- Typically, younger children like the slower rides, parades, seeing the characters, looking at the flowers, watching the street shows and musical performances, and wandering around non-crowded areas. Pace yourself to match the needs of the youngest member of your family.
- If you have older children, especially if they have their own cell phones, they may want to have a little independence during the day. You may want to plan time for them to go off together and meet up with you at a specified time and place.

What’s an Example of a Good Schedule?

If I were planning a full day with my children (8 - midnight), it would look something like this:

- 7:30 a.m. Be in line at the park, ready to go. I can’t stress this part enough. Morning lines are totally manageable. If you get there early--even on peak days--you’ll be able to get a lot in before the park gets crowded.
- 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Ride all our “top picks” and get FASTPASSES for the rides with the longest lines. Enjoy the park, meet characters, have fun with all your energy!
- 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The park will start to get more crowded. Eat lunch, enjoy some of the less-crowded attractions at the park (like the carousel, It’s a Small World, The Enchanted Tiki Room, Pirates of the Caribbean, Haunted Mansion, Jungle Cruise, and Teacups), start to wind down for nap time.

- 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Naps/down time (let older children explore the park on their own).
- 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. More rides.
- 5:00 p.m. Dinner (sit down and eat a nice meal before the crowds get hungry)
- 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Enjoy the rides and shows until you are ready to call it a night, buy any souvenirs you're excited about (more on that below in the "Souvenirs" section), and be sure to leave about 45 minutes before you think you should.*

* I'm just adding a brief, but important, note here. After you've had the "perfect" day at Disneyland, you don't want to go home on a sour note. My rule of thumb is to leave the park about 45 minutes before I *think* I should leave the park. This is more important when you have little children, but the basic idea is that if you start to leave the park 10 minutes before your child is about to "lose it," you'll be in trouble by the time you get to the parking lot tram. It takes *time* to walk to the exit, wait in line for the tram, board the tram, exit the tram, make that last restroom stop, walk up to your car, and exit the parking structure. Make sure you plan for that. It makes the "goodbye" so much sweeter when you're all in a good mood.

Mentally Preparing for "the Lines"

One of the main things for which you (and your children) need to prepare is *lots of lines*.

Hopefully, you'll be at Disneyland on a day where the lines are short, and you can be sure that the cast members will keep the lines running smoothly and efficiently (I used to do that!), but even so, there will be several lines to navigate.

For example, when you first arrive, there will be a line to get into the parking garage, a line to get on the elevator, a line to get on the tram, a line to get through the baggage check, a line to purchase your tickets, and a line to get into the park. That's six lines before you've even stepped into Disneyland. Not a big deal, as long as you're mentally prepared. If you've got the mentality that "lines are the enemy," then you're going to be battling with them all day. But

if you just accept the fact that lots of people like Disneyland, and we're all going to move through the magic in an orderly fashion, you'll be just fine.

You might want to say something to your children like, "Just so you know, one part of Disneyland is waiting in lines. It's such a fun place, and lots of other people want to come here, too. That means we take turns and we wait in lines. But don't worry, the lines move along pretty quickly, and we'll have fun talking and eating snacks, so it'll be fun!" (A little later in this eBook, we also have lots of great suggestions for making your wait time a great experience.)

Using FASTPASSES, Single Riders, and Smartphone Apps to Reduce Your Wait Times

We already talked a bit about FASTPASSES being big time savers, so once you get into the park of your choice, you'll want to get your first FASTPASS before you do anything else.

There will be a time frame printed on your FASTPASS, letting you know when you need to use it. They used to be flexible on this and would let you use the FASTPASSES as late as you wanted--even after the cut-off time, but they've changed their policy, so make sure you stick to the time printed on your pass, okay?

When we go to Disneyland, we usually get FASTPASSES for Indiana Jones or Space Mountain first.

When we go to California Adventure, we get FASTPASSES for the Radiator Springs Racers first (those run out very quickly).

Here's a great tip: "My sister keeps all our tickets in a lanyard around her neck. That way when we get FASTPASSES they are all there and you can just swipe them."

If a member of your party is in a wheelchair or has other special needs, be sure you check in at City Hall. They will work with you (beautifully) and give you a special pass for the attractions. You can also go to the Information area and get a map that has all the accessibility entrances to every ride and attraction. (I won't go into great detail on all that they offer here because much of this is on the Disney website, but here's what my friend Sarah had

to say: “Disneyland is one of the most accessible and wheelchair-friendly places we go. The employees go out of their way to make sure we are taken care of, comfortable and happy. We have always had magical experiences at Disneyland!”

My daughter also reminded me to mention the “Single Rider Lines” that are available on many attractions, like Splash Mountain, Matterhorn, Goofy’s Flight School, Radiator Springs Raceway, and possibly others (this isn’t a comprehensive list). You’ll need to check on the age/height requirements for these, but sometimes I’ll take my “little guy” on his own ride while the older children enjoy bigger rides using the Single Rider option.

And one thing you’ll want to know is that if the park closes at 10pm, that means the *entrance* to the ride lines close at 10pm. So if there’s a ride you’ve really wanted to go on all day, as long as you get in line right before closing (in this case, 10pm), you’ll still get to go on the ride. Isn’t that nice?

Throughout your day at the Disney parks, you also might want to access one of the smartphone apps that can let you monitor the wait times for the rides. Lots of them are free. The paid apps have extra tips on restaurants, itineraries, character meet times, and *lots* more. (We’ve used the free “Disneyland Wait Times” app by MediaLAB, and we’ve heard great things about the “Disneyland Magic Guide” by VersaEdge Software--that one is available for a small fee.)

When you do an app search, you’ll find *dozens* of Disneyland-related apps. I would suggest you download one or two of the free ones and perhaps spend a few dollars on one of the “in-depth” ones. If your children are a bit older (8 and up), they’ll have fun with the Disney Trivia apps, and you can talk about Disneyland’s history, Walt Disney’s life, and all those great details that go into making Disneyland magical. But then do your best to put your phone away because, really, you don’t want your phone to get all your attention. You want to be looking at your *children* and enjoying the beautiful surroundings. (More about that below, when you’ll read about “line time” and a “Disney Education.”)

How to Make Your “Line Time” Magical

Standing in line can become a great part of your day. Here are some ideas that might help:

(1) Get to know new people in line! People come from *all over the world* to go to Disneyland, and most of them are quite friendly, especially when you’re just standing in line together.

Before we get into a long line, I look around carefully and listen to the accents of the people near us. If at all possible, I get in line right behind someone from another country. (Does that sound stalker-ish? I promise it’s not.)

