



THE HAPPIEST HANDBOOK

YOUR STRESS-FREE GUIDE TO
WALT DISNEY WORLD WITH LITTLES

BY MCKENZIE FUSSELL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSIE OFFER PHOTOGRAPHY

W E L C O M E

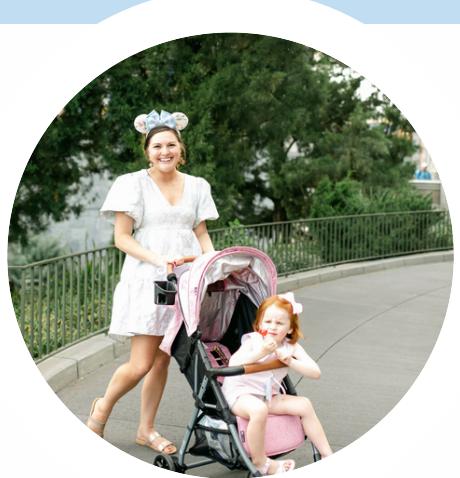
Hi There!

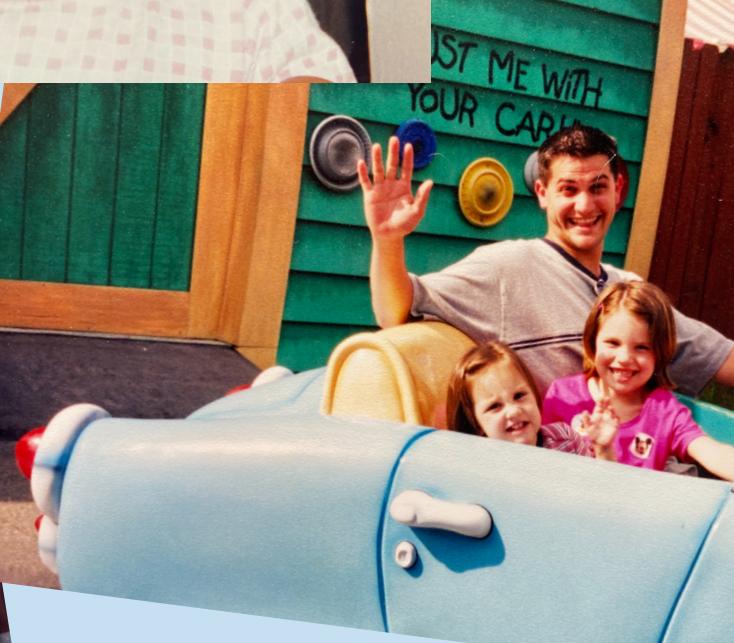
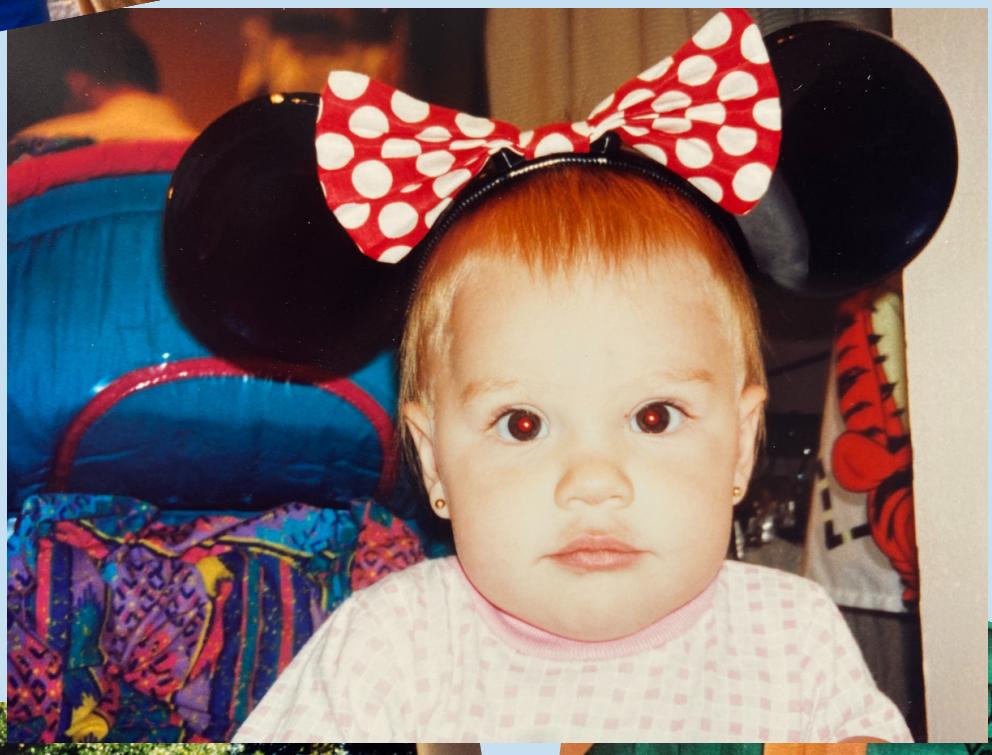
I've been visiting Disney since I was baby (thanks mom + dad!) but my very best trips, the most memorable ones, all took place over the past four years. The first trip with my oldest daughter Alba Grace in my belly, the first time she met her beloved Daisy Duck, getting to bring sister Millie along with us. The best. Watching my girls hug their favorite princesses in their ice cream covered smocked dresses... those memories are priceless. I've visited the parks hundreds of times, but the days spent at Disney with my littles are the days I've always dreamed of! Our family loves to make memories at Walt Disney World and I hope that within these pages you'll find tips that will help you make wonderful memories of your own!

