

PART ONE

PLANNING YOUR VISIT

WHEN to GO

VISITING MOST PLACES MEANS taking the seasons into account, but Florida is famous as a year-round escape. In fact, that's one of the main factors Walt Disney considered in deciding to build his second Magic Kingdom: the heavenly weather. So the seasons to consider in this case are more social than climatic: school semesters with their scheduled vacations and holidays; rainy or dry weather; and high- and low-price seasons.

The crowds are heaviest during spring break, particularly Easter week; from May to September; Thanksgiving week; and the fortnight from about December 18 to New Year's Day, which is the most hectic of all. By heavy, we mean prohibitively so—in past years, as many as 100,000 people have been packed into the Magic Kingdom alone. Three-day holidays, such as Presidents Day or Veterans Day, tend to draw people more heavily than ordinary weekends, too (although Labor Day has eased up, because so many school systems have begun reopening in August). And if you can go mid-week rather than on the weekend, or at least split it, you'll have a much easier time.

The best times to go are in late April or early May, especially if you appreciate moderately warm temperatures (in the 80s by day and 60s at night) and flowering gardens, because that's when Epcot hosts its flower and garden festival; in late September or October, when the weather is usually still well into the 80s, the rainy season is passing, and the kids are in school; and in the weeks after Thanksgiving and before

Christmas, specifically the early and middle weeks of December. The parks are fully and elaborately decorated for the holidays, there are Santas and storytellers from a dozen nations and traditions in Epcot, candles and tree lights glitter everywhere, and even the most stolid-looking strangers suddenly put on stocking caps with ears and smile at you. The huge 4 million-Christmas-lights display in Disney-MGM Studios and the Candlelight Processional in Epcot, which features Christmas-story readings by celebrity guests and music by full choirs and orchestras, have become annual traditions for many families. Average temperatures are in the high 60s or low 70s during the day and high 40s to 50s in the evening, but it's usually sunny and nice for strolling. (Hotel restaurant reservations tend to be at their loosest during the fall and prior to Christmas.) And though you may be heartily tired of Christmas music after a day or so, it's probably no worse than it would be in your local shopping mall.

January may seem sort of an afterthought, but it can be a good third choice. Sure, the Christmas lights and international Santas are gone, the parks' hours are shortened, and a few of the attractions, such as Blizzard Beach and Typhoon Lagoon, may be closed for their annual face-lift. But on the other hand,

accommodations are still cheaper. Even if the parks do open later or close earlier, the lines to get into attractions are so much shorter that you aren't likely to need the extra time. As a resort guest, you can get into one major theme park a day by 8 a.m. and stay until 2 a.m. at Pleasure Island. And now that the Magic Your Way program means that at least one park is open three hours later each night, you can surely see everything. It can be cool or even chilly (the averages range from near 70°F during the day to about 45°F at night), but it's generally fairly dry, and there are plenty of indoor activities if not.

If you must go in July, you'll probably be able to save some money, because hotel rates are low, parks stay open late, and both Fourth of July and Bastille Day (the French Independence Day, July 14) make for lots of fireworks and parades and consequently crowds. But be prepared for serious heat, humidity, dehydration, and



unofficial **TIP**

As for days of the week in general, avoid the park offering early entry on the Extra Magic Hours program. If you want to check out crowd conditions for the specific dates of your trip, check out our free Crowd Condition Calendar at www.touringplans.com. In addition to showing the anticipated crowd levels, the calendar also specifies the best park to go to and the park to avoid for each day of the year.

massive throngs. If you do want to visit during a major holiday or around a special event, such as Christmas, be sure to make your reservations well in advance—as much as a year in some cases—and confirm at least once.

WHAT *to* PACK

IN MOST CASES, PACKING for a Disney World vacation is pretty simple. Just follow the comfort rule. Shorts, T-shirts or polo shirts, and sweatshirts or sweaters will carry you well into December; a casual dress or reasonably neat pair of khakis will make you look downright respectable. The most important things to pack are comfortable shoes—two pairs at least, because wearing the same shoes during and following hours of walking is a good way to develop sore soles, if nothing worse. Do not make the teenager's mistake and wear super-heavy high-top athletic shoes that add 10 pounds and 20 degrees to your feet. Don't wear sandals that rub between the toes or anything new on your feet.

If comfortable shoes are the number-one priority, the second is clothes with expandable or forgiving waistlines. Even if you don't think you're going to eat much, the scent of food is constantly in the air (some of it intentionally blown into the streets, like the candy smell on Main Street in the Magic Kingdom), precisely to spark your appetite. Seasoned travelers know that a change in schedule can cause bloating as well as dehydration, paradoxically, and you don't want to find yourself holding your breath through Body Wars and feeling as if you're wearing two seat belts at once.