Here’s a little bit about some people we’ve met:

- **A couple from Switzerland:** They told us all about their tiny village. Yes, they have electricity, and no, they don’t wear lederhosen. They told us that people in Switzerland often stereotype all Americans as wearing cowboy hats and riding horses. And the woman taught us to count to five in French.
- **A 60-year-old hockey player from Canada:** He was in line for Dumbo with a “First Time Here” badge. We asked him how he liked Disneyland, and he told us how he’d waited all his life to come with his grandkids. It was really cute.
- **A family from Australia:** They had traveled all over Europe with their small kids, and they were on a month-long tour of the United States. They had *tons* of great stories to tell us, and it was fun for my children to get to know their children. I *almost* exchanged email addresses with them before we parted our way on the Matterhorn.
- **A young man from Korea:** He came to Disneyland all by himself that day, and while he was having a great time, he didn’t have anyone to share the day with, so we kept him company for awhile.

- **A college student whose backpack was COVERED with patches from countries around the world.** We had a great time talking with him about the best places he'd visited. What a great way to teach my children about world travel!

See? Doesn't that sound like fun? Obviously, we don't want to annoy anyone in line, but often times, people are happy to pass the time with some good conversation, and you can learn a lot about the world in the process.

(2) Ask your children questions . . . lots of questions. While you're standing in line throughout the day, you have *hours* to just build your relationships. Sometimes you'll just want to sit quietly and not talk to anyone. That's okay. We all need down time. But sometimes everyone has energy and wants to talk. Take advantage of this time to really get to know your children.

- What are your favorite things?
- What are you most afraid of?
- Where would you most like to travel?
- If you could be any Disney character, who would you want to be?
- How many children do you want to have?
- Do you know where you want to work when you get older?
- Do you want to start a business?
- Are there any hobbies you'd like to pick up?
- Is there anything you're really excited about right now?
- Who are your best friends?
- Who would you want to meet, if you could meet anyone in the world?
- What do you know about politics?
- What do you know about religion?
- What can I do better as a parent?
- How can I make your home life better?
- What skills would you like to develop?

There's also an app called Kid Chatteroo that is full of great questions and will let you record your children's answers.

(3) Get the “Hidden Mickey’s Guide.” Your children will have fun talking about them, looking for them, and trying to discover their own.

(4) And yes, there are tons of great smartphone apps that can make your “wait in line” time go quickly. My teenage daughter has one that makes music videos (called Video Star), so we dance in line to our favorite songs and then watch the videos. Or we take funny split-screen photos with a photo app called Split Pic. She also googles “Kid Fun Facts,” and we come up with all kinds of random things to talk about.

(5) We also play hand-clapping games, “I Spy,” or “20 Questions.”

The point is to have fun together, get to know each other better, and minimize the number of times anyone says, “How much longer?” Our time in line can produce some of our best memories.

Our Family’s Favorite Rides

If I were going to Disneyland for the first time, I would look through the full list of rides on the official Disneyland website, and then I would talk with my children about the ones that they were most excited about. We would then virtually experience them by watching YouTube videos of the rides from our recliner and having my husband rock, shake, and bounce the chair. That’s really fun.

Once you arrive, there are tons of knowledgeable Disney cast members, so if you ever aren’t sure where to go next, just ask someone for recommendations! Every ride is magical in its own way, and I don’t think you can ever go wrong. It is such a fun place.

Now, there are tons of “Ride Guides” online, and every family has their own favorites, but I’ll just list the rides that we personally love the most. (Remember, this is from a family whose children are between the ages of 5 and 13.)

At Disneyland:

Top Rides (*These are all thrill rides with minimum height requirements:*)

- **Splash Mountain** (*Visually fun, great music, STEEP drop, you ride in a log*)
- **Space Mountain** (*Totally dark, fast roller coaster through the stars. They “dress this one up” with scary images during Halloween.*)
- **Thunder Mountain** (*Quick, outdoor runaway train.*)
- **Matterhorn Bobsleds** (*The “monsters” inside are a bit scary, but this has always been a favorite!*)
- **Indiana Jones** (*Bouncy ride in a jeep--very adventurous!*)
- **Star Tours** (*They have something like 54 different possible versions of this ride. You’re wearing 3-D glasses and watching a screen, but it feels like you’re really in space!*)

Secondary Favorites:

- **Pirates of the Caribbean** (*Grace was afraid of this until she was three, but now everyone loves it. It’s a slow boat ride with a couple of big “slides.” Plan for it to take 15 minutes or so, once you get to the front of the line..*)
- **Haunted Mansion** (*This one is kind of dark and scary and will also take a little longer than most, but my children have all enjoyed it.*)
- **Carousel** (*There’s just something great about being on a carousel!)*
- **Innoventions** (*This isn’t a ride--it’s more of a “hands on” museum where you can learn all about futuristic inventions. Many families never make it here, and I think that’s a shame.*)
- **Dumbo** (*I love this ride, but I wouldn’t wait more than 20 minutes in line. GREAT for little ones.*)
- **Winnie the Pooh** (*Our 5-year-old picked this one. It’s very slow and visually appealing--a great option for little ones who can’t go on Splash Mountain, which is right next to it.*)
- **Small World** (*I would go on this over and over--especially at Christmastime. It’s just a happy ride. Slow, in a boat, with tons to see.*)

- **Autopia** (*This is where your kids get to drive their own cars, but seriously, pushing the pedal down for the whole ride takes some major leg strength. It's fun, though!*)
- **Nemo's Submarine Voyage** (*My nine-year-old son begged me to add this one. If the line is less than 20 minutes, I think it's worth it. You feel like you're really in a submarine, going under water, and it floats you through the movie "Finding Nemo."*)

At California Adventure:

Top Rides/Attractions:

- **Radiator Springs Racers** (*The line for this is ALWAYS long, so you want to get FASTPASSES early, but this is one of the best rides I've ever seen. You feel like you're actually in the movie "Cars."*)
- **Grizzly Bear Rapids** (*Late at night, there is no line, and you can go over and over--but you get SOAKED. We leave our sweatshirts in the stroller and plan to change into pajamas as soon as we get to the car.*)
- **Screamin' Roller Coaster** (*SO fun. Kind of scary. This is the only roller coaster that goes upside down at the Disney parks.*)
- **Soarin' Over California** (*My FAVORITE. It's honestly magical. You feel like you're flying over some of the most beautiful areas of California. They have a huge spherical screen, and you're lifted right into it. This is always at the top of my list.*)
- **Toy Story Mania** (*This is a huge video game. My kids love it. It's kind of like Buzz Light Year, but we think it's better. The line is always long, though--like 45 minutes to an hour--so we send one or two people in line while we take the smaller children on the King Triton Carousel next door. Then we join them in line when there's only 10 minutes or so left.*)
- **Symphony Swings** (*Quick, fun spinning ride. Everyone loves it!*)
- **Goofy's Flight School** (*This one has a single rider line, so I usually wait in line with Spencer, and then my older three go on by themselves and meet me back in line. It's a quick little car ride that leaves everyone smiling.*)

