

DISNEYLAND

INSIDER SECRETS FROM THE EXPERTS AT

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And we LOVE Disney!

Five of our writers—Leslie Harvey, Julie Bigboy, Patty Holliday, Gwen Kleist and Amy Barseghian—are regular visitors to Disneyland. Here, they share their best tips and advice for making the most of a magical visit to Disneyland Resort.

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--Cindy Richards, Editor-in-Chief, [TravelingMom.com](https://www.travelingmom.com)

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14 Disneyland Tips Every Walt Disney World Regular Needs To Know

You're a Walt Disney World regular going to Disneyland for the very first time? You're in for a new experience. While Walt Disney World seems to exist in its own "Disney bubble," Disneyland is set in the middle of a bustling city and surrounded by suburban homes. If you're used to the rolling green lawns and lush trees of Orlando with sprawling resorts and equally large Parks, you'll need to rethink that your visit to Anaheim, California. But no fear! The Disney magic is alive in California. Here are 14 Disneyland tips you need to know.



Sleeping Beauty is the princess of the castle at Disneyland
Photo Credit: Julie Bigboy / Day Trips TravelingMom

A Local Focus

While Walt Disney World is considered more of a destination, Disneyland is geared for the many locals who drive in to visit for the day. A majority of the visitors to Disneyland are local annual pass holders who come to play in the Parks for the afternoon.

If you're used to planning your Walt Disney World vacations 6 months ahead on the Resort online calendar, you might be frustrated by the Disneyland calendar. It seemingly doesn't have entertainment schedules or even Park hours booked more than 30-45 days ahead. It's a laid-back California vibe, for sure.

Getting to Disneyland

If you're a Walt Disney World regular, you know that the [Magical Express Bus](#) in Orlando will bus you (for free!) from Orlando International Airport to your Resort hotel if you are a resort guest. Magical Express workers also will deliver your luggage, from baggage claim at the airport straight to your room!

Unfortunately there is no such program in California. Once you arrive at the airport, there are several choices to make in getting to the Disneyland Resort. You can always rent a vehicle of course, or pay for a taxi cab or Uber or Lyft ride. And if you're flying in to either LAX or John Wayne Airport, the Disneyland Resort Express bus will take you to the Resort, for a fee. You can purchase slightly discounted Disneyland Resort Express bus tickets on [Get Away Today](#).

Two Parks

The Disneyland Resort is comprised of two Parks, Disneyland (the original, built by Walt in 1955) and Disney California Adventure Park, which opened in 2001. Disneyland is where you'll find the classics, like Pirates of the Caribbean and the Matterhorn as well as unique areas like Toontown and New Orleans Square. Disney California Adventure Park is home to Cars Land, 'A Bug's Land,' Toy Story Mania and a loop-de-loop coaster, California Screamin'. Unlike Walt Disney World there aren't any themed miniature golf courses or water parks at the Disneyland Resort.

The Parks at the Walt Disney World resort have miles of distance between them. Not so at the Disneyland Resort. The two Parks here are divided by a small esplanade, making Park Hopping easily accomplished within minutes!

Three Onsite Hotels

While at Walt Disney World you have your choice of 27 Resort Hotels ranging in price from value to deluxe. In Anaheim, there are only three on-site Resort hotel, all more in the deluxe price range. All three Resort hotels have excellent pool areas and specialty Disney-themed dining. However it's very convenient to book a non-Disney room and walk to the front gates within minutes, something that can't be done at Walt Disney World. Staying on-site is nice and there are perks, including an Extra Magic Hour in the morning and a guest's only side-entrance to Disney California Adventure Park. Read more about the [benefits of staying on-site](#).



Good Neighbors Abound

Looking for something off-site? Disney has a list of recommended hotels in the Anaheim area. Nicknamed "Good Neighbor Hotels," these range from economy to suites. Some are better than others. Do your research online, read reviews and for sure, look at a map. Some hotels boast that they're "right across the street" but not disclose that you have to hike around the city block after exiting the Parks to get to the hotel.

So Walk-able

While the Walt Disney World Resort is enormous (like the size of San Francisco!), the Disneyland Resort is compact and oh, so walk-able! You will love that you can walk to your Resort hotel within minutes, Park Hop back and forth with ease and pop in to the Downtown Disney District for meals because everything is all right there. Once at the Disneyland Resort there is no need for a vehicle.

Parking is Scattered

If you do decide to drive and park at the Resort, there are a variety of lots scattered around the area. Mickey & Friends is the large pay-to-park garage near the Disneyland Hotel and you can hitch a ride on the tram that will drop you Park-side. On the other side of the Parks are two smaller lots, the Pumbaa and Toy Story Parking Areas. At both places you'll pay, park and then be shuttled on a bus to be dropped off close to the Park entrance.

I actually prefer the Toy Story Parking lot on South Harbor Boulevard. Though it is the farthest away, it doesn't take long to catch one of the buses. The trams that take you to Mickey & Friends are so long at the end of the day, you might be waiting 30 minutes or more just to catch a ride back to your car.



The Magic Kingdom is not Disneyland

True, there are some similar attractions but the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World and Disneyland in California are not interchangeable. Each Park has unique features that you won't find in either place. Also, the rides that are similar are not identical, so you should still absolutely ride them when you come to Disneyland.

Paper Tickets

While Walt Disney World has moved into the high-tech world of [MagicBands](#), Disneyland still uses paper tickets. There is much debate about whether Disneyland would ever move into MagicBands since it's frequented more by locals. So you'll still be buying tickets upfront (you can purchase tickets ahead of time with a discount on [Get Away Today](#)) and getting [FastPass](#) one at a time while inside the Park.

It's Unlikely to Rain

While it rains at the drop of a hat year-round in Florida, rain in Southern California is much less common. The air is also less humid and more desert/arid. If you bring a rain poncho, it will be used more for the water rides than a sudden downpour. Of course, check the weather before your trip to know for sure!

Advanced Dining Reservations

Any Walt Disney World regular knows that if you want a coveted dining reservation you'll be booking it months in advance. However it's unnecessary to book every meal upfront when visiting Disneyland; reservations rarely fill up for all restaurants.

You should still book ADR (Advanced Dining Reservations) for certain locations (Blue Bayou, Ariel's Grotto or Goofy's Kitchen) or if there is a particularly popular time you want to eat. But you should be able to walk up for most meals without much wait.

A Lot Squeezed Into a Little Space

Disneyland and Disney California Adventure Park are going to seem so much smaller if you're used to walking in the large Parks of Walt Disney World. But this doesn't mean that the California Parks are lacking anything. Because of their space constraints, these Parks were created with lots of character and charm in their smaller spaces so take time to look at those little details. Areas like New Orleans Square, Toontown, 'A Bug's Land' and [Cars Land](#) have more amazing details than your eyes can even take in on one visit!

Character Spotting

While the Parks of Walt Disney World have [Character meet n' greets](#) on more of a schedule and location, Characters at Disneyland aren't on such a routine. Yes, you'll still find Lightning



Meeting a familiar Mouse at Disneyland
Image Credit: Julie Bigboy/Day Trips Traveling Mom

McQueen and Mater in Cars Land at the Cozy Cone Motel, and Tinker Bell and her friends in Pixie Hollow. I find that mornings just as Disneyland opens is a great time to find your favorites in the Park. Many Characters greet Guests just as they enter the gates. The Fab 5 hang out in the hub just before traveling Main Street U.S.A.

Over at Disney California Adventure Park, you can sometimes find the Incredibles or Sully from Monsters, Inc. walking in Hollywood Land or Flik in 'A Bug's Land'. Of course there are always the parades. They are our favorite way to see Characters, especially the popular princesses. They'll smile, wave and blow kisses as their float passes by! You could also consider a Character Dining Experience for guaranteed meet n' greets while you eat.

Everything You Love About Disney

With all these differences you might be worried that you won't be able to experience the same "Disney magic" you've come to expect from across the country. Know that between those differences the same Disney heart beats;

great customer service and Cast Members who love their jobs, a clean and safe environment and high quality entertainment. You'll still be able to find your favorite Disney-inspired treats too, like Dole Whips, turkey legs and Mickey ice cream bars!