Women should abandon purses for waist packs or convertible totes, or even backpacks. There are fashionable and ergonomically designed versions these days, and your shoulders will thank you. Men might want to try waist packs, too, or at least consider thinning out the stuff they carry in their wallets, not so much because of pickpockets but because some attractions have molded seats or constraints that may make you uncomfortable.

Some people stuff backpacks with water, cameras, snacks, sunblock, and more, and with theme park prices, it's easy to see why. But you are more likely to lose something, have the camera fall out or be drenched if you're lugging more than you need. Take packet-size samples of sunblock, insect repellent (sometimes useful toward evening and especially when waiting for the bus), and protein bars and hang your camera around your neck.

Overall, the smaller the bag, and the easier to open, the better: all the parks now have airport-style security, and bags must be opened and examined, so if you can get by, as we do, with a money clip, park pass, and whatever else fits in your pockets, you'll save quite a bit of time. Get a purse or tote with one easy zipper if possible rather than several individual compartments.

A bathing suit is almost always useful; even in the cooler season, you may want to head for the spa or catch a few rays around the numerous pools. Not only that, but if you plan to do any of the "splashier" rides such as Kali River Rapids or Splash Mountain, you'll be happier in wet swimsuits than wet underwear. If you plan to play a few rounds or sets, your shorts and T-shirts can probably do double duty. If you really want to save time at the airport or save your arms in transit, you can even leave your golf clubs behind and rent them at the resort—that is, unless you want to play every day. If you use Disney's Magical Express, the clubs and your luggage will be delivered to your hotel room for you (you don't have to be there to receive them). If you don't have a small, lightweight camera, or you would like to have a video record of your trip without investing in a new camcorder, you can rent one at the parks or buy inexpensive disposable flash cameras, which actually do quite well outdoors. And since you can't take flash photos of attractions or much else indoors anyway, what's the difference?

Disney no longer processes prints from film, but has developed with Kodak a digital photography program called PhotoPass, which automatically makes your pictures available on the Internet (**www.disneyphotopass.com**). So you or friends and family can view or download the pictures into a photo book or DVD anytime in the next 30 days. The Disney PhotoPass photographers who roam the parks will give you the pass, which is a credit-card-size plastic bit with a magnetic strip, and take souvenir photos of you for free. Or you can print out images from your digital camera at Kodak Picture Maker kiosks at any of the four theme parks. And if you don't have a digital camera but find yourself inspired, they're for sale all over the World.

Of course, if you are doing the romantic thing, getting married, or celebrating an anniversary, you may need to dress up. Only Victoria & Albert's in the Grand Floridian requires gentlemen to wear a jacket (preferably a tie, as well) and women to dress appropriately (although they've been known to bow to ambiguously semicasual wear). Several

others ask men to wear at least soft collars (as in polo shirts) rather than T-shirts. And each resort hotel has at least one nicer restaurant, where better slacks or a dressier top might fit in better. In general, however, most restaurants are used to the casual resort look. (See more on this in Part Seven, *Drinking and Dining*.)

As for outerwear, try to get something with dual use. A lightweight rainproof top of some sort is essential any time from May Day to Labor Day, when the heat and humidity mean almost daily showers, however brief. And believe me, when the signs at Kali River Rapids warn that some riders may get wet, they're talking hair-dripping, underwear-drooping soaked. If you're not packing a poncho, wear a bathing suit or use the ride to cool off in the heat of the day. Small fold-up umbrellas are far preferable to the traditional sort, not only because you can stash them in your bag instead of hauling them around but also because a crowd of people wielding pointed implements or leaning them against souvenir counters can be dangerous. (And then there are the ones hung on chair arms that trip you up in the restaurants.) Also remember that you will be moving in and out of air-conditioning, so sleeves you can roll up and down or a scarf you can toss around your shoulders or across the back of your sun-baked neck may come in handy.

In spring and fall, you'll want a lightweight jacket or a sweater in case of nighttime breezes or you want to take the ferry instead of the monorail. Something along the lines of a trench coat with zip-in lining or walking coat with a sweater will usually do in winter, though it's smart to have the anti-wind accessories—gloves, earmuffs, hats, or scarves—tucked in your bag for the worst days. And nearly any time of the year, remember to pack sunblock and sunglasses; December sunburns can be just as painful as August's, and may even be exacerbated by windburn.