- **Aladdin Show** (*In a beautiful theater, and the genie is hilarious. A must see!*)

Secondary Favorites:

- **Monsters Inc.** (*Kind of slow, fun visuals. The “monster” at the end speaks to you, specifically.*)
- **Little Mermaid** (*Feels like you walked into the movie! Fun, generally short lines.*)
- **Ghiradelli Chocolate Factory** (*Not a ride, but you get free samples, and we like to buy ice cream!*)
- **Bugs Life Show** (*This is great for when the weather is warm. It’s a little on the scary side, though, so hold your children close!*)

I was asked if there were any rides that are not worth the effort, and I honestly couldn’t think of any. We’ve loved every single ride we’ve experienced at Disneyland. It’s just that the ones above are our favorites.

When my children were all five and under, we spent a lot of time in Fantasyland and Toon Town (at Disneyland) and Bug’s Life Land (at California Adventure). We just took it slow and enjoyed being there!

Here are some additional thoughts from members of our community:

- “My kids thought Pirates of the Caribbean was too scary. They thought the pirates were real.” *Yes, you definitely want to be careful of this. Once my children reached the age of three, they were fine with the darker rides, but if your child gets scared easily, stick with the open air, slow, child-friendly rides as much as possible.*
- “Everyone loves the Buzz Lightyear Astroblasters. It’s fun for kids and adults.” *I agree. This ride didn’t make our list of favorites, but my kids do enjoy it.*
- “At both parks, ride the water rides in the morning so as you walk around, your clothes will dry. Cotton pants dry faster than jeans. If the kids are tired, or if you are, go to Tom Sawyer’s Island. Let them run around while you sit and enjoy.” *The only thing I’ll add to*

this is that often the water rides have ZERO lines at night. My children love to go on the Grizzly Bear Rapids and Splash Mountain over and over and over again before we go back to the car and change into our pajamas. And if you have a “running” toddler who gets lost easily, Tom Sawyer’s Island can be quite stressful.

- “Fantasy Land and Toon Town are always busy no matter when we have gone. They sometimes close early for parades and fireworks, so make sure and hit them earlier in the day. Peter Pan is always at least a 30-minute wait. It’s well worth it--I love that ride. The Snow White witch has always scared me. We don’t go on that one. The shows on the water are magical. Worth it to stop and watch. Go on *Its A Small World* at the end of the day, it is almost never busy, and it calms the kids.”
- In general, we do stay away from anything that really scares my children (like Tower of Terror), but sometimes it’s good to encourage our children to step outside their comfort zones. Spencer (5) loved the Matterhorn, but he was afraid to try Indiana Jones. We encouraged him to go on it and said, “You’ll be just fine.” Alia (his 13-year-old sister) whispered in his ear the whole time saying, “This is just pretend.” When he came out, he had a big smile on his face, and he said, “I feel like I’m a bigger kid now.” It totally increased his confidence, and he’s been talking about Indiana Jones ever since.
- “Tarzan’s Treehouse and Tom Sawyer’s Island are great places to get the wiggles out inside Disneyland. In California Adventure, the Redwood Creek play area is great. A show that provides a good chance to rest is the Tiki Room (and you can get a Dole pineapple whip from the waiting side and avoid the long line!). At California Adventure, the Bugs’ Land is really fun for children eight and under.”
- Use the train to get around Disneyland, as it saves on walking--plus you can bring your stroller on, if it folds up.”

As I’ve been writing up all these ride descriptions, I got so excited to go to Disneyland again! Those Imagineers do an outstanding job.

What About the Shows and Parades?

Disneyland has the most fantastic shows and parades I've ever seen--this is one of the key things that really sets it apart from other amusement parks. I worked these attractions just about every night when I was a cast member, and I *never* got tired of them. Honestly, they are beautiful, inspiring, fun, and memorable.

Many families, however, tend to focus only on the rides and completely miss all this incredible magic. (My children often do this.)

You'll clearly want to plan your day to meet the needs of your family, but if it's at all possible to see the featured Main Street parade, the evening fireworks, and Fantasmic at Disneyland, I would definitely recommend it.

California Adventure also has some wonderful shows. World of Color is the biggest one (and we think it's lovely), but our very favorite is the Aladdin show.

Whatever you decide, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind:

- If there are two parades in a day or two showings of Fantasmic, the second one is always the least crowded. I don't know why, but that's been the general rule. So plan to watch the second one.
- If you want a front row seat for Fantasmic, you get there right as the first show is ending. Tell a cast member who is working the show that you would like to sit in the front row. He or she will tell you where to stand while they empty the viewing area, and then you'll get to go right up to the front. You'll probably need to wait about an hour, but you'll be sitting down, and having a front row seat for Fantasmic is wonderful--especially if you are with an older group. (The shows were typically at 9 and 10:30, and that is way too late for my little ones, but ages 12 and up will love it.)
- If you don't care about being in the front row, and you just want to see the parade/show and get on with your rides, then (again) talk with a cast member and pick your spot

strategically. You'll want to sit toward an easy exit that is closest to your next destination spot. Then, when you see the parade or show is about to end, you jump up and quickly exit before the crowd starts to move. This is one of the best pieces of advice I can give you: *Think five minutes ahead of the crowd*. Otherwise, you'll end up baby-stepping your way through a huge group of people who aren't sure where they're going. And that can be 15 minutes of chaos if you have hungry, tired children.

- The same thing applies for fireworks or nighttime parades. It seems that the majority of guests who watch a nighttime parade or fireworks show have that as the last activity on their agenda. Then they all stand up and walk to the exit. We've been caught in that mass of people many times, and if you're not prepared for it, you'll leave the park in the bad mood (and we can't let that happen, can we?). So I would either recommend that you watch the Main Street show from the train station--all the way by the exit to the park--and make a quick escape so you're first in line for the parking lot tram, or I would suggest you build in some additional rides, shopping time, or snack time into your evening to give the crowd time to thin.

These ideas might seem a little over-the-top. *Come on, can't we just sit and enjoy the show and leave whenever we want?* Of course you can, but if you end up standing in a huge crowd of people for 30 minutes while your children are crying about how tired they are, you'll quickly start looking for other alternatives . . . unless you *like* that sort of thing. I've got your best interests at heart here.