Julie Bigboy, Day Trips TravelingMom



7 Important Things to Know about MaxPass at Disneyland

Disneyland's next generation FASTPASS service, MaxPass, is different from FASTPASS+ at Walt Disney World. For one thing, the new MaxPass system costs \$10 per day per person. Here, a Disneyland regular walks you through how the new paid Disneyland MaxPass system works and offers insider tips for how to use the digital FASTPASS alternative for free.



MaxPass vs. FASTPASS

In mid-January 2017, Disneyland announced it would make changes to its FASTPASS system.

FASTPASS is the old cut-the-line service for some of Disneyland's most popular attractions. The system required guests to scan their park tickets at kiosks outside a participating ride. The kiosks delivered paper slips with a reservation time when the guest could return to ride via an express line to minimize waits.

The new system, MaxPass, is a digital process that pairs the reservation with a guest's smartphone. MaxPass also throws in a little bit of a bonus, offering Disneyland's PhotoPass service, previously sold separately.

Of course, this all comes at a cost. Unlike FASTPASS+ at Walt Disney World, Disneyland MaxPass is not free.

How Disneyland MaxPass Works

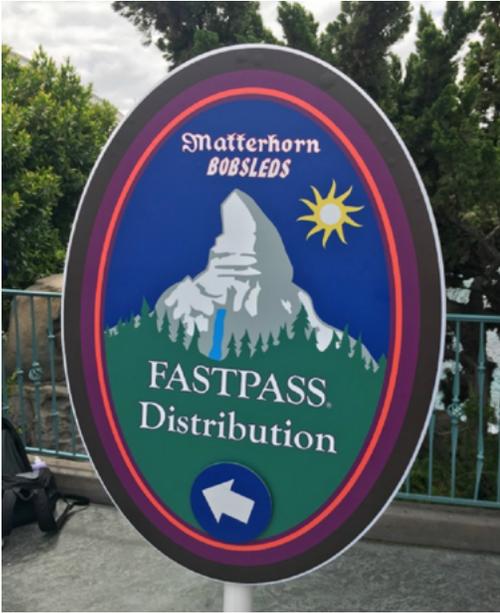
Here are 7 things you need to know about Disneyland MaxPass.

1. It's all on Your Smartphone

MaxPass now allows guests to book FASTPASS reservation times from any location using the Disneyland app on a smartphone. As long as guests have scanned a ticket to enter the park for the day, MaxPass works. No more running from one ride kiosk to the next booking FASTPASSes. Groups or families traveling together can all book on a single smartphone or break up on to multiple devices. Guests can redeem using a barcode on their smartphones or by scanning physical park tickets. You can even cancel and rebook MaxPass reservations if your plans change.

2. MaxPass is a Same Day System

Unlike Walt Disney World, where insiders know to book **Fastpass+** 30 or 60 days in advance, Disneyland is a locals park. That means a lot of last minute vacation planners. The MaxPass system reflects that; it is a same-day system. So there's no need to stress about pre-planning MaxPass weeks or months before your Disneyland vacation.



The addition of FASTPASS to the Matterhorn was an early step towards Disneyland MaxPass.
Photo credit: Leslie Harvey / Frequent Flyer TravelingMom

3. MaxPass is Not Free

MaxPass costs \$10 per person per day for anyone ages 3 and up. As you can imagine, for a family on a multi-day Disneyland trip, this additional cost can add up. Since MaxPass includes unlimited PhotoPass downloads, it still may be a value for families.

4. MaxPass Is Entirely Voluntary

If you like the old FASTPASS system at Disneyland or simply don't want to spend the cash on MaxPass, you're in luck. You can still get FASTPASS reservations for free. You just have to do it the old fashioned way--by running from one ride kiosk to the next and making a reservation for each ride in person. You'll no longer get paper slips. Instead, you simply scan your park ticket or annual pass for confirmation.

5. Things Have Changed a Bit for Annual Passholders

The highest-level passholders -Disney Premier Passports and Signature Plus - get MaxPass for free, just as they previously received Photopass privileges with their passes. In the past, Signature passes also included Photopass. No longer for new passholders. And Signature passholders now have to purchase MaxPass like anyone else. As for all other passholders, a MaxPass add on is available for \$75 for the remainder of the pass duration. Single day options at \$10 are also available.

6 Disneyland WiFi Can Be a Challenge

Disneyland superfans know that the big elephant in the room for a smartphone-based FASTPASS system is the unreliability of WiFi in the parks. No matter what cell phone provider you have, cell data service in the parks is spotty at best. For quite awhile, the Disneyland app was simply unusable in places for many guests.

Disneyland now has WiFi hot spots in strategic spots in both parks, but that has been unreliable, too. Disney has made no definitive announcements about parkwide WiFi.

7. MaxPass Is Worth It - For Most Guests

Of course the major question that Disneyland guests want to know is whether MaxPass is worth it. Having used the system personally, I would say that it is for the majority of guests. If you want to do any of the major thrill rides, MaxPass saves major time and energy. Now that I've experienced not having to run from kiosk to kiosk, I'm not sure I can ever go back.



FASTPASSes (now in digital form tied to your park ticket) are still available. Unlike MaxPass, the FASTPASSes still are free.
Photo credit: Leslie Harvey / Frequent Flyer TravelingMom

Disneyland has had trouble with overcrowding the last several years as visitor attendance has spiked. MaxPass offers yet another way to **beat the Disneyland crowds**. Unless you are a family with small kids who aren't going to ride most of the rides offering FASTPASS, I would try to budget for the extra cost, even for a day or two of your Disneyland vacation.

Leslie Harvey, Frequent Flyer TravelingMom



18 Valuable Reasons To Stay At A Disneyland Resort Hotel



Disneyland Hotel
Photo Credit: Julie Bigboy / Day Trips TravelingMom

If getting the full Disneyland experience is crucial to your vacation enjoyment, then booking a stay at one of the three Disneyland Resort Hotels is the key to the magic! A Disneyland Resort hotel room comes with full Disney immersion, extended Park hours and exclusive family activities. Here are all of the details on why Disneyland visitors should choose to stay in a Disneyland Resort Hotel.

Why Stay At A Disneyland Resort Hotel?

The Disneyland Resort is located in the middle of a bustling city and is surrounded by local hotels and motels. There are valid reasons why

some vacationers decide to stay off-site (cost, variety, availability). For those familiar with Walt Disney World Resort hotels, each of the three Disneyland Resort Hotels would be considered in a “deluxe” category which means they are costlier than the average hotels in the area. However I think that the benefits outweigh the cost differences in many cases. These are my top 18 reasons that visitors should [stay on-site](#) at one of the three Disneyland Resort Hotels.

Full Disney Immersion

You’ll be immersed in all things Disney from the moment you step onto the property. The shampoo and hand lotion in the bathroom may have Mouse Ears. Little details like the bedding, shower curtain, wallpaper or the pictures on the walls may be Disney themed. And if you book a Park view room, what you see out the window will be Disney-themed because it will overlook the Parks!

The Disneyland Hotel in particular has Hidden Mickeys to find from floor to ceiling and the amazing double headboard houses a magical surprise! Along the pathway from the hotel to the Downtown Disney District is Mickey’s huge sorcerer’s hat that Tinker Bell illuminates with twinkling lights at night. There are Disney touches everywhere you look. If you’re looking to immerse yourself in the “Disney bubble”, staying at an on-site resort hotel is the only way to go.

An Extra Hour Of Magic

One of the leading benefits of staying at a Disney resort hotel is the Extra Magic Hour. For each day of your resort stay, you are able to enter the Parks (with valid ticket) one hour earlier than the general public. If you aren’t purchasing your tickets through a Disney Resort package, I’d recommend purchasing from [Get Away Today](#). You’ll save a few dollars on the tickets, which is always a benefit.

Please note that during Extra Magic Hour, only select attractions and shops are open, but it’s a great way to hit Fantasyland in Disneyland or [Cars Land at Disney California Adventure](#) before the lines are a mile long. It’s amazing how much you can do in one hour in the Parks with smaller crowds! Each Park has separate gate entrances for the Extra Magic Hour guests.

A Night Out, Without The Kids

Disneyland Resort Hotel guests can book their kids into Pinocchio's Workshop, a child care facility on the grounds of The Grand Californian Resort & Spa for ages 5-12 (additional fee). Kids will do a craft, play games and have a snack while parents can enjoy a child-free evening in Downtown Disney or perhaps have a romantic dinner at Napa Rose!

