# Theme Park Trip Planner App – Deep Research for PRD Preparation

## Introduction

Planning a theme park visit can be overwhelming – from pre-trip itinerary building to on-the-ground decisions in the park. The envisioned **Theme Park Trip Planner App** aims to be a planner’s best friend for theme park vacations. It will **complement (not replace)** official park apps by focusing on trip planning, personalized itineraries, and guidance, without duplicating transactional features like ticket purchases or ride reservations[[1]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=I%20write%20a%20lot%20about,of%20them%20are%20pretty%20useful). Below we present comprehensive research on the app’s scope, target users, core features, and future development roadmap (incorporating real-time data and other enhancements). This will inform a Product Requirements Document (PRD) to kick off development.

## Scope and Objectives

**Pre-Trip Planning and In-Park Reference:** The app is designed for use both **before a trip** (to plan your days and must-do attractions) and **during the park visit** (to reference your plan, check info, and adjust on the fly). In the pre-trip phase, users can craft a daily itinerary – choosing parks (for multi-park resorts or trips), selecting attractions, and learning insider tips. While **in the park**, the app serves as a handy guide: showing the user’s planned schedule, attraction details, and (in future versions) current wait times. The goal is to reduce time spent in lines and help users experience more with less stress[[2]](https://www.parktrips.fr/en/blog/post-2669.html#:~:text=Park%20Trips%20is%20the%20mobile,necessary%20information%20at%20your%20fingertips)[[3]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=This%20got%20me%20wondering%3A%20Would,be%20something%20you%27d%20actually%20use). Crucially, the app will emphasize *planning and guidance* over transactions. Users will still rely on official apps for actions like Lightning Lane bookings or mobile food orders (which our app will not handle)[[1]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=I%20write%20a%20lot%20about,of%20them%20are%20pretty%20useful). By limiting scope in this way, the planner app can excel at trip optimization and **avoid the bloat** that plagues some official apps’ user experience[[4]](https://www.reddit.com/r/WaltDisneyWorld/comments/1c9ivk7/the_walt_disney_world_app_has_to_be_the_best_app/#:~:text=I%20absolutely%20hate%20the%20UI,2%20clicks).

**Complementing Official Apps:** Official park apps (e.g. Disney’s My Disney Experience) provide maps, real-time wait times, and transactional services, but they often lack robust trip planning tools and can have usability issues. Users report that important planning features in Disney’s app are *“buried deep”* under menus and that the interface pushes marketing content upfront[[4]](https://www.reddit.com/r/WaltDisneyWorld/comments/1c9ivk7/the_walt_disney_world_app_has_to_be_the_best_app/#:~:text=I%20absolutely%20hate%20the%20UI,2%20clicks). Frequent crashes or slowdowns (especially on spotty park Wi-Fi) further hamper reliance on those apps[[5]](https://www.reddit.com/r/WaltDisneyWorld/comments/1c9ivk7/the_walt_disney_world_app_has_to_be_the_best_app/#:~:text=requirement)[[6]](https://www.reddit.com/r/WaltDisneyWorld/comments/1c9ivk7/the_walt_disney_world_app_has_to_be_the_best_app/#:~:text=%E2%80%A2%20%201y%20ago). Our app seeks to fill this gap by offering a **streamlined planning-focused experience**: think of it as an **unofficial personal guide** that works in harmony with the official app. For example, a user might use our app to decide **what to do next and when**, then switch to the official app to scan their ticket or join a virtual queue if needed. By not competing on transactions or exclusive data, we avoid conflict with official services and instead provide value through better planning, customization, and user-centric design[[1]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=I%20write%20a%20lot%20about,of%20them%20are%20pretty%20useful).

## Target Users and Use Cases

**Primary Users:** The app targets **theme park visitors** who want to maximize their day. This includes: - **First-time or Infrequent Visitors** – who benefit from guidance and tips to navigate the park efficiently. They may be unfamiliar with the park’s layout, optimal touring order, or tricks to avoid crowds. Our app can serve as a friendly coach, offering suggestions and “insider” advice at each step. - **Seasoned Enthusiasts and Annual Passholders** – who already know the basics but want a convenient way to plan their day and track what they’ve done. They might use advanced features (like custom plans or wait-time forecasts when available) and appreciate toggling off tips they don’t need (see **Toggle Tips** below). Even for veterans, the ability to quickly see which rides have the shortest lines or to craft a personalized route has value[[7]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=1,Wait%20Time)[[8]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=The%20Tip%20Board%20in%20Genie,first%20to%20minimize%20your%20waits). - **Families and Groups** – coordinating a group can be challenging. The app can help align everyone’s must-do lists and schedule breaks for meals or rest. In future, group features (like sharing plans) could be added, but MVP will focus on single-user planning for simplicity.