Cast Member Thank You Notes

This is my ***favorite*** part of this Disney Kit.

It's a simple, fun, meaningful way to teach your children to appreciate excellent service--and in my opinion, Disneyland is one of the best places in the world where this can be taught.

When I was hired as a cast member at Disneyland, I had the opportunity to go to "Disney University," where we learned the four keys to a great guest experience: Safety, Courtesy, Show, and Efficiency.

They taught us that each guest will interact with 72 different cast members during their time at Disneyland, and our goal was to make each interaction magical. We worked hard each day to value that magic, to create beautiful experiences for our guests, and to be part of Walt Disney's "dream come true." I took that role very seriously and made a lot of wonderful memories in the process.

However, once I started going to Disneyland with my children, I noticed that they started focusing on "what Disneyland would do for them." They would start to complain about the heat, the lines, the ride that had broken down, or the fact that they couldn't sit in the front of the train.

Now, of course the guests have "the right" to want their experience to be fantastic. They're paying a lot of money for that. But it didn't feel right to take my children to such a magical place and see them acting selfishly. I wanted our experience at Disneyland to make us into better people.

The next time we went to Disneyland, I made some little cards with a picture of Mickey on them that said "Dear _____, Thank You for Making Disneyland Magical. Love, The Perrys"

Then I packed about a dozen into my purse, put in a couple of ball-point pens, and started our adventure.



Once I explained to my children that we were going to write special notes to the people who provided excellent service, they couldn't *wait* to get started. Alia wanted to give one to the man at the parking garage as soon as we got there, so while he scanned my pass, she wrote his name on one of the thank you notes and quickly handed it out to him through the window.

A big smile spread over his face, and he said, "Thank you so much!"

Then we gave one to the parking lot tram attendant. The reaction was the same.

When we got to the bag checker, Alia said, "Mom, they stand here and check bags all day, and I don't know if anyone ever thanks them." So she wrote up a nice little message and handed it to the woman who had checked our bags. She started to tear up and said that was the nicest thing anyone had ever done for her at work.

Now my children were on a roll.

Every time we've gone to Disneyland since then, we've taken some Cast Member Thank You notes. We give them to the custodians, the ride attendants, the characters, the store clerks, the performers . . . anyone who is doing a fantastic job and could possibly use a little more praise. My children take turns handing them out, and they get so excited when it's their turn to present a thank you note to someone who had helped make our day.



A few months ago, we gave one to the man working the “Crush Turtle Show” in California Adventure. He looked at the card and said, “*You’re the Perry family?*” (as though he knew us). He then went on to say, “*We’ve had one of these cards of yours hanging in the back room for over a year. I always wondered who you were.*”

Well *that* was nice.

So then we decided it was time to share this wonderful idea with the world so that other families at Disneyland could also experience the joy of gratitude during their time at Disneyland. Our only concern was that this would start to become too common, but then we came up with the idea to add a really nice personal note to each one--thanking the cast member for specific things they’d done to make the Disneyland experience magical.

Here are some examples:

- *Dear Bryan, the Pirate. You did such a great job welcoming us to Pirates of the Caribbean. Thanks for being so enthusiastic and posing for that “pirate picture” with us. It was really fun to meet you.*
- *Dear Angelica, You have such a warm, kind smile. Thanks for asking us about our day!*
- *Dear Joe, You are such an amazing artist! When we were walking by the Rivers of America tonight and saw all the Disney characters you’d drawn on the ground--with only water and a mop--we were so impressed! That was fantastic. Great work!*
- *Dear John, Thanks for the high-fives! Dumbo was the best. Thank you for making it fun!*
- *Dear Lloyd, Our children had a great time on the tire swing zipline. Thanks for helping them have a fun, safe time.*

Do you think cast members will *ever* get tired of hearing things like this? Neither do I.

So this is the plan: if each deliberate mother prints out these thank you cards (or makes her own) to share when her family goes to Disneyland, more and more cast members will start receiving thank you notes, and they are going to feel *terrific!* Then the park is going to become an even lovelier place to be--with all these cast members feeling appreciated and going out of their way to spread the magic. Then our children are going to get in the habit of looking for excellent examples of service and making it a point to show their gratitude. Doesn't that sound fabulous?

Try this out--even once--and you'll love what it does for your Disney experience. (And feel free to help your children pass out thank you notes at the grocery store, at restaurants, and at school and as well. The world is full of people who'd love to feel more appreciated!)

Character Meet-Ups

One of the best parts of being at Disneyland is meeting the characters *in person*. This is especially true for children under the age of 8 (but I must say that I still get a little excited when a character walks by, and I'm in my thirties!).

My children had autograph books when they were little, and we would just keep them handy in case we saw a character we wanted to meet. I always kept my camera ready because there were so many impromptu meet-ups that had to be captured quickly. Oh, these are some of my favorite memories.

Having an autograph book for each of your children is also a good idea if you want each one to get special attention from the characters. If you have a big group--and particularly if one child generally gets most of the attention--the others might feel left out. Having individual autograph books solves this problem.

On your Disneyland map, you'll be able to see a variety of character meet-up spots. Toon Town has Mickey's House and Minnie's House, and you can just about always find them

there. There's also the new princess Fantasy Faire located next to the castle. If your child has a specific character that he or she wants to meet, you can always check with cast members--particularly those in City Hall--for specific character schedules or additional opportunities to interact with characters (like story time with a princess or a Star Wars Jedi Training session). The apps we mentioned previously will have more information, as well.

Visiting the characters does take quite a bit of time, as the lines are usually 10-15 people deep, but if that's a main attraction for your child, just build it into your schedule and enjoy the chance to take photos. These are honestly some of the most precious pictures I have.



And I do just have just one more story--in case you find yourself needing something like this. There was a little boy who was absolutely *dying* to meet Pluto, but Pluto wasn't one of the characters scheduled to be out that day. The little boy was devastated, but a clever cast member (who totally deserves a thank you note), said, "Hang on a minute! I think I saw Pluto backstage. Let me go see if I can get him to sign your book." Within a couple of minutes, he returned with a darling "Pluto" autograph--just for the little boy. Isn't that sweet? (So if your child doesn't get to meet his or her favorite character, maybe you could enlist the help of a cast member. . . .)

Souvenirs

My main perspective on souvenirs is that although you can always buy Disney things online, at The Disney Store, or in local shops like Target or Wal-Mart, there's something magical about buying a treasured item at Disneyland.