Easy Souvenir Shopping

Want to buy souvenirs but don't want to carry the bags with you around the Parks? Package Express will deliver any purchases made in the park directly to your Disneyland Resort hotel.

Good Morning, From Mickey!

Schedule a free Character Wake Up Call during your visit. On our last trip I had Mickey call to wake up the kids so we could get into the parks early!

Exclusive Entrance

At the Grand Californian Hotel and Spa, there is a private entrance for all Disneyland resort guests that will allow admission into Disney California Adventure park. You will be required to show your valid room key to use this entrance. You will also need your valid park admission ticket. We used this entrance and exit several times during our most recent trip, which allowed us to quickly leave the park for lunch at Storyteller's Cafe and to take a mid-day swim.

Experience The Park Without Leaving The Resort

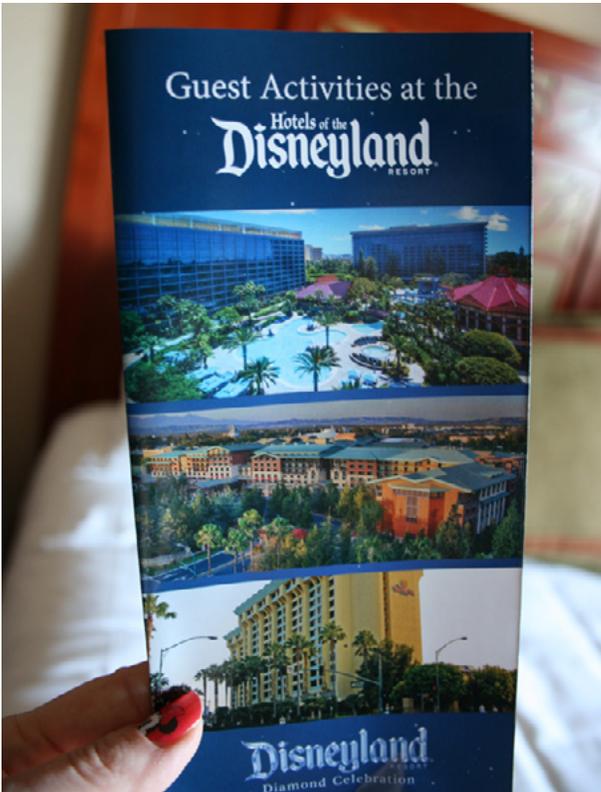
Book a Park View room at the Disneyland Resort and you'll receive an exceptional view of one of the Parks, including the opportunity to watch a parade or show from your window.

Concierge Treatment

If you're looking for a little something extra, consider adding concierge to your visit. My family and I did this once and concierge allowed us use of the private lounge. We ate breakfast in the lounge, stocked up with drinks and snacks that we took to the pool in the afternoon, and had appetizers (they also serve wine) in the evening before dinner. When we got back to the room, there was a plate with Mickey-shaped treats and fresh strawberries waiting for us. The Concierge service is something extra special, especially if you take breaks mid-day to enjoy the drinks and snacks in the lounge.



Tickets in hand, we're ready for a day at the Disneyland Resort
Photo Credit: Julie Bigboy / Day Trips TravelingMom



Resort guide for the Disneyland Hotel guests
Photo Credit: Julie Bigboy / Day Trips TravelingMom

Easy Access To Disneyland Resort Hotel Restaurants

True, you don't have to stay at the Disneyland Resort Hotels in order to book reservations at the restaurants but it's nice to know that they're so close at hand when you stay on-site. Each of the three Disneyland Resort Hotels have their own character dining restaurants as well as upscale dining like Steakhouse 55 and Napa Rose.

Evening Entertainment

Set your watch to island time at the Disneyland Hotel and enjoy the tropical sounds on the tiki-torch lit patio outside Trader Sam's – Enchanted Tiki Bar. At the [Paradise Pier Hotel](#), resort guests can visit the roof top pool area to watch the Disneyland fireworks show, complete with narration and music piped in over loudspeakers. Each of the Disneyland Resort Hotels host a Magical Night at the Movies. Bring your own snacks and enjoy a Disney movie shown outside. You can find out the time, location and specific film during check-in.

Stay In A Signature Suite

There's nothing like them anywhere except at the Disneyland Hotel. For the ultimate VIP experience, book one of these five extravagantly themed suites including the Mickey Mouse Penthouse, Pirates of the Caribbean Suite or Cinderella in the Fairy Tale Suite. These swanky rooms are pretty much the thing that Disney dreams are made of!

Magical Celebrations

If you have a special occasion during your trip, as a hotel guest you may contact Disney Vacation Planning for Disney Dream Makers to bring just about anything your heart desires directly to your room! This is a particularly sweet addition for grandparents to surprise grand kids with a treat basket, floral bouquet or even a full-room celebration complete with decorations, balloons and a cake.

Invigorating Walk Through The Park

Didn't get enough exercise on your Disneyland day? Take a fast paced 2-mile power walk in the wee hours of the morning that takes Disney Resort Hotel guests briskly through the Disney California Adventure Park. This is a complimentary activity and guests can sign up at Guest Services.

Key To The Magic

Adult room keys (your Key to the Magic) will be linked to the credit card that you use during check in so you can charge some Disney purchases onto your room account and not have to mess around with carrying your wallet. This is particularly handy when going to the Resort pool and you want to order food and drinks but don't want to lug your wallet.

Pool-Side Attractions

Disney Resort hotels have **amazing pools** complete with water slides, hot tubs, fresh towels, swim diapers for babies, life vests for toddlers, lots of lounging areas and pool-side dining & drink service. All three resorts have great water slides, several pools to choose from as well as hot tubs. With the resorts so close, we usually take a mid-day swim break and return to the parks refreshed in the late afternoon.

Exclusive Family Activities

From a scavenger hunt inside the hotel or learning how to create adorable washcloth creations there are many exclusive family activities for guests of the Disneyland Resort Hotels. Sign up for an animator's class to learn how to draw Mickey, take a trivia challenge or enjoy an exclusive magic experience at the Main Street Magic Shop inside Disneyland. Guests can register for these special activities at Guest Services inside their Disney Resort Hotel.

Take An Informative Tour

Want to learn more about the Disney Resort Hotels? Guests 14+ can take complimentary one-hour walking tours to learn more about these special resorts. Take the Happiest Hotel on Earth Tour and discover how the Disneyland Hotel was a part of Walt Disney's dream of the "Happiest Place on Earth". On the Art of the Craft Tour at the Grand Californian Hotel & Spa guests will discover more about the architecture and design of this marvelous hotel (reserve a spot at the Guest Services desk).

All The Disney Details

From the live piano music in the lobby of the Grand Californian Hotel & Spa, the interactive map in the **Disneyland Hotel** lobby or the ability to watch World of Color from your room at the Paradise Pier Hotel, these hotels each offer little details that make your vacation extra magical.

Julie Bigboy, Day Trips TravelingMom



10 Things To Know About Staying Off-Property At Disneyland



Photo credit: Leslie Harvey / Frequent Flyer TravelingMom

Thinking of staying off-property on your family's next Disneyland vacation? Worried you are going to miss out on the perks or suffer some inconveniences by trying to save a few bucks? Never fear! Armed with these pieces of Disneyland knowledge, you too can have a magical off-property Disneyland stay.

A major decision every Disneyland visitor needs to make is **choosing a hotel**. The three Disney-owned properties (the **Grand Californian**, the **Disneyland Hotel**, and **Disney's Paradise Pier**) certainly loom large. They offer magical theming and some special

perks. Staying on-property, however, isn't always possible for all families. The Disney hotels are significantly more expensive than their off-property competitors. Budget travelers aren't going to find them a great fit.

Even for Disneyland guests willing and able to pay the price premium for a Disney hotel, demand often far exceeds supply. I've seen many dates, especially around popular holiday periods, where all three Disney hotels are sold out.

When on-property lodging won't work, it is time to explore the off-property hotel options at Disneyland. The good news is that there are perks to be had off-site as well. Of course, there are a few cons to these hotels, but you can mostly avoid them if you know what they are and plan accordingly. If you are considering staying off-site on your next vacation, here are ten things you need to know to have the best off-property Disneyland experience.

Your Hotel Can Still Be As Close As A Disney Hotel.