**Use Case Examples:** - *Pre-trip:* A family planning a 3-day Disney World vacation uses the app at home to decide which park to visit each day and list out their top attractions. They input their vacation dates and get an itinerary outline for each day (e.g. Magic Kingdom on Day 1, Epcot on Day 2, etc.)[[9]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/theme-park-vacation-planner-app/#:~:text=Whether%20it%E2%80%99s%20your%20first%20trip,Hoppy%20planning). For each park-day, they select favorite rides and are shown average crowd levels or recommended times to visit each (based on historical trends). They also toggle on “tips mode” to read advice about each ride (for example, **“Ride Space Mountain first thing in the morning to avoid long lines”**). They add notes for personal items like lunch reservations at a specific time. By trip time, they have a clear plan and know what to expect.  
- *In-park:* Once at the park, the family uses the app as a **reference and checklist**. The plan is saved offline on their phone, so even if connectivity is spotty they can see what’s next. As they complete attractions, they check them off (satisfaction of progress!). If the app (in a future iteration) has live wait data, they might adjust the order – e.g. swapping a ride planned for later if they see its wait is currently low. If a ride is unexpectedly closed or has a huge wait, the app can suggest an alternate nearby attraction or a break (in later versions, this could be automated). The **official app** will still be used when necessary – e.g. when their plan says “12:30pm – Lunch at Cosmic Ray’s”, they might mobile-order through the official app, but that step was anticipated in our app’s plan notes.

**User Needs Addressed:** Overall, the app addresses the common pain point of *“wasting time in long lines without a strategy”*. Many park-goers wish for a tool that not only shows data (like wait times) but also tells them **how to act on it**[[10]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=My%20thought%20is%20that%20while,out%20of%20your%20park%20day). Our planner app’s value lies in answering questions like *“What’s the best way to do all my favorite rides?”*, *“When should we take breaks or see shows to avoid peak lines?”*, and *“What should we do next if our plan changes?”*. By researching existing behaviors, we know that visitors currently juggle multiple info sources (maps, wait time boards, crowd calendars, forums with tips, etc.). This app consolidates those into one **cohesive planning companion**.

## Key Features of the MVP (User-Driven Approach)

For the Minimum Viable Product, the focus is on **user-driven planning tools**. This means the app will provide structure and information, while the **user is in control of building their plan**. Unlike a fully automated scheduler, the MVP relies on the user’s inputs and decisions (guided by information we provide). This approach keeps development simpler and acknowledges that dynamic optimization requires data and algorithms that can be added later. Below are the core MVP features:

### 1. Custom Trip Itinerary Builder

Users can create a trip and break it down by days. For each day, the user can select which park or location they will visit (if the trip involves multiple parks or multiple days). They will then be able to add attractions/activities to that day’s itinerary in the order they plan to do them. The app might start by asking a few simple questions (trip dates, chosen parks, group profile) to set up a skeleton plan[[9]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/theme-park-vacation-planner-app/#:~:text=Whether%20it%E2%80%99s%20your%20first%20trip,Hoppy%20planning), or the user can start from scratch. Key functionalities:

* **Park and Date Selection:** The app supports choosing the park for each day (e.g. *“Day 1: Magic Kingdom”*, *“Day 2: Epcot”*). It will show official park hours and any special events for that day if available, so the user knows the timeframe. *(Data source:* we can load park hours from an API or static data – for MVP this could be a manually maintained dataset or a simple integration if available.)\*
* **Attraction List and Details:** Once a park is selected, the user can browse a list of attractions (rides, shows, character meets, etc.) for that park to add to their plan. Each attraction will have a detail page with a description and key info like height requirements, intensity, duration, etc., helping users decide if it’s suitable for their group[[11]](https://www.parktrips.fr/en/blog/post-2669.html#:~:text=,requirements%2C%20accessibility%20options%2C%20and%20descriptions). The detail page will also include *tips and recommendations* (more on Tips below).
* **Itinerary Editing:** The user can add attractions to the day’s itinerary and arrange them in the desired order (via drag-and-drop or up/down controls). They can also specify tentative times or morning/afternoon slots for each item if they wish (optional). For MVP, timing will not be auto-optimized by the app – users will estimate or decide when they want to do each item. The interface will be kept **simple and flexible**, functioning like a checklist or list builder. For example, the user might plan: 9:00am – Park Opening; 9:15am – Ride X; 10:00am – Ride Y; 11:00am – Snack Break; ... etc..
* **Multiple Plans / Presets:** Optionally, the app could offer a few **preset touring plans** (especially for first-timers who don’t know where to start). For instance, a “Kids Friendly Day” or “Thrill-Seekers Morning” template that users can load and then tweak. Undercover Tourist’s day-planning app offers preset park plans covering popular rides with low waits[[12]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/apps/#:~:text=Preset%20Park%20Plans%20in%20list,rides%20with%20the%20lowest%20waits), which shows the value of having a starting point. If providing presets in MVP is too much content work, we can stick to letting users create custom plans and perhaps link to example plans on a blog.