Here's the framework that's been helpful for our family:

- Our children have a specific amount of money budgeted toward souvenir purchases (usually between \$10 and \$25). This is their own money that they have earned, and they know how much they have to spend when they go into the park. This is key because they are very careful about spending their own money. Some families have had great success in giving each child something like a \$10 souvenir budget for the trip. (I know my children would like that.)
- Throughout the day, we let our children peek in the shops and talk about their favorite things, and then at the end of the day, we make a final decision on which items we're going to purchase.
- Because we have season passes, we sometimes wait until the *next* visit to make the purchase--just to be sure it isn't an impulse buy (but I know not everyone has that option). If you were there for more than one day, you could make day number one the "looking day" and day number two the "buying day." Just don't wait until the very last minute--you don't want to feel pressure when the park is about to close and everyone is exhausted.
- The stores are open one hour after the park closes, so we typically buy bulky things toward the end of our stay. One fun side-note: if you are staying at a Disney hotel, they will actually deliver your purchases straight to your hotel room, so you don't have to worry about losing them or carrying them around all day!
- We encourage our children to buy items that they will actually *use*. (For example, Ethan never plays with stuffed animals, but he wanted to buy one because it was so cute--

which it was. We shopped around a bit, and that's when he found the light saber that he plays with all the time.)

- Once the budget money is spent--or on days we are going to Disneyland "just to play and not to buy things," we have a rule that you can't whine and say, "Will you buy that for me?" or "I waaaannnt thaaaaaat." (Honestly, that kind of persistent question-asking is enough to drive you batty.) Instead, I tell my children that they can say, "Oh, isn't that beautiful?" or "I really think that is a great item." or "I think I'll save up for something like that." (If you teach your children how to make statements like that, I promise you'll be thanking me by the end of the day. The merchandise is honestly amazing, and I'd like to buy all of it. But there's a difference between admiring what you see and whining about wanting to have it all "right now." Our job as deliberate mothers is to teach our children that difference.)
- If this is your first time taking your children to Disneyland, you'll also want to have a discussion about the *quantity* of merchandise and sweets they're going to see. Immediately after we get off the tram, for example, there's a beautiful cart loaded with multi-colored cotton candy (we did buy that once, and everyone loved it). And at night, all the glow-in-the-dark merchandise comes out (swords, roses, hats, balloons . . . it's amazing how many things can glow). These are great treats, and they're a lot of fun, but if you're not ready for all of the dazzling delights, you'll start to feel a bit dizzy when your children start chanting, "Please! Please! Please!" Same thing with some of the shops. Small World, Buzz Light Year, and Star Tours empty directly into shops, so you end up in a beautiful store without even meaning to be. You might find things you love there, and you may go back to make a purchase, but you want to be sure to warn your children by saying something like, "Now, when we get out of some of the rides, we're going to be surrounded by beautiful things. We can look in each store for five minutes and take pictures of the things we might want to buy, and then we'll make the decision a little later." (Or something like that . . .)

Here are some of our favorite souvenirs (but remember, I'm not really a "shopper," so this is a very, very basic list):

- Autograph Books: These are fun, but it does take time to accumulate a lot of signatures. I would go for 3-10 autographs, and then focus mostly on taking photos of your family around the park to include in the autograph book. They sell autograph books at Disneyland for about \$10 each, if I remember correctly, or you could make your own before you go (check Pinterest!).
- Christmas Ornaments: These are great--you can pull them out each year and talk about your fun trip.
- Sweatshirts: I personally don't purchase a lot of Disney clothing for my children because they grow so fast, but I bought a sweatshirt for myself nearly 20 years ago, and it is still holding up beautifully. I think a Disney sweatshirt is a great purchase (at least for the mom).
- Storybooks: There are some beautiful books throughout the Disney parks, and if you find some that will make great bedtime reading (specifically the kind that can be read over and over again), these are well worth the cost. I usually buy books online, but a really special book at Disneyland is an exception.
- Postcards: Let your children pick one or two to take home as a fun piece of memorabilia.
- Light Saber: My nine-year-old son begged for a light saber in the Star Wars shop, and we finally got one for him the night our passes expired. He got to build it himself, and he chose a to make his a double-sided one. He and his brother play with this nearly every day.
- Mickey Hats with Names Embroidered: These are darling, and my kids were so excited to get them. Although these aren't really "useful," they are classic Disney items that are fun to have. If you buy them, be sure to get a photo of your children wearing them with the iconic Disney castle in the background!

- Key Chains, Pins, Jewelry: These have been favorites for my daughters. There are lots of options to choose from.
- Jewelry Boxes: When my girls were six and four, they saved up their money to buy Tinkerbell jewelry/music boxes. They loved them and played with them for years.
- Small, Unique Toy Sets: While you're shopping, you'll see little sets of toys that are never in your local toy stores. We let our girls get a special set of princess dolls we'd only seen at Disneyland, for example.
- Spinning Light-Up Toys: There are dozens of small toys that spin when you squeeze the handle, and they work perfectly as "quiet time" toys for babies and toddlers. Any time you consider purchasing a toy, ask yourself if it will work for quiet time. That way, you can put it away up high in the closet and bring it down once a day or a few times a week, and your child will be excited to see it.

I will say that we've never had "buyer's remorse" at Disneyland. Everything we have purchased has been excellent in quality and well-loved by our children.

And you'll definitely want to balance these purchased souvenirs with the lots and lots of photos. There are tons of wonderful opportunities during a day at Disneyland, and those bring back the memories and don't cost a thing! You could even purchase a cheap little photo album (at the dollar store or Target or Walmart) and have each child pick their favorite pictures from your time at Disneyland to have printed and put into the album. This inexpensive personalized souvenir could end up being your child's favorite!

Dining

In my packing list above, I spelled out all the snacks and lunch items we take to Disneyland, but if you're coming from out of town or staying for multiple days, you're definitely going to want to eat at the park. The prices are a bit high, but the food quality is excellent, and it's well worth the time to eat in the park--if your alternative is going down the street to a fast food restaurant, or something like that. I love eating at Disneyland, and we've never disliked

anything we've purchased there.

Our personal favorite is the gumbo or soup served in a sourdough bread bowl. At Disneyland, we buy this right behind Pirates of the Caribbean, and at California Adventure, we buy this on the Pacific Wharf (the Ghiradelli shop and the sourdough bread place give free samples).

Two bread bowls serve our family (when we add in some of our own fruits and vegetables), and the meal is *delicious*. (Cost is about \$20 - \$25 for the whole meal.)

We also love the French Market at Disneyland (by the Haunted Mansion) and the Mexican restaurant by Thunder Mountain. Our go-to for the kids is often the chicken strips and corn dogs right outside of the Golden Horseshoe. We typically spend between \$25 and \$35 for the whole family's meal, but we don't get a lot of extra sides or drinks or desserts, and we always share. That way, we can eat there more often.