Unlike at Walt Disney World, where off-property hotels mean longer transit times, Disneyland has some off-property hotels that are within walking distance. In fact, they are literally across the street! I find them to be excellent options for travelers with younger kids who need to take mid-day hotel breaks. Look for the hotels on South Harbor Boulevard directly across from the mid-block pedestrian entrance into Disneyland. These include the **Anaheim Fairfield Inn by Marriott**, **Courtyard by Marriott Anaheim Theme Park Entrance**, **Anaheim**, **Grand Legacy at the Park**, **Best Western Plus Park Place Inn – Mini Suites**, **Anaheim**, **Anaheim Camelot Inn & Suites**, **Howard Johnson Anaheim Hotel and Water Playground**, and several others.



The Disneyland Hotel is amazingly themed, but it isn't in every traveler's budget!
Photo credit: Leslie Harvey / Frequent Flyer TravelingMom

It's Possible To Get Early Entry Into Disneyland Park With A Little-Known Trick.

Think only Disney resort guests can take advantage of early entry into the parks? Think again. While "Extra Magic Hours" at Walt Disney World are indeed only available to Disney resort hotel guests, there's a little known hack at Disneyland that helps some families staying off-site with early entry privileges as well. Anyone purchasing Disneyland tickets for three days or more receives one day of "Magic Morning" access at Disneyland – no Disney hotel stay required. Magic Morning allows ticket holders early entry into Disneyland park on one of the designated Extra Magic Hour days (currently Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday). For families like mine with young kids, Magic Morning is a huge benefit. We use it to hit all the kid-friendly rides in Fantasyland like Peter Pan, Dumbo, and Alice in Wonderland with very minimal waits.

There's No Way To Get Early Entry Into California Adventure.

As wonderful as Magic Morning is, it is only for Disneyland park. If you are looking for early entry into California Adventure, your only option is to stay in a Disneyland resort hotel. This is essential to know if you have a kiddo who is crazy for [Cars Land](#).

Hotel Tonight Is Your Friend.

Who doesn't love a discount on a family vacation? There are so many ways to save at off-property Disneyland hotels, from [Priceline](#) to AAA discounts to simply subscribing to some of these hotel's mailing lists and watching for deal emails. One of the greatest ways to get a discount is by using the smartphone app, Hotel Tonight. You can search for discounted hotel deals several days in advance of your stay. This is ideal if you are planning a last minute vacation or have a cancellable room reservation. New to [Hotel Tonight](#)? Save \$25 on your first stay with code TRAMOM.



It's possible to get early entry to ride the Mad Tea Party, even when staying off-site!
Photo credit: Leslie Harvey / Frequent Flyer TravelingMom

If You Are Staying At A Good Neighbor Hotel, You Can Buy Your Tickets There.

Disney has designated a number of hotels in the vicinity of Disneyland as Good Neighbor Hotels. These hotels offer some conveniences to guests, including the ability to purchase tickets at the hotel front desk. Ticket purchasing privileges save you time in the morning so you don't need to wait in line at the regular ticket kiosks and miss rope drop.

But I know you are looking to save money as well as time, right? It's even better to purchase your Disneyland tickets in advance with TravelingMom partner [Get Away Today](#). This agency partners with Disney to provide the very same multiday tickets for a discount if you purchase at least 48 hours in advance.

Many Hotels Charge For Parking.

Just like Disney-owned hotels, many off-property hotels near Disneyland charge parking fees. These fees can range in price considerably, so remember to research the daily charges and add them up before comparing overall hotel costs. If you don't need a car and are flying to Disneyland, consider

taking a shuttle or ride-sharing service from the airport to save on rental car fees as well as parking.

There's Public Transit – ART – If You Aren't Staying Within Walking Distance.

Although I highly recommend staying within walking distance (especially if you have young kids), many off-property hotels with locations farther afield are still pretty convenient thanks to public transit shuttles operated Anaheim Resort Transportation (ART). Fees to ride ART are very reasonable; daily passes are \$5.50 for adults and \$2 for children ages 3-9. Single ride tickets and 3 and 5 day passes are available as well.



If you are dying to race on Radiator Springs early in the morning, the only way to do that is by staying at a Disney-owned hotel.
Photo credit: Leslie Harvey / Frequent Flyer TravelingMom

A Few Hotels Have Dedicated Shuttles – But Be Careful.

Still other off-property hotels offer their own shuttle services. These shuttles are usually complimentary for hotel guests. Most operate on a set schedule. One word of warning, however: the early morning and end of day shuttles are often extremely popular, meaning they can fill up and leave you stranded until the next one. Arrive early to catch the first shuttle of the day if you are determined to make it to the parks for rope drop. Or choose a hotel elsewhere if the uncertainty is too much.

Some Off-Property Hotels Have Themed Rooms Or Really Cool Amenities.

One of the reasons I love staying in Disney-owned hotels is the amazing theming that Disney offers. Some off-property hotels make a valiant effort at doing the same, even if it isn't always executed with Disney perfection. I guarantee your kids can't tell the difference. [Anaheim Fairfield Inn by Marriott](#), for example, has themed rooms that my kids loved. The brand new [Courtyard by Marriott Anaheim Theme Park Entrance](#) next door has a water park built into the hotel. And [Howard Johnson Anaheim Hotel and Water Playground's](#) pirate pool is always a kid favorite. There's no need to sacrifice whimsy just because you can't stay on-property.

You Can Still Dine At The Character Meals In The Disney-Owned Hotels.

Even if you aren't staying in the Disney hotels, you can still take advantage of some of their amenities – the most important of which is [Disneyland character dining](#). There's a character meal in each of the three hotels: Goofy's Kitchen for breakfast and dinner in the Disneyland Hotel, Chip and Dale's Critter Breakfast in the Grand Californian, and the [Surf's Up Breakfast with Mickey and Friends in Paradise Pier's PCH Grill](#). I recommend making a reservation in advance of your trip. Just look on the Disneyland website or call directly. The reservation window opens 60 days in advance.

Leslie Harvey, Frequent Flyer TravelingMom



The Ultimate Guide To Disneyland Character Meals

Dining with Mickey and pals is an important part of a Disney vacation for most families. Find out tips, tricks, and advice for character dining at Disneyland from a mom who has eaten with kids at every single Disneyland character meal. Tough work, but someone's gotta do it!

Few families plan a visit to Disneyland without scheduling a meal with their favorite Disney characters. Character meals are a perfect way to get photos and autographs with a wide variety of characters in a quieter setting. You avoid the theme park lines and have a more relaxed sit-down dining experience so you can rest and recharge for the parks.

My family visits Anaheim often, and we usually plan at least one [character meal at Disneyland](#) each trip. As a result, we've tried them all! I have learned what works and how to make the most of each of them. While I've really never had a bad experience at any of the Disneyland character meals, it is very important for visitors to know that the meals can be quite different. Cuisine varies and the lineup of characters at each one is entirely unique. Some experiences will be a better fit for some families than others. If you don't visit Disneyland often, it's very important to pick the right meal and know what to expect so your family isn't surprised or disappointed. So keep reading and you'll avoid that fate!

Here's what you need to know to pick the right Disneyland character meals.

The Basics On Disneyland Character Meals

Disneyland offers character dining in five different locations – one restaurant in each of the two theme parks (Disneyland and California Adventure) and one restaurant in each of the three Disney hotels (Disney's Grand Californian, Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel and the Disneyland Hotel). No matter where you are staying or which parks you are visiting, chances are that one fits into your itinerary.

You'll need to purchase theme park tickets to dine at the two in-park locations, but anyone can dine at the three out-of-park hotel restaurants. For that reason, the hotel restaurants can be an excellent choice for a meal on your arrival or departure day when you won't be visiting the parks. You'll still have the Disney experience without paying for an extra day of park tickets.

The characters that show up on a given day can vary widely, but you're guaranteed to see the character who "hosts" each meal. This means a visit with Ariel at Ariel's Grotto in California



Hugs for Daisy Duck at Surf's Up! at PCH Grill.
Photo credit: Leslie Harvey / Frequent Flyer TravelingMom

Adventure, Minnie at Plaza Inn in Disneyland, Mickey at PCH Grill in Paradise Pier, Chip & Dale at Storyteller's Cafe in the Grand Californian, and Goofy at Goofy's Kitchen in the Disneyland Hotel.