Just don't overload yourself. Frankly, years of travel (and packing) have convinced us that most people carry more clothes than they really need. As obvious as those easy-packing tips you see in travel magazines may be—pick things that don't wrinkle, pack lots of light layers, and so on—most visitors fill their suitcases with new outfits for every day. Who are you trying to impress? Plan your packing the way you'd plan everyday life at home—as if you were going to the mall or a movie and were going to be walking all day and climbing in and out of cars and buses. Besides, most people find it difficult to resist buying at least one sweatshirt

or souvenir T-shirt while they're visiting Walt Disney World, and then they have even more clothes to carry.

Of course, you should pack any prescription medications you need in your carry-on luggage. You should also bring a backup supply in case you spill, contaminate, or misplace medicine; also, bring a prescription for a replacement supply (see "Travelers with Special Needs," page 30, for pharmacy information). That's also a good idea for proving the prescription is actually yours. If you wear contact lenses or spectacles, a backup pair is a good idea. The other traveling musts are over-the-counter medications and ointments. People tend to drink more coffee and more cocktails on vacation, so be sure to pack headache medicines, Alka Seltzer, and the like; hotel shops are famous for marking prices up, and it saves space if you take only a few packets from your home supply. If you are allergic to bites or stings, remember the antihistamines. For scratches and small annoyances, a small tube of Neosporin or another antibiotic ointment is helpful. Be absolutely sure to pack bandage strips or moleskin and muscle-pain antidotes as well—blisters can ruin an otherwise wonderful trip. Some people swear by those little nylon footies stores put out for trying on shoes; wear a pair inside your regular socks, and they keep your feet from slipping and rubbing against your shoes.

The number of uses we have found over the years for zippered plastic bags is incredible, from keeping lotions and shampoos well away from clothes to storing bathing suits or sink-laundered underwear that didn't dry. The smaller ones are good for packing a sinkful or two of laundry detergent. They also keep silver from tarnishing, which means you can wear a little chain or pin without having to polish it every day in the humidity. The larger ones are essential for leftovers, because though the sit-down restaurants may have doggie bags, zippered plastic bags will come in very handy at the walk-up concessionaires, fruit markets, and carts. They can be filled with water and frozen overnight—as can bottles of water—to serve as ice packs the next day. They are good for sequestering those extra-smelly dirty socks from the cleaner clothes. They even work as emergency rain hats.

A few other tiny items that have proven extremely useful are packets of disposable stain remover, packaged wet naps, and a bandanna or handkerchief—an old-fashioned man's handkerchief, not a pretty little showpiece. Between bad weather, allergies, air-conditioning, damp bus seats, and so on, a good 12-inch square of cloth is a lifesaver. Even when

crowds are relatively thin, you are apt to be in close contact with a lot of ice-cream bars, barbecued turkey legs, cotton candy, fudge, etc.; and one of those towelette-size spot treatments can save you a lot of heartache and dry-cleaning money.

A tiny penlight, either of the sort that hangs on your keychain or even the credit card-size ones, may come in handy if you are trying to read maps at night or locate an unfamiliar key. (You may see parents of small children using small flashlights to reassure them in dark rides—which raises the question, why are the children being taken on the ride at all?—but Disney cast members try to discourage them. Also remember to be exceedingly careful about using even small flashlights in any of the attractions that include audio-animatronic characters, as they often employ lights as cues, and you may throw the programming off.) Wet hand wipes or sanitizer gel is good to have in your waist pack, especially when lines to the bathroom are long and you just want to wash your hands.

Earplugs come in handy, not just to avoid being awakened by the enthusiastic kids next door (or having your night cut short by the die-hard Pleasure Island veterans), but because parts of the Disney World transportation system kick off early; so you might wake up to a boat's horn or a bus's brakes. Over-the-bed lighting can be dim, so consider a battery-powered book light.

Cheap plastic ponchos are available all over the parks, generally for \$5 or \$6, but if you venture into one of the discount or club warehouse stores, you may find them for under \$1, already folded as small as shower caps. They're as useful for water rides as for afternoon showers.

As most of the hotel bathrooms are a little short on shelf and counter space, a divided plastic hanging container, like those sold for accessories or shoes, depending on the size of your toiletries, is useful because you can hang it over the shower curtain rod.

And finally, though there is not particularly a crime problem at Walt Disney World—at least not compared with most travel destinations (and remember, it is larger than a lot of cities)—there have been incidents of auto break-ins,



unofficial **TIP**

Also carry a couple of zippered plastic bags with you on days you plan to visit the parks, good weather or bad, to protect your wallets, cameras, and other valuables from the spray and occasional drenching doled out by flume and tube rides. And if you collect autographs from Disney characters, remember they smear! So tuck your book and pen in the bag, too.

pickpockets, and even rare room intrusions; so there is no good reason to walk around flashing a lot of expensive jewelry or worrying about leaving your earring at the pay phone. Leave it at home and stick to the costume stuff, or leave it in the hotel safe except for the big party. That way, even if you lose an earring, you can replace it quickly and cheaply at the next vendor cart. You might be surprised by what nice-looking silver you can find in the World.