McKenzie

ABOUT ME

McKenzie is a wife, mother, and life-long Disney lover with a passion for sharing helpful tips and tricks to make your Walt Disney World trip amazing!







*"Happiness is the richest thing we will ever own:
- Donald Duck*

INDEX



O1 *Know Before You Go*

O2 *Getting Started*

O3 *Where To Stay*

O4 *Disney Dining*

O5 *Planning Your Park Days*

O6 *Pro Tips*



K N O W B E F O R E Y O U G O



In this chapter I'll share my three golden rules for Walt Disney World trips with littles and how our travel mindset makes every trip special!

CHAPTER ONE

C H A P T E R 1

Prioritize



So you want to take your little ones to Disney? Maybe you're planning your very first trip or maybe you'd consider yourself a WDW pro. Either way, successful adventures with kiddos require both planning AND patience. Most importantly, they require realistic expectations. Which means that you've got to prioritize.



I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this, but if you want to have a great Disney trip with kids, you're not going to be able to tackle everything on your wishlist. Coming to terms with this reality (before you drive under the magical Mickey gates!) is truly the best way to enjoy a stress-free vacation. You're likely not going to ride every rollercoaster in the Magic Kingdom or catch every show, but I promise your trip will be one for the books!

Gather up your family and dream together. List your top three attraction priorities for each day of your trip (rides) then your top two experiences (ex: catching a Magic Kingdom parade + meeting Minnie Mouse) and one dining reservation you'd love to score. Once you've got your list of must-do's each day, jot down a few other adventures you'd love to squeeze in. If those things don't happen, that's okay. If they do, it's a major win! Setting the bar low makes planning your days so much more manageable and leaves room for the unexpected Disney magic you'll find around every corner of the parks!

TODAY'S PRIORITIES:

ATTRAC TIONS

O1

O2

O3

EXPERIENCES

O1

O2

DINING

O1

TODAY'S PRIORITIES:

ATTRAC TIONS

O1

O2

O3

EXPERIENCES

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TODAY'S PRIORITIES:

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EXPERIENCES

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O2

DINING

O1

CHAPTER 1

Take It Slow



I've heard it said that your family is only as old as your youngest child, so we take that into consideration on all of our trips. We move at a toddler pace on most of our park days and in my opinion, it's the best way to do Disney! We try our very best not to overplan and to let the littles lead. Taking it slow means fewer meltdowns and more room for unexpected magic.

Friends, I'm here to tell you that there is no meltdown like a sweaty, sugary, Disney meltdown! So let's avoid those. Okay?!



C H A P T E R 1

Be Flexible



I know my type A readers are cringing at the title of this page but this pep talk is for you so stay put! Things won't always go your way at Disney so flexibility is #important.