**Why user-driven?** By letting users manually compose their itinerary, the MVP avoids complex optimization algorithms but still provides value through **organization and information**. Many users enjoy planning themselves if given the right data – our app essentially becomes their planning notebook, but smarter. This approach aligns with what TouringPlans’ Lines app offers: users select the rides they want and the app can suggest an order but ultimately the user controls and can customize[[13]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=In%20Lines%2C%20you%20can%20create,Cruise%20is%20only%2010%20minutes). Initially, our app will empower the user rather than make decisions for them. Feedback can guide how much automation to introduce later.

### 2. Attraction Information & Integrated Tips (Toggleable)

Each attraction (ride, show, etc.) in the app will have an info page combining factual details *and* helpful tips. Information will include: - **Description and Thematics:** A brief description of what the attraction is (e.g. story or experience). - **Requirements:** e.g. height requirements, accessibility notes, rider switch availability for kids, intensity level. - **Duration:** Length of the ride or show, and show schedules if applicable (for shows/parades at certain times). - **Location:** Where to find it (e.g. the land or area, which we can show textually and later on a map). - **Nearby Facilities:** (If data allows, list nearby restrooms, eateries or similar rides – this might be a future enhancement, but noted here). - **Average Wait or Rating:** If available, a general idea of how popular the ride is – possibly a star rating from users or a note like “Very popular, lines build by late morning” (even if MVP doesn’t have live waits, a qualitative wait info can be given as a tip).

**Tips and Recommendations:** Uniquely, our app will provide **touring tips** for each attraction – with an option to turn these on or off. Tips might include strategies like the best time of day to visit, whether the ride offers single rider or express options, if it tends to have shorter lines during parades, or fun facts to enhance the experience. For example, on a coaster’s page it might say: “**Tip:** This ride often has short lines during lunchtime[[14]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/apps/#:~:text=4). Consider riding between 12-1pm while others eat.” Or “**Tip:** Use the single rider line to save time if your group doesn’t mind splitting up.” These tips make the app feel like a seasoned friend giving you advice, not just raw data.

Critically, **the user can toggle these tips on/off**. By default, for new users or those planning at home, tips might be on (so they can learn and incorporate the advice). In the park, an experienced visitor might switch off tips to declutter the interface, seeing just the basic plan. Providing a *“Show tips / Hide tips”* toggle is a UX choice to cater to both novices and veterans. As one designer noted in a different context, giving the user the option to disable tips ensures experienced users aren’t frustrated by hand-holding, while newbies can still get the support they need[[15]](https://forums.beamdog.com/discussion/52735/dread-wolves-near-death-but-not-dying#:~:text=April%202016%20%20edited%20April,2016). This flexibility will enhance user satisfaction for a broad audience.

*Example: A trip planning app interface showing a daily itinerary with park info and notes.* In the screenshot above, a planning tool breaks down a trip by day (e.g. *Day 3 – Magic Kingdom*), listing chosen attractions and including notes like “Virtual queue available” for certain rides. This illustrates how our app might display key tips or requirements (here noting a ride’s virtual queue) directly in the itinerary for quick reference. The ability to toggle such notes on/off would let users decide how much guidance they see in their day plan.

* **Rationale & Sources:** Including detailed attraction info and tips meets a clear user need. Competing apps emphasize this feature: Undercover Tourist’s app shows **“detailed ride information — wait time curve, when to visit, height restrictions, tips, and nearby places”**[**[14]**](https://www.undercovertourist.com/apps/#:~:text=4), essentially confirming that users want to know not just what an attraction is, but the *strategy* around it (when to go, how to ride efficiently). By providing “when to visit” advice and similar tips, our app differentiates itself from official park apps, which typically only list basic info and current wait times but **do not tell you if you should wait or come back later**[[8]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=The%20Tip%20Board%20in%20Genie,first%20to%20minimize%20your%20waits). In our MVP, the tips will be static (based on known patterns or crowd calendars), but still valuable in guiding user plans.

### 3. Interactive Park Maps (for Reference) – *MVP Lite Version*

Navigating the park is integral to in-park use. While the official apps have high-detail interactive maps, our app will include a simpler map or navigation aid to support the itinerary: - **Map View:** For MVP, this could be as basic as a static park map image or schematic with markers for the attractions in the user’s plan. A fully interactive GPS map is desirable (Undercover Tourist’s app has interactive maps with a compass[[16]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/apps/#:~:text=1)), but implementing and maintaining map data for multiple parks is complex. As a first step, we might allow users to tap an attraction in their plan and see a pin on a map or an image of where it is located. If high-resolution official park maps are publicly available, we could embed those. Alternatively, using an API like Google Maps with custom markers is an option (though some parks may not have all rides mapped clearly on Google). - **“Near Me” Sorting:** A simpler approach to help with navigation (if we cannot do maps initially) is to list the attractions in the plan or in the park by distance from the user’s current location (if the user grants GPS permission). Undercover Tourist highlights a “Near Me” feature to sort rides by proximity[[17]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/apps/#:~:text=3), which is useful when plans change on the fly. MVP might not fully implement this, but it’s a candidate for inclusion if straightforward via phone location services. - **Wayfinding Tips:** Even without a full map, each attraction’s page can include a brief note on location (“in Frontierland, near the big thunder mountain”) and estimated walking time from common points. Simple textual directions or landmark-based guidance could be part of the tips. This again is content-heavy, so might be minimal in MVP.