Character meals are extremely popular at Disneyland, particularly during school vacation periods and weekends when families flood the parks. Advance reservations are extremely important. Disneyland takes dining reservations 60 days in advance, and you can even make them easily online. While you won't often have to book immediately (my family had no trouble booking a spring break character meal experience about three weeks in advance of our last trip), it is always better to plan early.

Essential Info On The 5 Character Dining Experiences At Disneyland

- Surf's Up With Mickey & Friends
- Meals Offered: Breakfast
- Location: Out-of-park, PCH Grill at Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel
- Great for: Toddlers & young kids, Mickey fans

Surf's Up with Mickey & Friends is the only character meal at Disneyland where you are guaranteed a meet and greet with Mickey Mouse. Located at the PCH Grill in Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel, it's the ultimate Disney beach party, complete with Beach Boys music and dance breaks with the characters several times during a meal. My family found it pure fun and an excellent fit for families with younger kids (mine were ages 6 and 2 at the time of our meal).

It's also one of the smallest character meal experiences, meaning that the characters have even more time to interact with each guest. Frequent character visitors include Minnie, Pluto, Donald, Daisy, and Stitch.

Goofy's Kitchen

- Meals Offered: Breakfast, Dinner
- Location: Out-of-park, Disneyland Hotel
- Great for: Wacky food seekers, wide variety of characters

Goofy's Kitchen at the [Disneyland Hotel](#) offers a character dining experience with a wide and varied mix of characters, making it a smart choice for families with older kids or a wide range of Disney interests. On my visit, we saw everyone from Goofy himself to Sleeping Beauty, Pluto, Alice in Wonderland, and even Gideon from Pinocchio (look that one up!).



Goofy's Kitchen serves breakfast and dinner at the Disneyland Hotel.
Photo credit: Leslie Harvey / Frequent Flyer TravelingMom

At breakfast, Goofy's Kitchen is known for some of its more eclectic food options, including a macaroni and cheese pizza and PB&J pizza. It's also the only Disneyland character dining location

that offers dinner. Dinner may work better in many families' schedules to make the most of early morning hours in the parks when lines are shorter.

Chip & Dale's Critter Breakfast

- Meals Offered: Breakfast
- Location: Out-of-park, Storytellers Cafe at Disney's Grand Californian Hotel and Spa
- Great for: Obscure character seekers, a more relaxed and luxurious meal

Disney's most luxurious hotel, the [Grand Californian](#), is home to a character breakfast hosted by Chip & Dale in Storytellers Cafe. In keeping with the hotel's outdoor and rustic theming, all the characters who pay a visit to the breakfast are woodland creatures. Characters from Pocahontas, Brother Bear and Tarzan are frequent visitors. While this is a huge boon for Disney autograph seekers looking for more unique character interactions, chances are that your Mickey-loving toddler may not recognize many of them. For that reason, I recommend it for families with older children as well as for those who know and love their Disney trivia.

Consistent with its more luxurious reputation, Storytellers Cafe offers both a breakfast buffet as well as options of an a la carte menu, which can make for a more relaxing meal.



Dining with Rapunzel and other princesses at Ariel's Grotto.
Photo credit: Leslie Harvey / Frequent Flyer TravelingMom

Ariel's Grotto

- Meals Offered: Breakfast, Lunch
- Location: In-park, Disney's California Adventure
- Great for: The princess-obsessed, a more extensive and varied menu, table service.

If your little one is in the middle of a princess phase, make a beeline for Disney's California Adventure and the Ariel's Grotto character meal. Usually about five princesses will make an appearance here. On my last visit, my daughter met Ariel, Tiana, Rapunzel, Belle, and Cinderella.

Ariel's Grotto offers both breakfast and lunch (it is the only character lunch available at Disneyland). It is also the only character meal restaurant that offers only table service rather than a buffet. As a result, it is a bit of a more refined dining experience. Ariel's Grotto also boasts the most unique menu offerings of all the character meals but that also comes with a slightly higher cost. For lunch, seafood, pasta, chicken, and tri-tip are all on the menu, meaning you're likely find value in the price differential.

Ariel's Grotto has both indoor and outdoor seating, and I'd recommend requesting indoor if possible. My family found the noise from the nearby California Screamin' roller coaster a bit too loud in certain outdoor seating sections, although the view outdoors certainly can't be beat.

5. Plaza Inn

- Meals Offered: Breakfast
- Location: In-park, Disneyland
- Great for: Character variety, the best theme park location

If you want to be in a classic Disneyland location for your character meal experience, it doesn't get more classic than Plaza Inn. Plaza Inn is located at the end of Main Street USA overlooking Sleeping Beauty Castle. Minnie Mouse hosts the breakfast and a wide variety of characters make an appearance here, making it another perfect fit for families who have kids of different ages and interests. Winnie the Pooh, Fairy Godmother, Captain Hook, Rafiki, Max, and more have been known to pop in.

Because early morning hours at Disneyland are often the best time for short ride lines, I don't recommend booking a breakfast here as soon as the park opens. Instead, plan on a mid-morning brunch (10:00 am or so) after you'd had time to ride some of the attractions first. The food is hearty enough that a late breakfast will last you well into the afternoon.

Leslie Harvey, Frequent Flyer TravelingMom



17 Things That Are Free At Disneyland Resort



Free at Disneyland? Surely you jest! No jokes, there are plenty of free things you don't want to miss.

Photo: Patty Holliday, Candid TravelingMom

Disneyland is the Happiest Place On Earth. It's also an expensive one. A trip to Disneyland might set you back a few hundred dollars, which may leave your wallet a little less happy. What if I told you there are plenty of things that are free at the Disneyland Resort? What if I told you about 17 of those things in particular? Got your attention? Read on to find out why free and Disneyland do indeed go hand in hand.

Alright, I can hear it now.

What in the WORLD is she talking about, free at Disneyland? Girl, those tickets and hotels are expensive!

Yes, this is true. I won't even argue that point.

However, I know you're going. You know you're going. Disney knows you're going.

So you might as well get the most bang for your buck while you are there. Here's a list of 17 free things you can take advantage of at Disneyland.

Free At Disneyland Resort

Phone Apps

Download the official Disneyland app to keep an accurate eye on wait times, show times, and character meet and greets. Confession: sometimes I open it up when I'm home just to see what I'm missing. Sigh!

Free Pokemon Go hunting

Let's be honest: you heard the castle is a gym, and you want to check it out. You won't be alone!

FastPasses and Rider Switch Passes

Everyone knows FastPasses are free. And if you didn't know it, well, you do now. FREE!

FastPasses are like reservations holding your place in line. First, you pull a FastPass; then you can watch a parade or eat a meal, and return to the line at your appointed time.

Do you have a baby or young child too small to ride something like Space Mountain? Then you just won the Disneyland lottery. Three words: Rider switch



Fastpasses and Rider Switch passes are FREE. Learn them, love them, use them.
Photo: Patty Holliday, Candid TravelingMom

passes. While your party takes a trip, you'll wait at the exit with the small child. When they get off, it's your turn with the rider switch pass. The bonus rides come in for others in your party: you are allowed to take up to 2 additional people with you. Your sweet babe just scored someone a wait-free extra ride!

Holiday Freebies

You can score bags of free candy at the annual Mickey's Halloween party. And we're talking good quality stuff here, folks. While entry to this event is a stand alone ticket, you can probably clean up on candy for the year and recoup some of that cost.

If you are visiting over New Year's Eve, you can also scoop up free hats and horns for the midnight celebration.

Free Package Check Service

I love this one. Say you get ahead of yourself and buy yourself something pretty early in the day. And maybe one (or two) of those huge stuffed animals that you'll never be able to fit into your suitcase anyway.

You don't have to haul these around all day and hope you don't lose them. Take them over to the Disneyland Resort Stroller Shop, The Star Trader, Port Royal, or Pioneer Mercantile in Disneyland and at Elias & Company in Disney California Adventure. They will hold your packages for you. For Free. You must have the receipt for items you purchased, and they won't store limited editions.

Autopia Driver's License

You can grab a free driver's license while in line at Autopia. They are paper and not customized, but they are a fun and free way to remember your trip.



Broadway caliber show for FREE. Grab those (also free) FastPasses and enjoy the show!
Photo: Patty Holliday, Candid TravelingMom

Free Cups of Water at Any Quick Service Location

Don't dehydrate! Ask for a free cup at any walkup location. You can also get free chocolate squares at Ghiradelli and go across the way to Boudin Bakery to get some free sourdough bread.