Florida weather is unpredictable, regardless of what the forecast shows you. Rides break down (sometimes when you're on them.) Toddlers decide to boycott public restrooms (speaking from recent experience here!) and sometimes we forget to pack essentials. Things go wrong. Flexibility is the name of the game at Disney. Plans will need to be tweaked and changed throughout the day according to wait times and nap schedules. As our girl Elsa likes to say, "Let it goooooooo", roll with the punches and make the most of it. Put a smile on your face and treat yo' self to a dole whip or two! You're at Disney after all! :)



“Happiness is a state of mind. It's just according to the way you look at things.”

– Walt Disney



GETTING STARTED

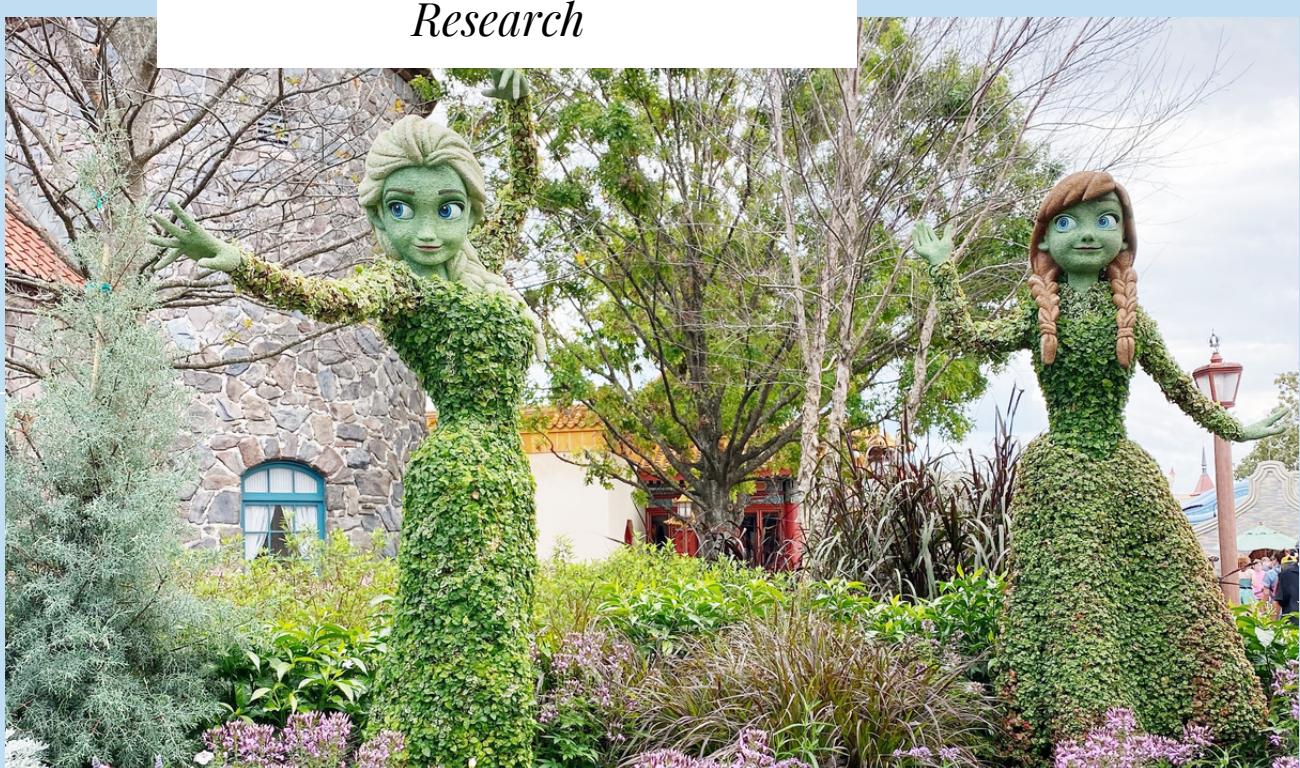


Now that we're all on the same page with our travel philosophy, let's get to work! Researching, dreaming and planning for your Disney trip is part of the fun!

