

THE BIGGEST MISTAKE YOU CAN MAKE AT DISNEY

**5 Ways to Kill the Money and Time
Sucking Habit Few Can Break**

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Believe it or not, there's a huge mistake, a cardinal sin if you will, that the vast majority of Disney guests make.

It doesn't involve discounts, credit cards, or waiting in long lines. It doesn't involve characters, fireworks, rides or the oft-touted "hidden secrets" of Disney's theme parks. It doesn't involve what you wear, what you pack, what you eat or when you go.

No, the biggest mistake that I personally witnessed time and time again in my years as both a guest and a Disney cast member was far sneakier. It's a giant trap that many fall into, but few recognize.

The biggest mistake people make at Disney?

Not having fun.

Now before you close this, hear me out. Our lives have become more technological and less spontaneous; as a society, we've become more serious and less interesting. Because getting to Disney can take so much time, money and effort, so many people lose sight of its whole purpose. Disney is not a military drill or a chore you do because you have to - it's a vacation.

Whether you're a parent, a spouse or just flying solo, it's easy to get caught up in how much it's costing and ways to keep those costs down. If you let me, I can break down every discount that's out there to make sure you have a killer Disney trip for an unheard of price tag - but I can't stand there when you walk in the gates and tell you *let it go, you're here now*.

Did you know happier people spend less? It's true. The happier you and your family are while you're at Disney, the less need there is to buy junk you don't need. Having trouble getting one of your kids to stop begging you for toys/dolls/expensive crap you can't afford? Spend more time on the rides. Spend more quality time with them (no cell phones) in the Happiest Place On Earth. Set a budget and stick to it, and let everyone know their limits before they arrive. Expectations can be managed, and intangible experiences are far more exciting anyway.

So let's get down to the nitty gritty. Here are some concrete tactics you can use for your next Disney trip that will take the stress out of the way so you can relax and have a blast.

Give Yourself Enough Time

If you've never been to Walt Disney World and want to see all four parks, you need a week. There's just no way around it. You can go for less time, but you will stress yourself out trying to fit it all in. At Disneyland, four days is a good length for newbies who want to cover both parks there. What's the point in saving some money by staying a day or two less but freaking

yourself out over self-imposed time limits? It's a vacation, so treat it like one. Which brings us to our next fun-sucker...

Ditch the Commando-Style Touring

If you've got a spreadsheet or an iPhone app that's ordering you from ride to ride on a military-like schedule, you're going to create enemies in your group real fast. Overplanning sucks the fun out of everything, so don't be Sgt. Debbie Downer and order everyone around all day. Know what rides you want to hit (mark up the map if need be) and work through them - but be prepared for contingencies. If your child is happier playing in a fountain, don't scold them because you could be on Dumbo. Take advantage of the moment. Take a seat, grab some pictures, create some memories. That's what we're there to do, right?

Don't Be Character Crazy

Disney characters are extremely popular and for many, a vital part of visiting the parks. The lines for some characters (I'm looking at your princesses and fairies) can exceed wait times for popular rides, so see popular characters early in the day to minimize the pain. For example, at Walt Disney World the princesses have their own Fastpass. Take advantage of it and use the gained time to do other things. Character meals are very popular because they kill two birds with one stone - you gotta eat and the characters come to you - these can be handy for anyone wanting quality time with Disney's stars.

Avoid Going Into Debt

You'll regret it. It will psychologically prevent you from fully enjoying your trip. Save up in advance if need be, but don't make impulse decisions on merchandise that you'll pay 24.99% interest on later. If finances are a concern for you, set your limits and stick to them. It's always a good idea to have some slush money for the trip for unexpected wants or needs, but keep in mind that Congress will never send you a bailout check. Disney can be experienced to the fullest on all kinds of budgets, so don't sabotage yourself by taking out a consumer loan for a pair of mouse ears.

Show Up Before Noon

Most Disney park visitors roll in around 11am - noon, causing a huge bump in crowds compared to what the early folks get to see. Make the effort to show up at park opening and you'll be rewarded with short lines, more rides in less time and your pick of characters to meet. By the time afternoon has rolled around, you'll have comfortably done more than most poor schmucks will do all day, and you can retreat to your hotel for some nap or pool time before returning for a relaxing evening. This tactic alone can save you hours of waiting in line, even during busy seasons.

The sad thing is, very few people put the above advice to good use. The fact of the matter is, if you're not going to have fun at Disney, stay home.

But if you're willing to do just a little prep work, you can have a no stress, epic Disney vacation. That's what Small World Ninja is all about – giving you the keys to the trip of a lifetime on any budget.

So do you have questions about planning your next Disney trip? Join me every Tuesday night for live, free Q & A – I'll answer any questions you have right on the phone. [You can get all the details here.](#)

Let me know how I can help you have the best Disney vacation ever, and remember...have fun.



Drew Hackney is the author of [*The Small World Ninja Ultimate Guide to Walt Disney World: The #1 Guide to No Stress Epic Disney Vacations*](#), and keeps up with the latest Disney vacation planning tips at his blog. He's hard at work on his next volume, *The Small World Ninja Ultimate Guide to Disneyland*. A former Disney Cast Member, Drew resides in Los Angeles with his beautiful wife and scheming chihuahua, and escapes to Disney as often as possible. In addition to an unhealthy obsession with the Mouse, he loves 30 Rock, Nutella and karaoke.