Uh, I think that might be 2 of my three main food groups right there. Unfortunately, no free wine tastings that I know of at DCA.

Maps, Guides, and Celebration Buttons

All free. Grab them when you first walk in and over at City Hall. Simple souvenirs to take home with you.

Free Broadway Style Show

Frozen at the Hyperion lives up to the hype. And it's free.

Okay, so those things actually require a bit of money up front. I mean, they are all happening at the parks, which means you are paying for the park ticket.

What about totally free?

Oh, I've got you. Check this out.

Fireworks

You'll see a ton of people seated in the Esplanade, the area between the two parks. They know the drill: it's a great location to pop a squat and watch the Disneyland fireworks for free. It's a decent view, too!

Wi-Fi

Disneyland has limited Wi-Fi in the parks at present. And that's tough when you are social media connected. Um, I may have run into data issues when I was there recently. Oopsie!

But you can pop in any of the onsite hotels (the Disneyland Hotel is my favorite) and "borrow" the free wifi in the lobby. This is one of the reasons I'll book dining at a resort hotel. I gotta feed my internet addiction as well as my belly! While you're there, enjoy the free AC.

Free Lunch

You can bring your own food. There is a great picnic area just outside of the Disneyland gates where you can set up and enjoy your meal. We've rented a nearby locker and stashed the cooler inside until we were hungry. You don't have to reenter security, so it's a great option when you are looking to save a little bit of money.

Downtown Disney offers these additional freebies:

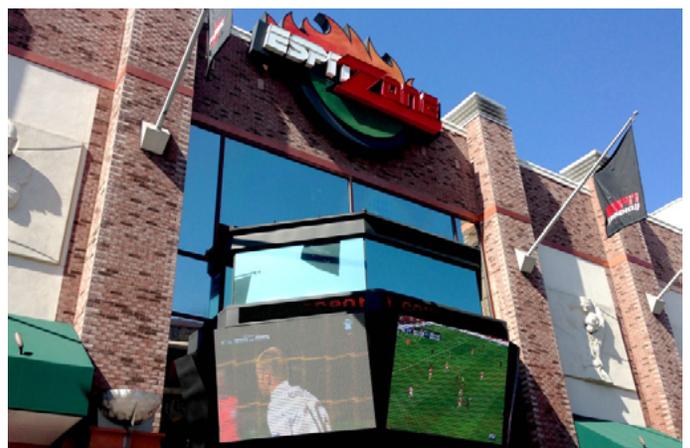
LEGO building at the LEGO store.

Window Shopping

This is the place where dreams are only a Visa swipe away! But leave that Visa in the wallet and just enjoy playing the "someday" game.

Live Music and Entertainment

Including televised live sporting events at the ESPN Zone.



Don't miss the game, just because you are at the happiest place on earth.
You can watch for free outside of the ESPN Zone.
Photo: Patty Holliday, TravelingMom

The tram

On slow days in the parks, this can be a nice option for entertainment. If there's a line, I'd skip it to allow folks who need to get to the parking structure first dibs. Kids who are transportation nuts love this little excursion! The tram gives you a little rest, and sometimes you get to spy some seasonal decorations on the trip.

And the number one thing that's free at Disneyland?

Exercise. I mean, have you seen the miles you can put on your legs? Strap on your Fitbit and see how many miles you can complete in one day. It's mind blowing! My biggest Disneyland day was 77,000 steps and 34 miles (13.1 were on the half marathon course). WOW.

There are [free things over at Walt Disney World](#) as well. Be sure to read up on those options if you are heading coast to coast this year! You'll want to take advantage of all the free you can, 'cause this magic is expensive, my friends!

Patty Holliday, Candid TravelingMom



Top Ten Ways To Escape The Rain At Disneyland

With all of the unpredictable weather, it's tough to know whether it will be sunny at Disneyland. To head to Disneyland and Disney's California Adventure theme parks in Anaheim well prepared for a little rain. Here are the best spots to hide out when the weather gets rough, and you'll have so much fun you may not even remember that it's raining outside.



Disneyland In The Rain

Have you ever heard the song "It Never Rains in Southern California"? Well guess what – it's a lie. It rains a lot. And if you're Disneyland-bound, it's best to have a game plan in mind so you won't be caught off guard when the sky opens up.

Personally, I don't mind visiting the parks when it rains. Cool, wet weather keeps the crowds at bay! Here are 10 places at the [Disneyland Resort](#) where you can go to weather the storm.

TravelingMom Tip:

Head to a discount store and buy some cheap plastic ponchos BEFORE you head to Disneyland. If you wait until it starts to rain at Disneyland or California Adventure, you'll find a long line and high prices if you try to buy a poncho in the Parks.



Star Wars Launch Bay in the old Innoventions Building.
Photo credit: Paul Hiffmeyer/Disneyland Resort.

Star Wars Launch Bay

Star Wars Launch Bay is a haven for Star Wars fans—and it's indoors! Check out immersive displays and movie props, play games, screen exclusive videos, and meet Darth Vader, Chewbacca, and many other Star Wars heroes and villains all in the comfort of an indoor facility.

Enchanted Tiki Room

Opened in 1963, the Enchanted Tiki Room has the distinction of being Disney's first animatronic attraction. Tropical birds, tiki gods and colorful flowers come to life in a "swinging 15-minute South Seas musical celebration."

While you are waiting for the show to begin treat yourself to a Pineapple Dole Whip at the Tiki Juice Bar. Just because it's raining doesn't mean you should miss out on this iconic tropical treat!

Animation Building

Head over to California Adventure for a unique opportunity to draw your very own Disney character! Located in the park's Hollywood Land area, this is a great place to take cover from the rain. It's huge inside, and there is a lot to do, including Turtle Talk with Crush, Sorcerer's Workshop, or just watching how animated features are made in the Animation Courtyard.

One of the Animation Building's biggest attractions is Animation Academy, which gives you step-by-step instruction on how to illustrate some of your favorite Disney characters under the guidance of a Disney artist. Learn some basic tricks and techniques of animation, and when it's all over you can take home your work as a souvenir!

Ride Dry

There are plenty of rides at both Disneyland and California Adventure that offer a haven from the rain. Pirates of the Caribbean, Haunted Mansion, The Little Mermaid, Monsters Inc., Buzz Light Year Astro Blasters, Space Mountain, Roger Rabbit's Car Toon Spin, and many of the Fantasyland rides are all set indoors and have covered line areas too.

Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln

This one is an oldie but a goodie! Located in the spacious Opera House theater right on Main Street, Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln is both entertaining and educational, as Abraham Lincoln comes to life through the latest Audio-Animatronics technology. A great place to escape the rain!

The Disneyland Story Exhibit

As the waiting area outside the Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln theater, most people won't even venture inside unless they're planning to see the show. That's a mistake. The Disneyland Story exhibit is a fascinating attraction in itself, especially for hardcore Disney fans like yours truly!

Step out of the rain into the Opera House and check out a vast collection of artifacts and memorabilia showcasing the development of Disneyland Park from when Walt Disney originally came up with the idea, through the decades and into plans currently in the works for the near future. Artifacts on display include a scale model of Disneyland Park as it looked on opening day, a scale model of Splash Mountain, a display of Disneyland ticket books (can you say "E-Ticket?") and rare, behind-the-scenes photos of Walt Disney.



Disneyland guests can enjoy a legendary Dole Whip Float, a tropical treat from the Tiki Juice Bar in Adventureland. Photo credit: Paul Hiffmeyer/Disneyland Resort.

While you're there, be sure to catch a screening of the short film, "Disneyland: The First 50 Magical Years," hosted by Steve Martin and Donald Duck. Originally produced as part of the park's 50th Anniversary in 2005, the movie is a nostalgic and humorous celebration of Disneyland Park through the years.



Mickey and the Magical Map live stage show at the Fantasyland Theatre.
Photo credit: Paul Hiffmeyer/Disneyland Resort.

Catch A Show

Most of the theater experiences in Disneyland and California Adventure are indoors. Note show times for Disney Junior Dance Party, Turtle talk with Crush, Mickey and the Magical Map and Frozen Sing Along Celebration.

Shopping

If ever you needed an excuse to shop, can you do any better than rainy weather? There are numerous shops throughout the Disney Resort, and guess what – they are all indoors and out of the rain!