CHAPTER TWO

CHAPTER 2

Research



For those new to the world of Disney, research is your first step. If you've purchased this e-book I can already tell that you'll love this phase of planning your Disney vacation. This is the part where you dream up the type of Disney trip you'd like to have and get your family excited about what's to come.

A few of my favorite sources for research:

Websites & Youtube: Disney Food Blog + All Ears

Youtube Search Words: Disney Vlog, WDW Resort Tour, WDW Room Tour, WDW Rides, WDW Tips

Facebook Groups: Disney With Littles, Smart Moms Planning Disney, Taking Tots To Disney, TBBC Mama's Planning Disney



C H A P T E R 2

Hiring a Planner



Did you know that you can hire a Disney planner to help with your trip for free?! Yep! They are paid by Disney, so hiring one will only SAVE you money!



Hiring a Disney planner can be a huge help, even for Disney pros like myself! Planners will do the "dirty work" for you so that you can focus on your family while on vacation. They'll wake up early to book your dining reservations, stay on top of promotions and deals Disney launches during the planning process, and help you maximize your time in the parks! The really good ones will also make themselves available to answer your questions and help with any hiccups you may encounter during your Disney stay. Travel agents are in the know when it comes to changes in park policies and health info so you'll always be in the loop.

Need a recommendation?

*Mary Helen Law, Mouse Counselor, IG @maryhelen_mousecounselor
Courtney Callicutt, Mouse Counselor IG @courtneyc_mousecounselor
Natalie Alfant, Mouse Counselor IG @nataliealfant_mousecounselor*

CHAPTER 2

When To Get Started



If you're asking, "how far out can I start planning my trip" then today is as good as any! There's no harm in starting the research process more than a year out, but the sweet spot for booking is 6-12 months out. Many of our trips are planned in just a few months and sometimes we're even more spontaneous than that.

Perks of being just a few hours down the road I suppose!

And now to answer the burning question... when's the best time visit?!
The answer is different for every family but you'll want to pay close attention to crowd levels (check out magicguides.com), weather (summer is HOT!) as well as festivals & after hours events your family may be interested in. Visiting while school is still in session (avoiding school holidays) is always a good idea!





*“Any day spent with you is my favorite day.
So, today is my new favorite day.”*

— Pooh (*Winnie the Pooh*)



WHERE TO STAY



There's so much to consider when it comes to Disney resorts. But this is a guide to stress-free Disney trips with littles so we'll use that for our ranking order!

CHAPTER THREE

CHAPTER 3

Monorail Resorts



Monorail resorts make mid-day Magic Kingdom naps possible. Some of these resorts are close enough that you can even walk to the Magic Kingdom! Five star fireworks views, the best dining on property and all of the deluxe resort amenities you can dream up. The monorail resorts are the most convenient choice for a Disney vacay with young kids. But be warned, they'll come with the heftiest price tag.

The Grand Floridian, The Polynesian & The Contemporary are Disney's monorail resorts. My favorite is the Grand Floridian. (Regardless of where you stay, you must visit the Grand Floridian lobby on your trip to hear the lobby pianist.) The monorail runs to these three resorts as well as to Epcot & Magic Kingdom! We love the monorail because you DO NOT have to fold your stroller unlike Disney busses.



CHAPTER 3

Skyliner Resorts



If a monorail resort isn't for you, consider a Skyliner resort. Disney's open-air skyliner system can transport you from The Riviera (Deluxe Resort), Caribbean Beach (Moderate Resort), Pop Century (Value Resort), & Art of Animation (Value Resort) to Hollywood Studios or Epcot!

My favorite skyliner resorts are The Riviera & Art of Animation (check out the family suites!) Pop Century is a great value resort option, with recently updated rooms!

**Note: You will have to fold your double stroller up on the skyliner so do take that into consideration. Single strollers can remain open.*



CHAPTER 3

Honorable Mentions



Swan & Dolphin:

*Epcot is our family favorite and we're Marriott Cardholders so the Swan & Dolphin (the only Marriott owned Disney property) are a no-brainer for us. Epcot area resorts are worth considering if your family is planning an Epcot day because you can walk or take a quick boat ride over. *The Boardwalk, Beach Club & Yacht Club are in the Epcot bubble and also worth considering if this sounds appealing!*

Old Key West:

OKW is a DVC (Disney Vacation Club) property (which means you can rent points to save \$\$\$ - check out MouseSavers.com) our family loves the slow laid back vibe, HUGE rooms, many pools, on-site dining & water taxi to Disney Springs!