Here's what other Power of Moms Community Members had to say:

- "The food has vastly improved over the years, and there are a lot more healthy options, though a churro, for us, is always on the menu . . . oh, and cotton candy. We love the fresh soup and chili in bread bowls at both parks."
- "The BBQ back by the petting zoo is a favorite, as well (they charge per person and serve family style)."
- "The ice cream on Main Street in Disneyland or at the Ghiradelli shop in California Adventure is phenomenal. We get a huge double cone and a few spoons, and that's a fun treat for everyone to share."

They do have plenty of healthy items available at each of the main restaurants and at the outdoor stands (fruit, salads, etc.).

These are great options, but to save on cost, I usually bring my own fruits and vegetables and simply purchase a nice main dish there.

At each restaurant, you'll find plenty of seating. Typically, you'll receive your meal on a tray, and you can eat wherever you'd like. There are some *really* nice restaurants at California Adventure (like the Napa Rose), and the Blue Bayou is a popular one at Disneyland, but those are quite a bit more expensive, and I would save that for a date night.

You can also talk to the cast members there about their favorite restaurants or explore all the ratings and details within the Disney apps or other guide books. These are just a few ideas to get you started.

A Couple of Resources You'll Love

There are two fantastic resources at Disneyland that not everyone knows about: The First Aid Station and the Baby Care Center.

The First Aid Station is located at the end of Main Street in Disneyland (there's also one in California Adventure near the Ghiradelli chocolate shop). The medical professionals there are ready to assist with any first aid issues. My friend's daughter got stung by something, and they fixed her right up. That was one of the highlights of her day because they were SO cute about it.

We've stopped in the First Aid area for bandages for blisters or Tylenol for headaches, and they have been absolutely wonderful.

If you have a child with special needs, the First Aid area is perfect. They give you a private room with a bed and a restroom, so you can comfortably attend to your child.

The Baby Care Center (if you have a baby) will be your lifesaver! They are all set up to take care of mothers who are nursing, pumping, changing diapers, or trying to feed a little one. It's right next to the First Aid Station, and it's totally equipped with everything you might need.



You'll find a beautiful air-conditioned room, high chairs, little coloring tables, a TV playing Disney movies, rocking chairs, tiny potties, and diaper changing stations. They also sell milk, diapers, bottles, wipes . . . basically anything a baby would need. (The prices are a bit steep, so I would suggest you bring all you can, but one time we forgot to bring diapers, and I was so *grateful* for that Baby Center.)

Extra “Magic”

There are a few special things that we've enjoyed at the Disney parks that I think are worth passing on. (I'm sure there are many, many more that I haven't mentioned here, but this will give you a good start!)

- **Celebration Pins:** If you go to City Hall at Disneyland or Guest Services at California Adventure, you can ask for special buttons. They have some for birthdays (if it's even close to your birthday . . . they don't check birth certificates or anything), and they also have a variety of others that say things like “First Time Here” or “I'm Celebrating!” These are fun, and my children really enjoy them. Plus, there's no extra charge. If it's your birthday, they also have a telephone at City Hall your child can use to hear a special birthday message from a Disney character.
- **Fun Facts:** The Official Disney Guides, trivia apps, or the assortment of Disney fan websites will have lots of these, but it adds a little excitement to your day when you

know some of the “insider” information about Disneyland. For example, the buildings on Main Street are made to look taller than they are. The bricks and windows at the top are smaller. They also pump out different smells (like cotton candy) into the street so all your senses will be working at the same time to enjoy the “Disney Magic.” You could spend a few minutes learning about the basketball court in the Matterhorn or the exclusive “Club 33”--these are just extra details, but they add a little bit of intrigue to the day’s adventure.

- **Special Opportunities:** There are lots of neat opportunities to get “V.I.P. Treatment” at Disneyland. For example, if you ask the attendant on the dock, they’ll let you ride up with the driver of the Mark Twain Steamboat (you have to be the first to ask, and you may have to wait until the following trip, but there’s a guest book you get to sign up there, and you get to ring the bell). You can also ride with the driver of the Monorail. The Jedi Training Academy lets some of the audience members go up on stage to “fight” Darth Maul or Darth Vader. If you get there early and smile and wave nicely at the person selecting the padawans, they might pick your child. A lot of the special opportunities will just come when you’re in the right place at the right time. We recommend being really nice to the cast members, asking if there might be any “hidden extras,” and allowing some space in your day for moments of serendipity. Doing so has yielded some fantastic moments.

Discipline at Disneyland

I am very hopeful that if you’ve planned your day well, gotten enough sleep, packed adequate snacks and water, and incorporated some of the ideas from above into your Disney experience, your children will behave beautifully. However, there is still a chance that your children will misbehave at some point during the day.

On a recent trip to Disneyland, we arrived around dinnertime, and the park was quite crowded. Instead of stopping to eat and rest (which is what we ought to have done), we got FastPasses for Space Mountain and got in line for Star Tours. I took notes on what happened:

- Grace complained that Spencer was banging into people because he was trying to walk on the corners of the squares in the sidewalk.
- Grace thought Ethan was going too slow when he was getting the Fast Passes, and she was getting quite impatient with him.
- Ethan elbowed Spencer in the eye accidentally when pointing to a Star Tours robot. Spencer screamed.
- Alia thought Ethan was talking too loud while we were in line--and let him know in a not-very-nice way.
- Spencer didn't want to go on Star Tours, and he was mad we were going on in spite of his wishes to go somewhere else.
- Ethan found a coin on the ground, and Spencer was sad he didn't have one. He started throwing a mini-tantrum, and I was trying to find a coin in my purse to give him, but I was so frustrated with everyone that I wanted to yell.

When you have experiences like the ones outlined above, it's easy to wonder why you even bothered to go through so much effort to give your children a special day out.

And if you've taken off work and invested a lot of money to be there, your frustration might be even deeper.

But think about it: your children might be overly excited, jet-lagged, tired, thirsty, hungry, over-stimulated, or disoriented. They're in a new environment that is surrounded with the lights, sounds, tastes, and sights they've been dreaming about. This is a lot for a child. It's a lot for an *adult*, so you will save yourself a lot of angst if you anticipate that there are going to be some behavior problems. It's totally common.

Sometimes all it takes for us is a snack, a little rest on a bench, or some time to relax in a theater setting with comfortable seating.

But other times, I've needed more specific discipline strategies. I've heard parents say, "We're going home if you don't behave," but is that really going to work? I do know one mom with season passes who made that threat and actually did follow through, but after I've gone through all the trouble of getting my family packed and ready for Disneyland, I don't want to go

home. So here are some discipline techniques that have worked well for us. Maybe these will work for you, or maybe they will inspire some additional solutions that will work better for your family.