For the PRD, it’s worth noting that **map/navigation features are lower priority** than planning and info features in MVP, but they shouldn’t be forgotten. Even a basic map boosts the in-park usability significantly, so if technical constraints permit, we will include at least read-only maps. Many users expect a map in any park app, but as a **planner companion** our app’s map can be simpler since users can always open the official app’s map if needed. (We may even link a button to open the official app’s map for a specific ride – e.g. a deep link – to offload detailed navigation to the official app if possible.)

### 4. Personal Notes, Checklists, and Social Sharing (User-Driven Utilities)

To truly become a planner’s best friend, the app should allow a bit of personalization beyond selecting rides: - **Add Notes:** Users can append notes to any item in their itinerary or for the day overall. For example, “Johnny’s must-do” next to a ride, or “Meeting up with friends at 5pm”. This free-form note capability lets them record things like confirmation numbers for dining reservations, reminders to pack ponchos if the weather looks rainy (perhaps the app shows average weather per day, like UT’s itinerary does[[18]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/theme-park-vacation-planner-app/#:~:text=)), or any custom activity not in our attractions list (like “Hotel pool break”). The PRD should specify a simple notes field for each itinerary item and each day. - **Checklist / Done Marker:** In the park, users can mark attractions as completed (e.g. a checkbox or swipe to mark done). This doesn’t affect the plan’s order but gives a sense of progress. It could also trigger a fun feedback (like a small celebration animation or stat tracking how many rides done). - **Trip Summary and Countdown:** While not core to planning, these are fun features that increase user engagement. A **countdown timer** to the trip (e.g. “10 days until your vacation!”) can get users excited during the planning phase – Undercover Tourist’s planner includes a countdown widget[[19]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/theme-park-vacation-planner-app/#:~:text=Image%3A%20Personalized%20Itinerary%20screenshot%20image), and we can too if trivial to implement. After or during the trip, a summary of what was accomplished (X rides done, Y hours saved by smart planning, etc.) could encourage sharing. - **Sharing Plans:** MVP could allow exporting or sharing the itinerary (even if just as text or screenshot) with others. For instance, a user might email or WhatsApp their day plan to the rest of their group who don’t have the app. This doesn’t require full multi-user sync, just an output. However, as a stretch goal, we might let users create an account to save plans to cloud and share an access code with friends so they can view the plan in their app. Given MVP scope, we might postpone real-time collaborative features, but keep in mind for future (perhaps when more social/community features come in).

### 5. No-Internet Mode (Offline-first Design)

Since the app is meant to be heavily used on-site where connectivity can be spotty, we will build MVP features to **work offline or with intermittent internet**. All the user’s entered data (their itinerary, notes, selected attractions, etc.) will be stored on the device so it’s accessible without wifi. The attraction information and tips should be cached as well (we’ll bundle the data for the parks in the app or fetch once and save). This way, if the user is in a network dead zone, they can still open the app and see their plan and info. Only features that inherently require internet (like pulling live wait times or updates) would need connectivity – and those real-time features are slated for later version. Users have complained that even official apps time out or crash in low-signal conditions[[5]](https://www.reddit.com/r/WaltDisneyWorld/comments/1c9ivk7/the_walt_disney_world_app_has_to_be_the_best_app/#:~:text=requirement), so an offline-friendly approach is a selling point for our planner.

In summary, the MVP feature set delivers a solid planning experience: Users can create and customize itineraries, access a wealth of attraction info and touring tips (toggling as needed), navigate the park with basic maps or location aids, and personalize their plan with notes and checklists. All of this is done with the user’s input at the center – the app advises and records, but the **user drives the plan**. This lays a strong foundation for layering on more intelligent features in future updates.

## Future Development and Roadmap

After the MVP is launched and validated with users, the next steps involve **integrating real-time data and smart features** to elevate the app from a static planner to a dynamic park companion. The user feedback and data from MVP will guide prioritization, but the envisioned roadmap includes:

### Real-Time Wait Times & Live Data Integration

The biggest planned enhancement is incorporating **live wait time data for rides** (and other live info like ride closures). The likely source, as noted, is the Queue-Times.com API – a free service providing live wait times for over 80 parks worldwide[[20]](https://queue-times.com/en-US/pages/api#:~:text=Queue%20Times%20offers%20an%20interface,waiting%20times%20in%20the%20world)[[21]](https://queue-times.com/en-US/pages/api#:~:text=The%20Real%20Time%20API%20offers,are%20updated%20every%205%20minutes). In a future version, the app will pull current wait times for the user’s selected park and display them in the app. This opens up several new features: - **Live Wait Displays:** Show current waits next to each attraction in the plan (or allow the user to tap “refresh wait times”). For example, if Space Mountain is currently 20 min, the app shows that, possibly color-coded (green for short, red for long wait). - **Sortable Ride List:** Even outside the user’s specific plan, we could provide a list of all rides in the park sorted by current wait or by vicinity. This helps users make impromptu decisions. TouringPlans’ app allows sorting attractions by wait time to easily spot short lines[[7]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=1,Wait%20Time), a very useful feature for real-time use. - **Alerts or Notifications:** The app could let a user set an alert if a certain ride’s wait drops below X minutes, notifying them “Hey, Splash Mountain is down to 15 min wait – now might be a good time to go!”. This kind of alert adds a proactive element. - **Live Updates to Plan:** Eventually, an **adaptive plan** feature can be introduced. For instance, if a user’s next planned ride suddenly has a 90 min wait due to a breakdown earlier, the app (if the user opts in) could recommend swapping the order or doing a different nearby attraction first. This verges into *dynamic itinerary optimization*, which is complex but a key differentiator if done well. It’s essentially what Disney’s Genie service and third-party optimizers attempt, though not always successfully[[22]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=I%27ve%20heard%20mixed%20reviews%20on,but%20they%27re%20trying%20this%20already)[[23]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=That%27s%20a%20great%20point%2C%20and,proactively%20telling%20you%20when%20to). We can start modest: simple suggestions based on thresholds or basic rules (“Ride X is very busy now, consider Y which is nearby and has a short wait”).

**Integration Details:** Queue-Times API provides JSON endpoints for park wait times[[24]](https://queue-times.com/en-US/pages/api#:~:text=List%20park%20queue%20times). We’ll need to map our attraction list to their IDs. The service updates every 5 minutes and is free with required attribution (we would include a “Powered by Queue-Times.com” notice in the app’s info section as required[[25]](https://queue-times.com/en-US/pages/api#:~:text=data%20are%20updated%20every%205,minutes)). Rate limiting is generous, but we should still be efficient (maybe update in background every couple minutes or on user action). If Queue-Times lacks a park that users demand, we might look at alternate sources or crowdsourcing (see below).

By integrating live data, our app transitions from a static planner to a **real-time decision tool** – fulfilling the original vision of helping users **“avoid the longest lines”** and adjust on the fly[[26]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=Dynamic%20Guidance%3A%20Instead%20of%20just,you%20avoid%20the%20longest%20lines). One challenge, as identified in community discussions, is that to truly optimize in real-time, you either need a lot of user data or direct feeds – a chicken-and-egg problem for new apps[[27]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=flow%20and%20giving%20accurate%20real,get%20that%20level%20of%20accuracy). That’s why we plan to roll this out after building a user base and ensuring we have a reliable data feed (Queue-Times, fortunately, gives a direct park feed without needing user submissions, so it solves part of that problem).

### Predictive Planning and “Smart” Itineraries

With live and historical data in hand (Queue-Times also has historical trends), a future version can offer **predictive wait time forecasts** and even automate itinerary recommendations. For example: - **Wait Time Forecasts:** Show expected waits later in the day. TouringPlans does this with charts and labels like “Ride Now” vs “Wait to Ride” based on forecasted crowds[[8]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=The%20Tip%20Board%20in%20Genie,first%20to%20minimize%20your%20waits). Disney’s official app provides a vague graphical forecast for waits but no numeric detail[[28]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=You%20can%20choose%20to%20blindly,we%20think%20it%E2%80%99s%20more%20useful). We can provide more clarity by showing predicted wait in minutes for upcoming hours. This helps users decide if a 40-min wait now is actually good because it’ll be 60 later, etc. - **Optimized “Suggested Plan”:** Given the user’s list of desired attractions, the app could run an algorithm (taking into account average walking times and predicted waits) to suggest an optimal order. This would be an evolution of the MVP where currently the user manually orders things. In an advanced state, the user could hit “Optimize My Plan” and get a reordering that minimizes total wait time. This is complex (it’s an instance of the traveling salesman or optimization problem under time-varying weights), but not unsolvable – academic research exists on optimal theme park touring routes[[29]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=OP%2C%20my%20Masters%20thesis%20was,2922.pdf.%20I%27m%20the%20lead%20author). Even a simpler heuristic approach could be valuable (e.g. avoid backtracking, do popular rides first, etc.). - **Dynamic Re-optimization:** The ultimate goal would be an itinerary that *updates itself* as conditions change (essentially what the hypothetical “smart itinerary” concept is[[30]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=Here%27s%20the%20core%20idea%20I%27m,exploring)[[31]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=My%20thought%20is%20that%20while,out%20of%20your%20park%20day)). If a ride goes down or wait times spike unexpectedly, the app might shuffle the order or insert a break. This level of “smart” would require careful UI (to not confuse users) and trust from users to follow the suggestions. It might be introduced gradually, perhaps as a “Guide Me” mode separate from a user’s locked-in plan.