*“They say if you dream a thing more than once,
it’s sure to come true” – Sleeping Beauty*



DISNEY DINING



In my opinion, the best part of any vacation is the food! Mickey shaped food tastes even better. You might be surprised to learn that Disney World dining isn't all hot dogs and plastic cheese! There's a little somethin' for everyone, even the most adventurous eaters!

CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER 4

Character Dining



Character dining is a Disney must. An easy way to "kill two birds with one stone", knocking out a meal AND hanging out with characters at the same time. You'll have a unique character experience your littles are sure to remember! In my opinion, character dining is one of the best parts of a Disney vacation. I'd recommend you book at least one during your visit.

Breakfast at Topolino's Terrace is our family favorite character experience! Reservations for this one can be harder to snag but it's well worth stalking the Disney website & signing up for Mouse Dining alerts for.

You can find character dining experiences in several resorts and in each of the Disney World parks. You'll find different characters and unique theming at each restaurant.



CHAPTER 4

In-Park Dining



There are hundreds of in-park dining options ranging from snack kiosks and quick service restaurants to sit down dining experiences fit for even the biggest foodies. I like having a reservation for one sit down restaurant each day (especially in the Magic Kingdom where quick service options aren't the tastiest).



CHAPTER 41

In-Park Dining

RESERVATIONS TO SNAG!

MAGIC KINGDOM

Be Our Guest (character dining), Crystal Palace (buffet and previously character dining), Skippers Canteen (delicious options for adventurous eaters, hilarious staff and most impressive kids menu!), Cinderella's Royal Table

ANIMAL KINGDOM

Yak & Yeti (one of my favorite restaurants on property!), Tusker House (character dining!) and Rain Forest Cafe for more adventurous littles! Tiffins is a TREAT but not the most kid-friendly option.

HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

Hollywood Brown Derby (order the Cobb salad and thank me later!), Hollywood & Vine (underwhelming food but the littles will ADORE the character interactions!) and Tune In Lounge. Oh wait, that last one's not a restaurant but we can't visit HS without popping in for drinks and AC!

EPCOT

We are team #snackaroundtheworld in Epcot but have also tried many of the restaurants. Our favorites have been Tutto Italia (decent food, better wine list!) and anything in Mexico! You really can't go wrong eating in any of the countries!



CHAPTER 4

Resort Dining



Finding a resort that has on-site dining options you love is always a win but don't forget that you can make reservations to dine at any Disney resort! It's a fun way to explore the property and scope out your next resort destination.

Favorite Resort Dining:

Citricos at The Grand Floridian

Flying Fish at The Boardwalk

Beaches & Cream at The Beach Club

Olivia's at Old Key West

Steakhouse 71 at The Contemporary



CHAPTER 4

Disney Springs Dining



With plenty of magical shops to explore, live music, tons of dining options and even a few kid-friendly rides like a train & carousel, Disney Springs is always a hit with our girls! Definitely worth scheduling an evening at Disney Springs on your next trip.

Disney Springs Favorites:

*The Boathouse
Homecomin'
D Luxe Burger
Giddeon's Bakeshop*



CHAPTER 4

Dining Reservations



Resort guests can make dining reservations 70 days out. If you don't see a reservation for a specific spot right away, do not fear! I'll share my favorite hack with you!

I've scored all of our best dining reservations using the Mouse Dining website (www.mousedining.com) to sign up for alerts. I suggest using the paid membership option so that you can add multiple phone numbers to the alerts! The system works by triggering text messages when a dining reservation is dropped so you'll need to act fast when you get the text!

Still haven't scored a reservation by your park day? Once in the parks, you can join walk up lists for restaurants that have availability! Keep an eye on the dining reservations tab of the app throughout the day.