WHERE *to* GET INFORMATION

THE PROBLEM IS NOT GETTING INFORMATION, it's not getting an overload. Aside from "authorized" Internet sites, there are many unofficial sites dedicated to travel information, new rides, renovations, rumors, and such. In general, a good place to start your search is **www.disney.com**. From there you can get accommodation rates, information on booking cruises, restaurant information, and so on by browsing the links. You can even make your reservations directly through the Web site, if you don't mind giving your credit-card number to a computer (not that Disney is any less safe than any other online shopping mall, but you never know). Other Web sites include:

www.mousesavers.com

www.mousetyme.com

www.mouseplanet.com

www.wdwinfo.com

www.disneydreams.com

www.allearsnet.com

In addition, almost any travel site on the Internet will have at least a fair amount of Disney World data, and so will the usual travel suspects, such as the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the airlines serving central Florida.

For complete but not exhaustive details on the various hotels, their rooms, rates, and current packages, stop by an American Express office or other travel agency and get the Walt Disney World vacation brochure, or call the Walt Disney Travel Company at ☎ 800-327-2996 or 407-828-3232 and have it mailed to you. (This is not a good bet if you're planning to go within 90 days, however, as it may take several weeks to arrive.) If you already know pretty much about when you want to travel and where you want to stay, you can call the Walt Disney World operators at ☎ 407-W-DISNEY (934-7639), set up your vacation, and give them a credit-card deposit. You can buy your Park Hopper passes and admission tickets at the same time.

If you are staying in a hotel within Disney World borders (and you probably should, as you'll see in the next chapter),

there will be newsletters in your hotel room with current park hours, special events, and so on. A few of the restaurants are much harder to get into than the rest, among them Victoria & Albert's at the Grand Floridian, the American wine-savvy California Grill at the Contemporary, Fulton's Crab House at Pleasure Island, the Coral Reef in the Seas with Nemo and Friends Pavilion at Epcot, Jiko in the Animal Kingdom Lodge and Villas, the Flying Fish Cafe at the BoardWalk, bluezoo in the Dolphin, and Artist Point in the Wilderness Lodge. There is a special dinner-reservations line to book seats as much as two years in advance, though most restaurants cut the list off shorter. Call ☎ 407-WDW-DINE (939-3463). To make reservations at restaurants at the resort hotels once you've arrived, stop by the Guest Relations area in your hotel lobby when you check in or dial directly from your in-house telephone.

HOW *to* CUT COSTS

ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO CUT COSTS is to visit when hotel accommodations are the least expensive. You can generally find bargain rates, though not always at all resort hotels, in January and early February, July, into October, and after Thanksgiving until Christmas week. These extra-value periods often coincide, not surprisingly, with school schedules, when most families aren't free to take vacations, so for those traveling without kids, they are doubly ideal.

Also, if you're planning to fly into Orlando, see if there's an airfare/accommodations package that suits you. **Delta** is the "official" Walt Disney World airline (call Delta Vacations at ☎ 800-221-6666 or visit www.delta.com), but sometimes you'll see other travel packages advertised. You may wish to ask your travel agent.

The Magic Your Way plan, introduced as part of the 50th-anniversary "Happiest Celebration on Earth," is aimed primarily at families with children, but it may have advantages for adults who are staying more than three days. Although most of the publicity focuses on the relative bargains available by staying at the value-priced resorts, there are packages available at all levels of accommodations. It can include a "deluxe" dining program for about \$70 per adult that covers three meals a day (entree, dessert, and nonalcoholic beverage for breakfast, lunch, and dinner), plus an appetizer at dinner and a refillable mug. "Signature" restaurant dinners count as two dinners, but Victoria & Albert's does not participate in the program.

To customize the Magic Your Way package, check the shopping cart–style menu at **www.disneyworld.com**.

If you're not staying that long, or don't plan to spend all your time in the parks, spread it out. You may save a little on various park passes by buying in advance (see next section), but you should also consider whether you will actually need to enter the theme parks on the day you arrive or the day you check out. Some packages offer multiday passes that include those two days, when frankly, you might be happy to do with a dip in the pool and dinner.