It’s important to note that even Disney’s Genie (with all of Disney’s data) struggled to perfectly optimize everyone’s day[[22]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=I%27ve%20heard%20mixed%20reviews%20on,but%20they%27re%20trying%20this%20already). We should manage expectations and possibly market our approach as giving *options* and *insights* rather than “guaranteed perfect plan”. Many enthusiasts still prefer having control (hence the toggle for tips and ability to override suggestions). Our app could position its smart features as opt-in help: users can choose a fully manual plan, a semi-optimized plan, or a fully dynamic mode.

### Community and User-Contributed Content

Another future direction is building a **community aspect** around the app: - **Crowdsourced Tips & Waits:** Allow users to submit their actual wait times or experiences to improve data accuracy. TouringPlans’ Lines app famously does this – users time their waits and the app aggregates it to refine forecasts[[32]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=If%20you%20tapped%20into%20any,expect%20that%20you%E2%80%99ll%20actually%20wait)[[33]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=ImageWhen%20you%20get%20in%20line%2C,MASH%20that%20little%20green%20button). We could implement a lightweight version where after a ride, the app asks “How long did you wait in line for X?” and uses responses to adjust predictions (or simply share that info with others as anecdotal tips). Similarly, users might be able to upvote or add comments to the tips on attractions (“The morning strategy worked great!” or additional advice). Moderating this could be challenging, but even a basic community rating on tips could surface the best advice. - **Social Planning & Sharing:** Enabling friends to link up in the app, share plans, and see each other’s locations or progress could enhance group use. Even a group chat or the ability to “find other park fans” as Park Trips app does[[34]](https://www.parktrips.fr/en/blog/post-2669.html#:~:text=A%20Community%20of%20Enthusiasts) might be a long-term idea, though it ventures beyond core planning into community building. Park Trips introduced features like integrated chat and meetups for park enthusiasts[[35]](https://www.parktrips.fr/en/blog/post-2669.html#:~:text=A%20Community%20of%20Enthusiasts), essentially making the app a social hub. Our app could consider a friend system where you can share your trip itinerary with others on the app, or post it (if you want) to a community feed for bragging/archival. - **User-Generated Plans:** Once we have enthusiasts onboard, we could let super-users create and share their own touring plans or tip lists (e.g. a user could publish “My Ultimate 1-Day Universal Studios Plan” and others can use it as a template). This content can enrich the app and reduce our need to author every tip or plan. It aligns with being a planner’s community.

### Additional Content and Functionality

Some other enhancements that can be phased in: - **Dining and Events Integration:** Provide info on restaurants (perhaps just link to their menus or list if reservations are needed), and allow adding dining to the itinerary. Also include park events (fireworks, parades, show schedules). Park Trips already lists showtimes and even restaurant menus in-app[[36]](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.parktrips.app&hl=en_US#:~:text=,visit%20count%20and%20join%20others), and Undercover Tourist’s app lists character meet times and special events by day[[37]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/apps/#:~:text=Daily%20park%20information%E2%80%94%20opening%20hours%2C,greeting%2C%20parades%20and%20show%20times). Having these in our app means a user doesn’t need to cross-check other sources. For MVP we might just allow a “Custom item” where a user can type “Lunch @ 1pm” themselves. But later, integrating official schedules via an API or scraping (or manual updates) would make the app a one-stop planner. - **Multi-Park Trip Support:** If not in MVP, we ensure later that users can plan trips covering multiple parks (for destinations like Disney World or if someone is visiting different parks on a road trip). This includes possibly suggesting which day to do which park if the user has flexibility (leveraging crowd calendar data). For example, our app could say “Monday is predicted 8/10 crowded at Magic Kingdom but 5/10 at Epcot – maybe swap your days”. That uses crowd calendar predictions (Queue-Times has crowd level models[[38]](https://queue-times.com/en-US/pages/about#:~:text=The%20site%20uses%20machine%20learning,of%20the%20year%2C%20park), or we could ingest other crowd calendars). - **Cross-Platform and Sync:** MVP might be mobile-only. In future, a web version or at least account sync so users can plan on desktop (bigger screen) and then have it on their phone would be great. Planning often starts on a desktop web. That entails building a web front-end or at least robust cloud sync. This is more of a platform consideration for PRD roadmap. - **Monetization & Partnerships (if relevant):** While not a user feature per se, eventually the app could incorporate affiliate links (e.g. to purchase tickets via a reseller, since we won’t sell directly, perhaps partner with Undercover Tourist or others) or in-app purchases for premium features (for instance, advanced optimization could be a premium upgrade, similar to TouringPlans requiring a subscription for some features[[39]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=make%20a%20Lightning%20Lane%20reservation,of%20them%20are%20pretty%20useful)). This is beyond MVP but worth outlining in PRD for business context. The requirement to *not* have transactions is clear – meaning no direct selling – but referral links or ads for relevant services could be allowed if done tactfully. However, we know one reason users find official apps clunky is the overload of promotions[[4]](https://www.reddit.com/r/WaltDisneyWorld/comments/1c9ivk7/the_walt_disney_world_app_has_to_be_the_best_app/#:~:text=I%20absolutely%20hate%20the%20UI,2%20clicks), so any monetization should avoid degrading the experience.