CHAPTER 4

Snacking & Groceries



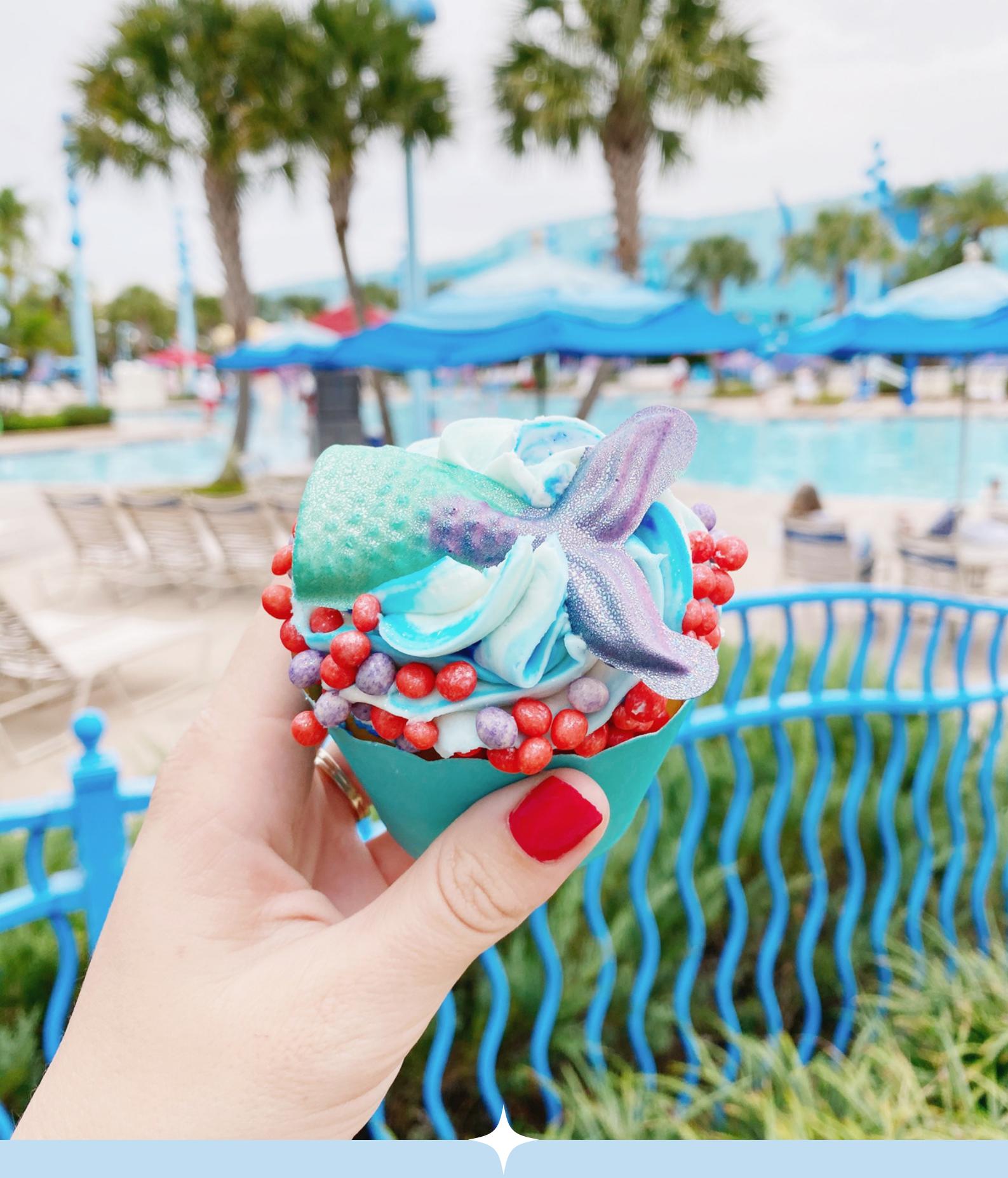
Snacks are part of the Disney experience! We don't overdo it with the dining reservations so that we can overindulge in Mickey pretzels and popcorn throughout our day. My favorite WDW snacks are the Cat Tail from Cheshire Cafe in the Magic Kingdom, Corn & Pork Tacos from the Margarita Stand in Epcot's Mexico pavilion, Macarons from Epcot's France pavilion, egg rolls from Epcot's China pavilion and churros from any kiosk offering them! :)

Disney Food Blog has some of the best up-to-date guides for snacking in the parks, you can even print their guide to take with you!