- **Take Time for Training.** This first suggestion is from parenting expert, Amy McCreedy of Positive Parenting Solutions. She suggests that you have a family meeting long before you hop in the car or plane to talk about expectations for the park. Discuss what “behave” really means, so your children know what you expect of them. (In our family, for example, we really emphasize speaking kindly to one another, giving everyone a chance to choose an activity at the park, being obedient to Mom and Dad, and being patient when things don’t go as planned.)
- **Set a “Leaving Time” and then Adjust that Time According to Behavior.** At the beginning of the day, I say, "I'm planning to leave the park tonight at 9:00. If you behave well today, that's what time we will leave. But if anyone says something unkind or throws a tantrum or breaks one of our family rules, then I move our 'end time' up 10 minutes because that means you are not quite up to having such a long day here." Then, throughout the day, when someone really misbehaves, I say in a very calm voice, "Okay, I understand that today is feeling a bit too long for you. We'll leave at 8:50." Of course, we take rests and make sure we're not pushing the children too much, but that has worked really well for us--the kids are working together as a team to be able to stay as late as they can.
- **Skip a Ride.** Sometimes, if it is only one child who is acting poorly (like a teenager who has a bad attitude), I'll have that child sit out one ride (not a favorite, but an "intermediate" ride that he/she would really like to go on). It's only had to happen once because the kids really don't want to have to sit out. This is a hard one if the park is really crowded and the lines are long, but it emphasizes the idea that going on rides is a privilege.
- **Be an Encourager!** (This one is from Amy, as well.) It's very effective to praise the children who are behaving really well. You can take one child aside and say, "I noticed how you helped your brother stay occupied while we stood in line. That really shows a

lot of teamwork/maturity/kindness." Sometimes when we point out great behavior in ear-shot of our other children, they are inspired to behave likewise!

Our children really do want to behave well at Disneyland. They want it to be a magical day-- just like you do. But it often requires a little help on our part. And if you notice that YOU are starting to be the one who misbehaves, it won't hurt to give *yourself* a rest. Or some jelly beans. (I like the black ones.)

Nap Time at Disneyland

My husband laughs that I can find a way to nap *anywhere*. And it's true. I am a daily napper, and I've found a way to take a nap just about every day for the past 20 years. My days at Disneyland are no exception.

Some people won't want to take time to nap at Disneyland because they want to "make the most out of the day." I totally understand that, and if your children can go the whole day, and you just want to get a good night's rest before and after, more power to you.

However, if you're going to be there for more than one day, if you're traveling with little ones, or if you want a sure-fire way to avert potential meltdowns (your own and your children's), then I think it's wise to plan in a little nap.

Here's how we do it:

- The easiest way is to stay at a Disney hotel or a hotel that's just across the street. Then you can go back to your room, sleep for an hour or two, and come back with your energy totally restored.
- You also might want to go back to your car with your youngest child (if you have another adult who can stay in the park with the other children). We fold the seats down and make the car as comfortable as possible, and we keep pillows and blankets in there so we can have a nice rest. When you park in the Mickey and Friends parking structure, you will have a cool, shaded area in which to relax. And if you download a

“white noise” app to your cell phone, you can drown out any noise that others might be making as they go to and from their cars. (The noise is usually very minimal, but you never know.) I’ve also seen families go back to their vehicles to rest and watch a movie. That’s nice, too.

- If you personally don’t need a nap, but you have a child under the age of three, it’s really helpful to have a stroller where he/she can easily take a rest. I would pack bottles or sippy cups of milk, recline our jogging stroller all the way back, cover it with a light blanket, and walk around the shops on Main Street until my little one fell asleep. Then I would watch musical presentations, wander around the park, enjoy (quiet) street shows, or just sit in a nice shady spot. There are splash parks in California Adventure, that are nice for the older children, or you could just find a bench in a remote area of the park and relax for a bit.
- All right, one more place to nap is in the First Aid Station. I know this sounds a little strange, but did you know that they have a whole room full of beds right there at the end of Main Street? I’ve gone in there four or five times, and I just say something like, “I’m not feeling very well, and I’d like to rest for a bit. Would it be all right for me to lie down here?” The people there are so friendly, and they take my temperature (that’s a policy), they give me some water, and they let me pick a little bed where I can take my nap (I can even get a blanket and a pillow).



I typically bring Spencer in there with me, and he and I fall asleep together, snuggled under a blanket. (When he was a baby, I'd put him to sleep in the stroller first and then wheel him into the First Aid and park the stroller next to one of the beds.)

I will say, however, that this isn't the "ideal" place to nap. It's often noisy because the other people in there may be discussing their injuries or illnesses, and the lights are bright, but if you have a nice set of ear plugs in your purse (that's why "ear plugs" were on my packing list), then you can tune out most of the noise, put the blanket over your head, and get enough of a nap to take the edge off.

Walking back and forth to the car or to the hotel will give you a better napping environment, but it will take quite a bit of extra time. If you just need to rest enough to catch your second wind, or if you're pregnant, and you simply need some time to elevate your feet, the First Aid Station will be your oasis. I always leave there a happy camper.

A Disney Education

This could be an eBook of its own, but I'll just mention a few ideas that have helped me to really *teach* my children while we're at Disneyland. I mentioned before that Disneyland was our family's "preschool" for a couple of years. Getting family passes was much more affordable than sending two children to preschool, plus we had a little baby who got to join in the fun.

I didn't want to just spend the day mindlessly wandering the park, however (though that is definitely fun), so I made it a point to create learning opportunities out of as many Disney experiences as possible. Here are some of my favorites--spanning a variety of ages:

- **Story Time:** At one point, they had a Princess Story Time in one of the bookstores by the castle. We would get there early, read through some of the books on display, listen to the princess tell her story, and then talk about what we heard. Whether you're there for a Princess Story Time or not, there are tons of books throughout the park, and my children and I have enjoyed them so much.

- **Dream Training:** There are all kinds of displays at Disneyland about the current Imagineers, Walt Disney’s personal history, and the lives of other “dreamers” (like Abraham Lincoln). Many of the parades and shows will also build on that theme, and this gives us lots of opportunities to talk about our personal dreams, what it takes to make dreams happen, and how one person’s dream has made so many people happy. Taking a few minutes to stop, look at these displays and really talk about what you learn can be very valuable.
- **Theme Discussions:** This idea might work best for those with season passes, but there are so many ways to group your activities at Disneyland into specific themes. For example, you could study space exploration and astronomy at home and then talk about it while you’re in Tomorrowland. We had a “train day” when we were doing preschool, and we went on the Monorail, Casey Junior’s train, and the official Disneyland train that circles the park. We talked about trains the whole day. You could also discuss different types of dinosaurs and then go on the Disneyland Railroad between Tomorrowland and Main Street. There’s a huge diorama of different dinosaur species. Innoventions is an excellent place for family discussions. They have a display there about body fat, for example, and we got to see what 20 pounds of actual “fat” looks like. That led to some great discussions about nutrition and exercise.