Other memberships or jobs can be useful as well. See if your hotel offers any **AAA** or **AARP** discounts; some passes and tickets purchased through AAA are 5 to 10% less expensive, and they offer small bonuses such as free Cokes in “secret” AAA lounges—more valuable on hot days than it sounds. (If you get a AAA Diamond pass for your auto, you can park in specially marked areas near where the trains drop off riders, though you will still have to pay the parking fee.) Active or retired military personnel and their families are entitled to stay at the Shades of Green resort, which is near the golf courses and may be particularly ideal for older vets. Shades guests get discounts on greens fees (up to 50% in value season) and 10% off park admissions; there is shuttle-bus transportation to the Transportation and Ticket Center (TTC); and there are VCRs in each room with a video “vending machine.” If the resort is full, there may be some discounted accommodations made available at other Disney hotels. Call the resort directly at ☎ 407-824-3400 or 888-593-2242, or visit **www.shadesofgreen.org**.

Another way to save money is to figure out just how convenient and/or luxurious you want your accommodations to be. After all, if you're not doing much more than showering and sleeping at your hotel, you don't need turndown service. If you decide to go for the cheapest room, you can ask about being shifted to a room with a better view when you check in, and it may not cost you anything. But if you're planning a honeymoon, you may want that grand piano. For more on hotels, see Part Two, Where to Stay.


Ask about any special packages or promotions, making sure the packages cover what you want to do. For instance, there are holiday packages that include special performances in the pre-Christmas weeks and even packages aimed at golfing fans (see Part Five, Sports and Recreation). Sometimes, hotels will offer an extra night for free if you stay a certain number of days, just the way rental-car companies do. This

has been true in prime season recently because of the general downturn in tourism.

Consider juggling your dining schedule. Food and drink are among the biggest items on a Disney World vacation budget, just because there is so much to buy. If you're planning to spend the day touring the World Showcase at Epcot, for instance, you'll probably end up at least nibbling several cuisines, so don't reserve a table for a big dinner that night. Eat a big meal at lunch occasionally; most restaurants have similar portions but smaller prices during the day. Don't forget to stuff one of those zippered plastic bags into your pocket before you leave your room, in case you end up buying fruit or an egg roll or the like from a vendor and want to hang on to the leftovers. (Have you seen the size of those barbecued turkey legs? Five dollars and fifty cents and you're as stuffed as a . . . well, you know.)

You'll save a surprising amount of pocket change if you carry your own water. Refill those plastic bottles at the drinking fountains and you'll not only stave off dehydration and take the edge off your appetite, but you'll also save \$2 or even \$3 per bottle. WDW mugs are good for unlimited soft-drink refills (namely, Coca-Cola products) in your hotel, including the pool bars; they cost about \$12, but if you take your caffeine seriously, it will pay you back in a day or two, as otherwise the drinks are \$2.50 a pop.

Finally, make sure that you really want to see everything on the menu, entertainment-wise. The truth is, you cannot see everything at Walt Disney World. You can't even see everything really worth seeing, not if you want to enjoy it. Do you absolutely have to play a round of golf when you already belong to a country club back home? Must you get a body treatment at the spa? Why pay for tickets to one of the water parks when your hotel has at least one swimming pool and probably several? Why pay to hang around Pleasure Island with the rest of the would-be hipsters when you can stroll Disney's West End or the BoardWalk for only the cost of the occasional cover or cocktail? Make some of your choices now, and the rest will be easier to make later.

 **unofficial TIP**
Don't be embarrassed to take doggie bags. If you don't think you'll eat them the next day, ask the front desk about having a mini-refrigerator brought to your room; it costs about \$5 to \$10 a day, but it might save you much more than that. Or put ice in the sink. (Check the minibar if you have one in your hotel room; it may have a little extra space, and the Vacation Club hotels usually have refrigerators in the larger accommodations.)



WALT DISNEY WORLD ADMISSION OPTIONS

IN AN EFFORT TO ACCOMMODATE VACATIONS of various durations and activities, Disney offers a number of admission options to its theme parks. These options range from the basic One-Day, One-Park ticket, good for a single entry into any one of Disney's theme parks, to the top-of-the-line Premium Annual Pass, good for 365 days of admission into every theme and water park Disney operates, plus DisneyQuest and Pleasure Island.

The sheer number of ticket options available makes it difficult and, yes, daunting for a family to sort out which option represents the least expensive way to see and do everything they want. Finding the optimum admission, or combination of admissions, however, could save the average family a nice little bundle.

HELP IS ON THE WAY!