### Competitive Landscape & Differentiation

To ensure our product strategy is sound, we examine existing solutions and how our app will stand out:

* **Official Park Apps (Disney’s My Disney Experience, Universal’s app, etc.):** Strengths – authoritative data, necessary for things like reservations, detailed maps, and live updates. Weaknesses – They are transactional and operational tools more than planning guides. They often lack personalized itinerary functions and can be unintuitive[[4]](https://www.reddit.com/r/WaltDisneyWorld/comments/1c9ivk7/the_walt_disney_world_app_has_to_be_the_best_app/#:~:text=I%20absolutely%20hate%20the%20UI,2%20clicks)[[6]](https://www.reddit.com/r/WaltDisneyWorld/comments/1c9ivk7/the_walt_disney_world_app_has_to_be_the_best_app/#:~:text=%E2%80%A2%20%201y%20ago). Our app differentiates by focusing purely on the guest’s plan and experience, not on selling or on-boarding to park services. We won’t replicate features like ticket storage, purchase flows, or Genie recommendations (which, as noted, can be suboptimal[[40]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=Disney%20Genie%2C%20which%20is%20free%2C,don%E2%80%99t%20recommend%20following%20Genie%E2%80%99s%20recommendations)). Instead, we provide **honest, user-first advice** (e.g. if Genie recommends an odd attraction at rope drop, our app would flag that as low priority if wait is always short[[40]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=Disney%20Genie%2C%20which%20is%20free%2C,don%E2%80%99t%20recommend%20following%20Genie%E2%80%99s%20recommendations)). Essentially, when using both apps side-by-side, ours provides the *strategy* and the official provides the *execution*. Many savvy park-goers already use a two-app approach (e.g. TouringPlans + Disney app)[[1]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=I%20write%20a%20lot%20about,of%20them%20are%20pretty%20useful) – we aim to be the go-to planning app in that combo.
* **TouringPlans (Lines app and website):** This is a close competitor in functionality for Disney/Universal parks. TouringPlans offers custom touring plans with optimization, wait time predictions, and user-submitted data, but it requires a subscription for full use[[39]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=make%20a%20Lightning%20Lane%20reservation,of%20them%20are%20pretty%20useful). It’s also somewhat niche and geared towards hardcore planners. Our app seeks to democratize these tools in a more modern, user-friendly package and expand to **all parks**, not just Disney/Universal. By leveraging queue-times data (which covers Disney, Universal, Six Flags, regional parks, etc.[[20]](https://queue-times.com/en-US/pages/api#:~:text=Queue%20Times%20offers%20an%20interface,waiting%20times%20in%20the%20world)) our app can serve *any park enthusiast worldwide*. TouringPlans also doesn’t cover ride advice for parks outside the big ones, which is a gap we can fill. In terms of features, Lines has some we plan to emulate (like showing both posted and expected wait times, sorting by waits, etc.), and we should respect their proven ideas while bringing our unique twist (like the integrated tips toggle and a free or freemium model).
* **Undercover Tourist’s Apps:** UT has a **Vacation Planner** app (for overall trip budgeting and itinerary)[[41]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/theme-park-vacation-planner-app/#:~:text=Download%20our%20Theme%20Park%20Vacation,Planner%20App%20for%20Free)[[18]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/theme-park-vacation-planner-app/#:~:text=) and separate **“Park Day” apps** for Orlando and SoCal which include wait times, maps, and preset plans[[42]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/apps/#:~:text=Skip%20the%20Lines%20with%20the,Orlando%20Theme%20Park%20Day%20App)[[43]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/apps/#:~:text=Save%20Time%20Each%20Day%20with,Times%20%26%20Park%20Plans%20App). They’re somewhat close to what we’re doing, with a mix of planning and live data. However, UT’s focus is tied to promoting their ticket sales (hence the budget and ticket integration). Our app can differentiate by being **agnostic and purely planning-focused**, with potentially a broader park coverage as well. Also, UT’s apps are region-specific; our vision is one app for all parks (Park Trips, discussed next, is more like that). We also have the advantage of starting fresh in 2025+ – learning from what works in those apps and targeting a modern UX. Notably, UT’s app features confirm the importance of things like **custom plans, wait time lists/maps, crowd calendars, and detailed ride info with “when to visit” tips**[[14]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/apps/#:~:text=4) – all of which are on our roadmap or MVP. We will offer similar value but without the commercial tie-in, which could attract users who aren’t necessarily buying tickets through UT.
* **Park Trips:** A newer entrant (launched 2025) that is very similar in concept – a comprehensive theme park companion with global coverage[[2]](https://www.parktrips.fr/en/blog/post-2669.html#:~:text=Park%20Trips%20is%20the%20mobile,necessary%20information%20at%20your%20fingertips)[[44]](https://www.parktrips.fr/en/blog/post-2669.html#:~:text=Global%20Coverage). Park Trips’ key features include real-time wait times, show schedules, attraction details, and even community chat[[45]](https://www.parktrips.fr/en/blog/post-2669.html#:~:text=Key%20Features%3A%20Your%20Personal%20Guide,in%20Parks)[[34]](https://www.parktrips.fr/en/blog/post-2669.html#:~:text=A%20Community%20of%20Enthusiasts). It essentially validates our product idea. To compete, we should excel in usability and planning intelligence. Park Trips provides data and some planning tools (it lets you “strategically plan by identifying shortest queues”[[45]](https://www.parktrips.fr/en/blog/post-2669.html#:~:text=Key%20Features%3A%20Your%20Personal%20Guide,in%20Parks)), but it’s unclear how much it helps build a custom itinerary versus just giving info. Our emphasis on a **user’s personal itinerary** (with toggled tips and future dynamic suggestions) can set us apart – being more of a personalized planner than a general info app. Also, if Park Trips leans heavily on community, we can differentiate initially by focusing on the **personal planning** aspect, then potentially building community features differently (perhaps more about sharing plans than live chat, depending on what users prefer). Given Park Trips is free, we likely also stay free for base features to stay competitive.