Slip Into The Grand Californian Hotel

Head over to the Grand Californian, located adjacent to Disney's California Adventure. There, you can relax in front of the massive fireplace in the hotel lobby. This is a perfect place to stay dry and regroup in an elegant setting.

Grab A Bite

When all else fails, plenty of restaurants throughout the Disneyland Resort have indoor seating where you can enjoy a leisurely meal while waiting out the rain. In California Adventure, Flo's V8 Cafe has a good sized dining room overlooking Cars Land's scenic Ornament Valley. Taste Pilot's Grill, located next to Soarin' around the World, also has plenty of indoor seating. At Disneyland, try the French Market Restaurant, Golden Horseshoe, or Plaza Inn. More upscale and Character restaurants often require a reservation, but if the parks aren't too crowded, you may want to try Storytellers Cafe at the Grand Californian, Disney's PCH Grill at Paradise Pier Hotel, Ariel's Grotto at Disney's California Adventure, Goofy's Kitchen at the Disneyland Hotel, or any of the restaurants in Downtown Disney.

However you decide to spend your day, don't let a little rain ruin your family's fun! With a little planning, your day at the parks can shine even when the sun isn't out.

Gwen Kleist



Disneyland Tips For Frozen Live At The Hyperion Show



Photo Credit: Amy Barseghian / Lifestyle TravelingMom

Disneyland's California Adventure Park has many different experiences for everyone to enjoy. One of those experiences includes a Broadway-like stage show in Hollywood Land. For years, the stage has delighted visitors with one of the best performances at the Disneyland Resort, Disney's *Aladdin: A Musical Spectacular*. *Aladdin*, *Jasmine*, and the amazing *Genie* have taken a flying carpet out of California Adventure to make way for a new stunning and rather spectacular show, *Frozen Live at the Hyperion*. *Frozen Live* brings the animated blockbuster to life in a

theatrical display and through the use of technology and huge props, Elsa, Anna, Kristoff, Sven and the rest of the cast delight fans and newcomers alike.

We spent the day at Disneyland this past weekend and personally experienced the show and discovered some helpful travel tips that will make *Frozen Live* even more enjoyable from beginning to end.

Time

One of the best tips is to keep in mind the time. *Frozen Live* at the Hyperion is a little over an hour long; that means everyone in your party should be ready to sit for a longer period of time. The seats are lush and comfortable like a theater should be and the show and cast definitely keep your focus, but being mindful of the time is important.

Exit Stage Left

If your child gets a bit antsy or needs a restroom, you can exit at any time during the show. Sitting on the outer ends of an aisle is a good choice if you have younger kids as you can leave without disrupting those around you any more than necessary. Cast members are on hand in total Disney style and will direct you to where you need to go.

Divide And Conquer

Because the show is longer, this is the perfect time to split up and let older kids experience **the rides and roller coasters** that younger ones may not be able to enjoy. The air conditioning and comfortable seats provide for a mid day rest so younger children can join the fun later on with renewed energy.



Photo Credit: Amy Barseghian / Lifestyle TravelingMom

Before The Show

You'll also be sitting outside before the show and the popularity of Frozen Live has a direct effect on your wait before the show so plan to arrive about 30 minutes prior to the start of the show. Keep in mind that seats are on a first-come, first-serve basis. You will wait in line outdoors with limited shade so be sure to have sunblock, hats, snacks and something to keep little ones occupied while you wait.



Photo Credit: Amy Barseghian / Lifestyle TravelingMom

Amy Barseghian



Planning Guide To Mickey's Halloween Party At Disneyland



Photo Credit: Joshua Sudock/Disneyland Resort

Is Halloween your favorite time of the year? Are you a Disney fan who dreams of Mickey Mouse and friends dressed in their favorite costumes? Do you like attending special events with exclusive attractions? If you said yes to any of those things, then Mickey's Halloween Party at Disneyland should be on your bucket list! This planning guide to Mickey's Halloween Party has the details you need to know about this annual fall event.

Guide To Mickey's Halloween Party At Disneyland

Visiting Disneyland Resort during Halloween Time is a festival of decorations and Halloween-themed attractions. Read on to learn more

about Mickey's Halloween Party, including new additions to this year's ticket.

What Is Mickey's Halloween Party?

Mickey's Halloween Party is a private, after-hours event held at Disneyland. It includes special Halloween fun not offered during regular park hours such as trick or treating, a party exclusive Halloween parade, and exclusive Halloween fireworks. It's a really special Disney event that I try to attend every year, check out why [I love attending Mickey's Halloween Party](#) at Disneyland!

There is extra value starting in 2017 in that you can visit Disney California Adventure during the 3 hours prior to the party starting. In the past, you could only visit Disneyland. This means you can experience the new Halloween Time happenings at California Adventure like the Haul-O-Ween makeover in [Cars Land](#). Plus the party ticket includes [unlimited Disney PhotoPass](#) during the event.

What Does Mickey's Halloween Party Include?

- Entry to Disneyland or Disney California Adventure 3 hours prior to the start of the separate ticket event.
- Trick or Treating for candy and healthy treats throughout the park.
- Unlimited Disney PhotoPass during the party.
- Halloween Screams fireworks hosted by "Master of Scare-omnies" Jack Skellington.
- The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow will ride his ghostly black steed, heralding the arrival of a "Frightfully Fun Parade"
- Special Disney Villains Meet & Greet opportunities in select locations around Disneyland.
- Cadaver Dans quartet performs Halloween tunes on a graveyard-themed raft on the Rivers of America.



Photo Credit: Paul Hiffmeyer/Disneyland Resort

- Most Disneyland attractions will be open during the party including Space Mountain Ghost Galaxy and Haunted Mansion Holiday.
- Costumes are allowed for everyone during the party (normally only kids are allowed to wear costumes in the parks).
- Mickey Mouse and friends will be wearing their costumes too!
- Festive decorations throughout Disneyland and animated Halloween images on Main Street.

Do I Have To Wear A Costume At Mickey's Halloween Party?

You don't have to wear a Halloween costume but a majority of attendees do (including adults). It's the perfect time to indulge in your whimsy or crazy costume ideas because the event is Halloween-themed and includes trick or treating.

Even if you don't dress up, it's fun to see everyone else's creative costumes. From the elaborate to simple and DIY to Broadway-worthy, there is a wide variety of costumed participants. The best part is seeing groups attend in costume themes.

Last year we were characters from Inside Out, we've also dressed as a Batman & Robin family and Peter Pan & the Neverland crew. Need costume inspiration? Check out our [Mickey's Halloween Party costume ideas and tips!](#)

Guide To Mickey's Halloween Party Costume Guidelines

- Costumes must be family-friendly and may not be obstructive, offensive, objectionable or violent.
- Guests who dress like characters may not pose for pictures or sign autographs for other guests.
- Costumes may not contain any weapons that resemble or could easily be mistaken for an actual weapon.
- Costumes may not contain sharp objects, pointed objects or materials that may accidentally strike another guest.
- Layered costumes or costume props that surround the entire body are strongly discouraged and may be subject to additional security screening.
- Costumes may not reach or drag on the ground. (e.g. full-length Princess dresses).



Photo Credit: Paul Hiffmeyer/Disneyland

Mickey's Halloween Party Costume Guidelines For Guests 13 Years And Under

- May wear a mask as long as the mask doesn't cover the entire face and eyes are still visible.

Mickey's Halloween Party Costume Guidelines For Guests 14 Years And Older

- No mask allowed unless for medical purposes.
- Headwear is acceptable as long as it doesn't cover the face.
- Capes must not go below the waist.
- Acceptable accessories include transparent wings, plastic light sabers, toy swords, and tutus.
- Themed T-shirts, blouses, sweatshirts and hats are acceptable.



Photo Credit: Paul Hiffmeyer/Disneyland

Guests who do not adhere to these guidelines may be refused entry unless the costume can be modified to meet the official standards.

How Do I Buy Tickets To Mickey's Halloween Party?

Ticket prices range from \$95 - \$120. Discounts are available on select nights with advance purchase and for Disneyland Annual Passholders. You can also get discount tickets with [Get Away Today](#), TravelingMom's recommended Disney vendor. Disneyland Resort Annual Passholders, Disney Vacation Club members, and Disney Visa cardholders will get a week head start.