Epcot is the most exciting park for snacking, especially during a festival! You can enjoy small bites from around the world while taking in some of the prettiest spots in WDW!

You can bring your own snacks and drinks into the parks as well. We packs tons of snacks to keep the littles in good spirit all day long! Disney even allows cooler bags as long as there is no loose ice.

We like to bring groceries to our room to save on drinks, snacks and breakfast! Sign up for Instacart and have your groceries delivered straight to your room before check-in.



*"This much I know. If you are what you eat,
then I only wanna eat the good stuff."*

- Ratatouille



PLANNING YOUR DAYS



Refer back to our perfect formula for stress free Disney days and let's get to planning!

CHAPTER FIVE

CHAPTER 5

Know The App



The My Disney Experience app is your new best friend! Spend time getting to know it before your trip! When visiting with kiddos these features will be the most helpful to understand:

**How to use the map feature to view wait times, find baby care centers, restrooms, nearby dining, character experiences and entertainment opportunities.*

**Using the mobile food order feature to order ahead quick service food before arriving at the kiosk*

**Check Daily park hours and closed attractions*

**Use the resort hotel feature to check-in, explore resort amenities and even unlock the door to your room!*



CHAPTER 5



Disney Genie is the complimentary offering that is now available to all guests visiting Walt Disney World. Walt Disney World guests will access the tool within the existing My Disney Experience app at Walt Disney World and Disneyland guests will use the Disneyland app to access Disney Genie.

Disney Genie provides a real-time Tip Board with customized recommendations for experiences, wait times and next showtimes, and Lightning Lane return times; restaurant waitlist, check-in and reservations; mobile order; and access to attraction virtual queues (currently available for Remy's Ratatouille Adventure).

Ahead of or on the day of their visit, guests can input their "Top Picks" for attractions, entertainment and dining, as well as their park-hopping plans, and Disney Genie will generate a recommended itinerary based on these selections.

Pro tip: Disney Genie recommendations are just that — suggestions. If Genie adds something to your itinerary that you're not interested in doing, you can remove it and Genie will re-optimize your day with new recommendations. Within Disney Genie, guests have the option to purchase Disney Genie+, a paid add-on that enables guests to bypass the standby queue and instead use the Lightning Lane (previously the FastPass entry) for most attractions. The cost is \$15 plus tax per person, per day at Walt Disney World and \$20 plus tax per person per day at Disneyland, where Disney Genie+ also includes free Disney PhotoPass downloads.

Once purchased for the day, Disney Genie+ can be used in all parks by guests with park hopper tickets at no additional cost. Disney Genie+ gives guests Lightning Lane access to special attractions!



CHAPTER 5



As part of the Disney Genie service, guests to Walt Disney World now have two ways to access Lightning Lanes (the newest version of Fastpass). Those are the daily Genie+ service, or by purchasing Individual Lighting Lane access for specific attractions.