TO SIMPLIFY THINGS, we tried to define guidelines to help you choose the best ticket options for your vacation. After a day or so, we realized that a handful of general guidelines was an impossible task, so we wrote a computer program to figure it out. You can use the program to determine your best ticket options by visiting our Web site, www.touringplans.com. The program takes into account discounts for Florida residents, members of the military, and families able to take advantage of advance-purchase tickets. All you have to do is answer a few simple questions relating to the theme parks you intend to visit, whether you intend to stay at a Disney or non-Disney hotel, and so on (nothing personal). The program will then identify the four least-expensive ticket options for your vacation.

MAGIC YOUR WAY

IN JANUARY 2005, WALT DISNEY WORLD pretty much chucked its entire panoply of admission options and introduced a completely new array of theme-park tickets in a program called Magic Your Way. The new scheme applies to both one-day and multiday passports and begins with a Base Ticket (also referred to in some Disney literature as a Starter Pass). Features that were previously bundled with certain tickets, such as the ability to visit more than one park per day (park hopping) or the inclusion of admission to Disney's minor venues (Typhoon Lagoon, Blizzard Beach, Pleasure

Island, DisneyQuest, and the like), are now available as individual add-ons to the Base Ticket.

As before, there is a volume discount. The more days of admission you purchase, the lower the cost per day. Base Tickets can be purchased from one to up to ten days. The Base Ticket admits you to exactly one Disney theme park per day. Unlike with Disney's previous multiday tickets, you cannot use a Base Ticket to visit more than one park per day.

Under the old system, unused days on multiday passports were good indefinitely. Now passes expire 14 days from the first day of use. If you purchase a Four-day Base Ticket on June 1 and use it that day for admission to the Magic Kingdom, you'll be able to visit a single Walt Disney World theme park on any of your three remaining days between June 2 and June 15. After that, the ticket expires and any unused days will be lost. Through another add-on, however, you can avoid the 14-day expiration and wind up with a ticket that's valid forever. More on that later.

BASE-TICKET ADD-ON OPTIONS

THREE ADD-ON OPTIONS ARE OFFERED with the Base Ticket, each at an additional cost:

PARK HOPPING Adding this feature to your Base Ticket allows you to visit more than one theme park per day. The cost is a flat \$48 (tax included) on top of the Base Ticket price and covers the total number of days' admission you buy. It's an exorbitant price for one or two days but becomes more affordable the longer you stay. As an add-on to a Seven-Day Base Ticket, the \$48 flat fee would work out to \$7 per day for park-hopping privileges. If you want to visit the Magic Kingdom in the morning and dine at Epcot in the evening, this is the feature to request.

NO EXPIRATION DATE Adding this option to your ticket means that unused admissions to the major theme parks and the swimming parks, as well as other minor venues, never expire. If you added this option to a Seven-Day Base Ticket and used only four days this year, the remaining three days could be used for admission at any date in the future. The No Expiration option ranges from \$16 with tax for a two-day ticket to \$101 for tickets with seven or more days. This option is not available on one-day tickets.

WATER PARK FUN AND MORE These are single admissions to one of Disney's water parks (Blizzard Beach and Typhoon Lagoon), DisneyQuest, Disney's Wide World of Sports, or

Magic Your Way Admission Chart

TICKET TYPE

7-DAY	6-DAY	5-DAY	4-DAY	3-DAY	2-DAY	1-DAY
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BASE TICKET ADULTS

\$233	\$231	\$228	\$226	\$216	\$148	\$76
\$33/day	\$39/day	\$46/day	\$57/day	\$72/day	\$74/day	—

PARK HOPPER ADD-ON

\$48	\$48	\$48	\$48	\$48	\$48	\$48
\$7/day	\$8/day	\$10/day	\$12/day	\$16/day	\$24/day	\$48/day

WATER PARK FUN AND MORE (WPFAM)

\$53 for 6 visits	\$53 for 5 visits	\$53 for 4 visits	\$53 for 4 visits	\$53 for 3 visits	\$53 for 3 visits	\$53 for 3 visits
\$9/visit	\$11/visit	\$13/visit	\$13/visit	\$18/visit	\$18/visit	\$18/visit

NO EXPIRATION ADD-ON

\$101	\$69	\$64	\$48	\$21	\$16	n/a
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All prices include tax and are rounded to the nearest dollar.

Pleasure Island. The cost is a flat \$53, and the number of admissions per ticket is tied to the number of days' admission you buy. One-, two-, and three-day tickets come with three admissions; four- and five-day tickets get four admissions; six-day tickets merit five admissions; and six admissions are accorded to seven- through ten-day tickets. The number of admissions is fixed. You cannot, for example, purchase a Ten-day Base Ticket with only three admissions or a Three-day Base Ticket with four admissions. You can, however, skip the Plus Pack entirely and buy an individual admission to any of these minor parks.