Karen Heffren, Desert TravelingMom



9 Must-Do Attraction Tips For Disneyland Christmas Celebrations

If you're already a Disney fan, you know that visiting Disneyland during the holidays holds a special thrill. From the moment you pass through the gates, you're immersed in the Disneyland Christmas magic. Here is what you need to know about the classic holiday offerings at the Disneyland Resort.



Sleeping Beauty Castle sparkles with ice and snow for a Disneyland holiday
Photo Credit: Julie Bigboy/Day Trips TravelingMom

Why You Should Visit Disneyland During The Holidays

Disney is a delight 365 days a year, but Disney really pulls out the stops during the holidays! The entire resort is decorated top to bottom, including Downtown Disney District, the 3 resort hotels and both theme parks. There are Christmas trees, swags of evergreen garland and over-sized ornaments everywhere. It was easy for us to find a great spot for our family Christmas card photo.

If you're looking for food, whether unique or traditional for the holidays, there's enough here on the menus to please even the pickiest eaters. And nobody entertains like Disney. The Disneyland Christmas parades, shows and evening entertainment are joyful for all ages. My family and I live close to the Disneyland Resort, so we recently made a day trip to see the parks in their holiday glory.

Disneyland Christmas – What's New?

Disney likes to keep its parks fresh. That means shelving some events, reviving others and introducing totally new delights. Check out these new holiday events, happening only at the Disneyland resort.

Festival Of The Holidays

This holiday season at Disney California Adventure Park, the Festive Foods Marketplace is offering snack-sized plates of dishes from around the globe. The 14 kiosks serve up freshly prepared snacks and drinks. Each kiosk celebrates either a culture or tradition of the holidays. For example, Southern Home Holidays serves up sweet potato pie, Mistletoe Morsels offers Swedish dishes and Treats for Santa has traditional cookies and punch.

Rich and hearty offerings are served in small portions, including chorizo bean sopes, roasted lamb and a Kahlua pork slider. These are more "gourmet" than the usual park fare and the prices reflect that. A dish costs anywhere from \$6.25 for carrot & chickpea fritters to \$8.75 for smoked duck with a vegetable spring roll. With our family of six, we just couldn't justify the cost of indulging in these small dishes. Instead, we opted to share a hearty soup in a bread bowl from the Pacific Wharf Cafe.

Desserts are more reasonably priced so we bought a few sweet treats and shared. The mocha yule log with candied chestnuts at only \$4.75 is a special treat that won't break the bank. My

husband was thrilled to see the variety of beer options available and treated himself to an IPA. There are also many wines to choose from. Non-alcoholic sips include frozen chocolate milk, pumpkin spice hot chocolate and Merry Berry sherbet punch.

Traveling Mom Tip:

Lines at the kiosks were short when we arrived in the park around 2 pm. By nightfall, the queues had grown. Arrive early in the day with your appetite ready to avoid the crowds!



Whimsical holiday decor at Disneyland's Toontown
Photo Credit: Julie Bigboy/Day Trips TravelingMom

!Viva Navidad!

The Three Caballeros (Donald Duck, Panchito and José Carioca) host !Viva Navidad! That's a festive celebration that includes mariachi and samba music, folklorico dancers and Mickey and Minnie in full Latin-American garb. We all joined in the lively street party, dancing and clapping along to the vibrant sounds. The party takes place several times a day in the Paradise Pier area of Disney California Adventure Park. Be sure to check out the 12-foot-tall Santa and Mrs. Claus mojiganga puppets.

Traveling Mom Tip:

Choose the shows that are earlier in the day to capture the full essence of this energetic show. I wished we'd seen the show before dark when we could have taken in more of the brightly colored costumes. By nightfall the area was poorly lit and it was difficult to see all of the aspects of the party.

If you are visiting after the New Year, there will also be a Three Kings Day celebration. Disney California Adventure park will be celebrating with displays, kids' crafts and traditional sweets for sale.

Festival Entertainment

Six live performance groups will be entertaining the crowds this holiday at Disney California Adventure park. During our visit we had the pleasure of dining in the Pacific Wharf area and listening to the pleasant harmony of RAISE, an a cappella group that sings R&B-style holiday music. Mariachi Divas is already a park favorite and these ladies had us singing and dancing along with their bilingual songs.

For the kids, there are stations near the food kiosks with complimentary children's craft tables to create art or to color. Also, several times a day Princess Elena of Avalor (of the namesake television show on the Disney channel) serenades guests with a "magical grand arrival" and then greets children for photos and autographs.

Traveling Mom Tip:

Consider dining in the Pacific Wharf area for lunch so you'll be able to take in a show during your meal. We were able to see two acts while we dined and the groups had the kids up and dancing in front of the stage.



Dancing reindeer in The Christmas Fantasy Parade at Disneyland
Photo Credit: Julie Bigboy/Day Trips TravelingMom

World Of Color-Season Of Light

World of Color-Season of Light is the nighttime holiday show at Disney California Adventure Park. It combines lights, beloved movie clips and Christmas music. Sprays of mist become the screen for projected animation of Disney and Pixar films in a winter-themed production.

TravelingMom Tip:

Take note that being sprayed with mist on a chilly winter night may not be ideal, so consider that before choosing to stand in the front row!

Traveling Mom Tip:

If seeing the World of Color-Season of Light show is on your agenda, consider taking a mid-day break back at the hotel to rest up the family so you'll have the stamina for a late evening show. Keep in mind that the World of Color shows are standing room only, even if you have a FastPass or a special dining package!

Traditional Classics Return

Disney knows that guests not only want fresh and new but they also cherish the yearly favorites. These are some of the classic Disneyland holiday delights that return every other year.

Holiday Overlays

Haunted Mansion Holiday and "it's a small world" Holiday return, with subtle changes every year that only enhance each attraction. There's a delightful new character represented inside the Haunted Mansion Holiday graveyard. The facade of "it's a small world" Holiday sparkles again with thousands of twinkling lights.

Traveling Mom Tip:

The attractions with holiday overlays are extremely popular and only Haunted Mansion Holiday offers FastPass. Grab that FastPass early and then ride the other popular attractions within the first hour of opening to beat the crowds.

Parades

Dancing reindeer and gingerbread, a toy workshop and Santa atop his sleigh! A Christmas Fantasy Parade is back. We watched the parade just across from "it's a small world" Holiday, which is generally a less crowded viewing area (versus Main Street U.S.A.).

Seasonal Decor

Not to be missed are the amazing holiday decorations that are so carefully themed throughout the different "Lands" and areas of the Disneyland Resort. Taking a photo in front of the towering Christmas trees inside each park is a must-do. Two of my favorite areas with seasonal decor are Toontown and Cars Land.

Toontown in Disneyland Park is so bright and colorful, with over-sized garlands that are so appropriate for this zany "Land." The holiday decor in Cars Land could not be more perfect! From the Christmas tree studded with hub caps to the air filter and white-wall tire garlands that drape over Route 66, Cars Land is positively charming for the holidays.

Traveling Mom Tip:

Keep a lookout for the PhotoPass photographers that are stationed around the park. They take wonderful photos of your family with the seasonal decorations. But you don't need to purchase the Disney PhotoPass plan. You can hand your camera to the photographers and they will take your photo for you without charge.

Believe...In Holiday Magic Fireworks Spectacular

After a year hiatus for the 60th Anniversary celebration, Believe...In Holiday Magic fireworks spectacular has returned to the Disneyland Park. All the sparkle, the stirring music and yes, even the snowfall has returned! Fireworks shows at Disneyland are not to be missed.

Traveling Mom Tip:

Watching from in front of Sleeping Beauty Castle on Main Street U.S.A. is always magical but you'll still be able to experience the show (and snow!) with slightly smaller crowds if you watch from the area in front of "it's a small world" Holiday.



The larger-than-life gingerbread house inside Disney's Grand Californian Resort & Spa hotel - Photo Credit: Julie Bigboy/Day Trips TravelingMom

A Visit With Santa

Santa is stationed in multiple areas of the Disneyland Resort. We chose to check in with Santa at Disney California Adventure park, in the Redwood Creek Challenge Trail. What a charming location, with homey rustic touches (and a couch almost long enough to hold my big family!)

You can also meet Santa in Critter Country in Disneyland Park and at select times inside the Resort hotels.

Traveling Mom Tip:

Log your name on Santa's "Nice List" like my son did on our visit. He joyfully wrote the names of each family member inside Santa's book.

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