In summary, our app finds its niche by combining the strengths of various tools: the **knowledge and optimization of TouringPlans**, the **breadth of Park Trips**, and the **user-friendly design and trip focus** of Undercover Tourist’s planner – all while remaining independent of any single park’s ecosystem. The end result envisioned is that whenever someone plans a theme park trip, they download our app to handle the planning and maximizing of fun, and they use the official app only as a secondary utility for on-site transactions or very detailed park-specific functions.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

The above research outlines a clear path for the Theme Park Trip Planner App – from an MVP that empowers users to craft their own park day plans with expert guidance, to a future where the app can dynamically optimize and enhance a park visit in real time. We have identified the core features (itinerary builder, attraction info with toggleable tips, basic mapping, personal notes) that align with the app’s goal to be a *planner’s best friend*. We have also factored in the user clarifications: - The app will be useful **both before the trip and during the trip**, adjusting its role accordingly. - The initial version will be **user-driven**, avoiding heavy reliance on real-time feeds or complex algorithms (which addresses data availability concerns[[27]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=flow%20and%20giving%20accurate%20real,get%20that%20level%20of%20accuracy) and allows faster development). - We have incorporated a **“tips toggle”** to cater to different user experience levels[[15]](https://forums.beamdog.com/discussion/52735/dread-wolves-near-death-but-not-dying#:~:text=April%202016%20%20edited%20April,2016), ensuring the interface can be both guidance-rich or clean as needed. - We explicitly stay **complementary to official apps** – no ticket buying or Lightning Lane booking here[[1]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=I%20write%20a%20lot%20about,of%20them%20are%20pretty%20useful) – focusing instead on features that official apps lack (like custom planning, wait sorting, unbiased tips[[7]](https://touringplans.com/blog/five-things-you-can-do-in-lines-but-not-the-disney-world-app/#:~:text=1,Wait%20Time)[[14]](https://www.undercovertourist.com/apps/#:~:text=4)).

In preparing the PRD, the next step will be to translate these findings into concrete requirements and user stories. For instance: - *User Story:* “As a first-time visitor, I want to input my favorite rides and get a suggested order with tips, so I feel confident about my day.” - *Requirement:* The system shall allow the user to select attractions and view recommended times to visit each (static tip or future dynamic). - *User Story:* “As an in-park user, I want to quickly see what I planned next and the current wait, so I can decide if I should stick to plan or change it.” - *Requirement:* The app shall display the itinerary with real-time wait data (if available) or highlight changes. - etc.

We will also define the data requirements (park and attraction database, integration with Queue-Times API, storage for user plans) and UX requirements (simple toggle controls for tips, offline access). Potential risks (like data accuracy, user learning curve for a new app, or keeping content updated) should be noted with mitigation plans (e.g. start with a limited set of parks in beta, use crowd-sourced verification for tips, etc.).

By grounding the PRD in both the **user’s needs** and the **industry context** (what others offer, what pain points exist), we can ensure the app’s features are not just technically feasible but genuinely valuable. The research shows there is a real demand for smarter trip planning tools[[10]](https://www.reddit.com/r/Themepark/comments/1ltrxw2/quick_question_for_park_visitors_would_an_app_to/#:~:text=My%20thought%20is%20that%20while,out%20of%20your%20park%20day). With a carefully scoped MVP and a forward-looking roadmap, our app can enter the market filling a gap for theme park travelers who want to *plan smarter, wait less, and enjoy more*.

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