The foregoing add-ons are available for purchase in any combination (except for No Expiration add-on on one-day tickets). If you buy a Base Ticket and decide sometime later that you want one or more of the options, you can, at full price, upgrade the Base Ticket to add the feature(s) you desire.

ANNUAL PASSES An Annual Pass provides unlimited use of the major theme parks for one year. An add-on is available to provide unlimited use of the minor parks. Annual Pass holders also get perks, including free parking and seasonal offers such as room-rate discounts at Disney resorts. The Annual Pass is not valid for special events, such as admission to Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party. Tax included, Annual Passes run

\$462 for adults and \$407 for children ages 3 to 9. A Premium Annual Pass, at \$595 for adults and \$525 for children ages 3 to 9, is also available. The Premium Annual Pass provides unlimited admission to Pleasure Island, Blizzard Beach, Typhoon Lagoon, DisneyQuest, and the Wide World of Sports complex, in addition to the four major theme parks. In addition to Annual Passes, Florida residents are eligible for discounts on one-day theme-park Base Tickets (about 10%) as well as on various add-on options.

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THE NEW TICKETS

FIRST, HAVE A REALISTIC IDEA of what you want out of your vacation. As with anything, it doesn't make sense to pay for options you'll never use. A Seven-Day Base Ticket with six WPFAM admissions might seem like a wonderful idea, but actually trying to visit all those parks in a week in July might end up feeling more like Navy SEAL training. If you're going to make only one visit to a water park, DisneyQuest, or Pleasure Island, you're almost always better off purchasing that admission separately, rather than as an add-on.

Next, think carefully about paying for the No Expiration option. An inside source reports that fewer than one in ten admission tickets with unused days are ever reused at a Disney theme park. The rest are misplaced, discarded, or forgotten. Unless you are absolutely certain you'll be returning to Walt Disney World within the next year and have identified a safe place to keep those unused tickets, we don't think the additional cost is worth the risk. (We've lost a few of these passes ourselves.) And we'd avoid altogether the No Expiration option on Base Tickets of less than five days.

WHERE TO PURCHASE MAGIC YOUR WAY TICKETS

YOU CAN BUY YOUR ADMISSION PASSES on arrival at Walt Disney World or purchase them in advance. Admission passes are available at Walt Disney World resorts and theme parks. Passes are also available at some non-Disney hotels, certain Walt Disney World-area grocery stores, and through independent ticket brokers. Offers of free or heavily discounted tickets abound, but they generally require you to attend a time-share sales presentation.

Disney offers discounts of around \$7 to \$12 on certain multiday tickets if you buy them in advance from its Web site. Visit **www.disneyworld.com** for more details.

If you're trying to keep costs to an absolute minimum, consider using an online ticket wholesaler, such as **www.mapleleaftickets.com** or **www.theofficialticketcenter.com**, especially for trips with five or more days in the theme parks. All tickets sold are brand new, and savings can range from \$7 to more than \$25, depending on the ticket and options chosen.

The Official Ticket Center and Maple Leaf Tickets offer discounts on tickets for almost all central Florida attractions, including Disney, Universal, SeaWorld, and Cirque du Soleil. Discounts for the major theme parks are about 6%. Tickets for other attractions are more deeply discounted.

Finally, if all this is too confusing, our Web site will help you navigate all of the new options and find you the least expensive tickets for your vacation. Visit **www.touringplans.com** for more details.

For Additional Information on Passes

If you have a question or concern regarding admissions that can be addressed only through a person-to-person conversation, call Disney Ticket Services at ☎ 407-827-4166. If you need current prices or routine information, you're better off calling ☎ 407-824-4321 for recorded admission info or visiting **www.disneyworld.com**.

Special Passes

Walt Disney World offers a number of special and situational passes that are not known to the general public and are not sold at any Disney World ticket booth. The best information we've found on these passes is available on the Internet at **www.mousesavers.com**.

FASTPASS

YOUR HANDOUT PARK MAP, as well as signage at respective attractions, will tell you which attractions are included in the FASTPASS program. Attractions operating FASTPASS will have a regular line and a FASTPASS line. A sign at the entrance will tell you how long the wait is in the regular line. If the wait is acceptable to you, hop in line. If the wait seems too long, you can insert your park admission pass into a special FASTPASS machine and receive an appointment time (for sometime later in the day) to come back and ride. When you return at the appointed time, you will enter the FASTPASS line and proceed directly to the attraction's preshow or boarding area with no further wait. There is no extra charge to use FASTPASS.