“Soarin’ Over California” makes it easy--with lots of great aviation facts right there in the queue. If you’re alert to all the effort Disney puts into creating educational experiences for your family, you can actually learn a *lot* while having fun at the same time.

- **Business School:** Whether it’s paying attention to the excellent customer service (with the thank you notes!) or simply commenting on the products and processes, Disneyland is an excellent environment for teaching your children about business. We’ve discussed things like supply and demand, how Disney decides what to sell and how to sell it, approximate costs for running the park, cast member scheduling, maintenance routines, and what ideas would enhance their services. Disney is

obviously a huge business, and in many ways, they model practices that many other businesses would do well to replicate.

Date Nights at Disneyland

If there's any way you can spend some time in the park with just you and your spouse, I would highly recommend it. There is something totally romantic and dreamlike about date night at Disneyland.

You get a chance to explore the things you usually don't get to see because you won't be rushing from ride to ride. Eric and I love to walk around in the shops, talk to cast members, enjoy a nice dinner (Blue Bayou, French Market), people watch, check out the window displays, or even meet with other couples who also have passes.

Sometimes we do the single rider lines if we want to go on an attraction (and the lines are long), and my husband says with a smile, "Nothing says 'Date Night' like the Single Rider Line!"

I just wanted to mention this option because, while Disneyland is a fantastic place for family fun, there's a deeper level of relaxation and enjoyment at Disneyland that I've only experienced when I'm not keeping track of four other people. *I love it.*

How to Make Disneyland Magical for a Spouse Who Isn't In Love with Disneyland

I needed to add this section because there may be many couples who are not "duo-Disney fans." I understand this.

My husband and I went to Disneyland while we were dating, but he didn't tell me that he didn't love the crowds and the lines. He's gone to Disneyland several times over the years with me and the children, but it's just not his favorite place. (He prefers hiking, camping, being out in nature, and quiet, serene settings . . . which is totally okay!)

So when we go to Disneyland as a family, there are a few things I do to make the experience great for all of us:

- **I make sure we're all well-rested.** Do you like how I talk so much about sleep? If we're doing an after-school trip to Disneyland, it makes much more sense to give everyone a nap (even me and my husband) before we go--rather than jump in the car and head out with a group of people who are destined to return home grumpy. If we were coming from out of town, I would make sure we all got to bed early the night before Disneyland, and I would make sure we made time for naps (or got back to our hotel before the children were ready to have a meltdown).
- **I make sure we have enough food and water.** A lot of this goes back to what I pack for our Disney trips. When I have plenty of snacks and drinks, that means the children will be less fussy . . . which means my husband and I will be having a better time. I also pack a few snacks I know my husband will like, and I plan for us to be near his favorite Disney restaurants around dinnertime.
- **I structure the day's activities so we can maximize "fun" and minimize "frustration."** For example, if the park is extraordinarily crowded, we head to the less popular rides that have shorter lines. The carousel, Pirates of the Carribean, Haunted Mansion, Tiki Room, Jungle Cruise, Small World, and Teacups will typically have reasonable lines, even on packed days. We put the happiness of the *whole* family above the need to go on "every single ride," and that sets us up for success.
- **I have a serious talk with my children about gratitude.** One of the most frustrating things about taking children to Disneyland is that after you've invested a lot of money and precious time into such a big trip, your children will still act like "children," and they will bicker, whine, and complain about silly things. Then it's natural for the parents to think, "How *dare* they act so badly when we've done so much for them?" That's just a formula for a bad family vacation. So I have a long talk with my children before we go, and I explain that we expect them to be kind and courteous and grateful throughout the trip. (And we use the specific discipline strategies I discussed earlier.)

Basically, everything I'm writing in this eBook is designed to make your time at Disneyland great. I asked my husband what he would say is the most helpful thing I do to make Disneyland pleasant for him, and he said it's just the fact that I set the day up so intentionally.

Because I pack what we need, I have a basic plan for where we'll be going and what we'll be doing, and I build in time for rest, food, and "down time," it makes it possible for him to be a really great dad at Disneyland and just enjoy the magic with his children.



No one wants to be a frustrated, annoyed, grumpy parent at Disneyland, but I've definitely been there . . . and I don't want to do that again . . . and I don't want YOU to have go through that. That's why I've put this book together!

Parting Words

All right, friends, we have come to the end of this Disneyland guide.

If you think of some additional ideas you'd like to share with our community, please visit the link on the Power of Moms Disney Kit Homepage where you can add your comments. We would love to see your links to books on Amazon, smartphone apps, Disney-related websites, or blog posts that have great tips and information.

For more Disney resources and an active forum where you can ask all your detailed questions, visit the [Disney Parks Moms Panel Website](#). They've done a phenomenal job putting this together, and you can get all the advice you want from many other Disney experts!

If you have any further questions specifically for Power of Moms, please email disney@powerofmoms.com.

Although I clearly love the Disney parks, taking your children there isn't a "requirement" for being a good parent. For many in the world, a Disney vacation might never be a possibility, and I understand that. I honestly hope I haven't built up Disneyland so much that those who are not able to go feel badly. Disneyland is amazing, but it is just *one* beautiful way to spend time together as a family.

For those who *are* able to go, I hope that the ideas in this eBook are helpful to you.

I've seen and experienced firsthand the powerful effect Disneyland has on families. We've seen families there who were sponsored by the Make-a-Wish Foundation--children with cancer who were able to step into this magical new world as one final dream come true. We've seen friends go to that happy place who were mourning the loss of loved ones, but who could find joy in that positive, comforting environment. We've gone there ourselves when the stresses of life seemed to be crushing down on us. It has literally been one of our "happy places."

I've spent a lot of time on this Disney kit, and at times I've wondered, "Is this really the best use of my time?"

But then I think about all the families who are planning their vacations, savoring their time with their children, and hoping that their investment of time and energy will give them that "dream come true" they've imagined.



So I've written this for *you*.

I want you to feel what I feel when you walk into that park (and when you walk *out* of that park). I want you to enjoy the time there with your family--because our children will be all grown up before we know it, and when we finish up our time at the Disney parks, we want everyone to be thinking, "That was a *wonderful* experience."

Here's to *your* magical memories!

April Perry

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