CHAPTER 5

Attractions

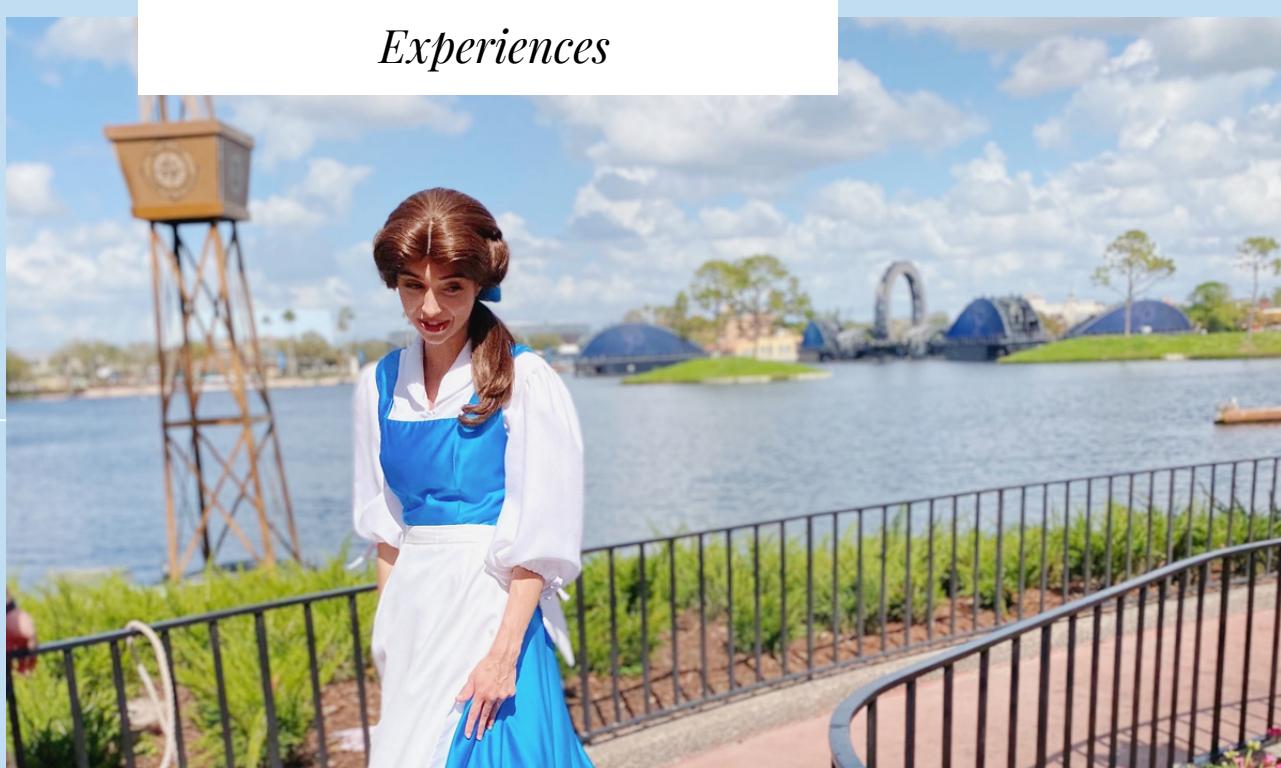


While I think you can have a great day at Disney without a single ride, the attractions are part of the fun! Not sure what attractions your kiddos will like? You can watch YouTube videos of the attractions prior to your trip to get a feel for their interests! You never know what your littles will enjoy and we're always surprised by what our girls like and don't like. Preparation and research is key!



CHAPTER 5

Experiences



One of the best things about Disney with littles is that they're not quite tall enough for all of the thrill rides, leaving more time for experiences like parades, shows, character meet & greets and fireworks! These are some of the most special and memorable moments at Disney World!





*“That’s the real trouble with the world, too
many people grow up. They forget.”*

- Walt Disney



PRØ TIPS



*A quick guide to my Disney tips & tricks you
need to know about!*

CHAPTER SIX



*"Laughter is timeless, imagination has no age,
and dreams are forever."*

- Walt Disney

DISNEY BAG CHECKLIST

<i>Rain Coats</i>	<i>Ibuprofen</i>
<i>Ponchos</i>	<i>Chapstick</i>
<i>Hand Sanitizer</i>	<i>Blister Balm</i>
<i>Masks</i>	<i>Bandaids</i>
<i>Bubble Refills</i>	<i>Hair Ties</i>
<i>Bubble Wand</i>	<i>Stain Treater</i>
<i>Glow Sticks</i>	<i>Facial Mist</i>
<i>Hats</i>	<i>Ziploc Bags</i>
<i>Sunglasses</i>	<i>Wet Wipes</i>
<i>Quiet Time Activities</i>	<i>Diapers</i>
<i>Change of Clothes</i>	<i>Sunscreen</i>
- <i>Backup Outfits</i>	
- <i>Costume</i>	<i>Stroller Tag</i>
<i>Liquid IV</i>	<i>Mommy Hook</i>
<i>Water Bottles</i>	<i>Clip-on Fan</i>
<i>Snacks</i>	
<i>Magic Bands</i>	
<i>Fuel Rod</i>	
<i>Pressed Coin Book</i>	
<i>Autograph Book</i>	
<i>Towel</i>	