FASTPASS doesn't eliminate the need to arrive at the theme park early. Because each park offers a limited number of FASTPASS attractions, you still need to start early if you want to see as much as possible in a single day. Plus, as we'll discuss later, there is a limited supply of FASTPASSes available for each attraction on a given day. If you don't arrive until the middle of the afternoon, you might find that all the FASTPASSes have been distributed to other guests. FASTPASS does make it possible to see more with less waiting than ever before, and it's a great benefit to those who like to sleep late or who enjoy an afternoon or evening at the theme parks on their arrival day at Walt Disney World. It also allows you to postpone wet rides, like Kali River Rapids at the Animal Kingdom or Splash Mountain at the Magic Kingdom, until the warmer part of the day.

UNDERSTANDING THE FASTPASS SYSTEM When you insert your admission pass into a FASTPASS time clock, the machine spits out a small slip of paper about two-thirds the size of a credit card—small enough to fit in your wallet but also small enough to lose easily. Printed on the paper is the name of the attraction and a specific one-hour time window, for example 1:15 to 2:15 p.m., during which you can return to enjoy the ride.

When you report back to the attraction during your one-hour window, you'll enter a line marked "FASTPASS Return" that will route you more or less directly to the boarding or preshow area. Each person in your party must have his or her own FASTPASS and be ready to show it to the Disney cast member at the entrance of the FASTPASS Return line. Before you enter the boarding area or theater, another cast member will collect your FASTPASS.

You can obtain a FASTPASS anytime after a park opens, but the FASTPASS Return lines do not begin operating until 45 to 90 minutes after opening. Thus, if the Magic Kingdom opens at 9 a.m., the FASTPASS time-clock machines will also be available at 9 a.m., and the FASTPASS Return line will begin operating at about 9:45 a.m.

WHEN TO USE FASTPASS Except as discussed below, there's no reason to use FASTPASS during the first 30 to 40 minutes a park is open. Lines for most attractions are quite manageable during this period, and this is the only time of day when FASTPASS attractions exclusively serve those in the regular line. Regardless of time of day, however, if the wait in the regular line at a FASTPASS attraction is 25 to 30 minutes or less, we recommend joining the regular line.

FASTPASS RULES Disney amended the rules so that now you can obtain a second FASTPASS two hours or less from the time the first one was issued. Rules aside, the real lesson here is to check out the posted return time before obtaining a FASTPASS. If the return time is hours away, forgo the FASTPASS. Especially in the Magic Kingdom, there will be a number of other FASTPASS attractions where the return time is only an hour or so away.

FASTPASS Guidelines

- Don't mess with FASTPASS unless it can save you 30 minutes or more.
- If you arrive after a park opens, obtain a FASTPASS for your preferred FASTPASS attraction first thing.
- Do not obtain a FASTPASS for a theater attraction until you have experienced all the FASTPASS rides on your itinerary (using FASTPASS at theater attractions usually requires more time than using the standby line).
- Always check the FASTPASS return period before obtaining your FASTPASS.
- Obtain FASTPASSES for Rock 'n' Roller Coaster at Disney-MGM, Mission: Space, and Test Track at Epcot, and Winnie the Pooh, Peter Pan's Flight, Space Mountain, and Splash Mountain at the Magic Kingdom as early in the day as practicable.
- Don't depend on FASTPASSES being available for rides after 2 p.m. during busier times of year.
- Make sure everyone in your party has his or her own FASTPASS.
- Be mindful that you can obtain a second FASTPASS as soon as you enter the return period for your first FASTPASS or after two hours from issuance, whichever comes first.
- Be mindful of your FASTPASS return-time slot and plan intervening activities accordingly.

TRAVELERS *with* SPECIAL NEEDS

THE DISNEY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN WORKING for a long time to make the parks handicapped-friendly, even if not absolutely everything can be made accessible. (The Animal Kingdom may have been the first totally accessible theme park ever created, and as many of even the older attractions as can be modified are being updated.) If you use a wheelchair, for example, you and the rest of your party are nearly always allowed to bypass the crowds by using special

gates at the monorail, trains, and so on—another reason so many visitors who are not truly handicapped tend to insist on borrowing wheelchairs. Many, but not all, resort buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts. Restrooms are accessible, and most restaurants are as well. Every resort hotel has at least some accessible guest rooms. Each park rents wheelchairs (\$10 plus a refundable \$5 deposit) and/or miniature electric carts (\$35 plus a \$5 deposit), and your rental receipt is good for the whole day, meaning you can elect to leave your wheelchair as you leave one park, ride the monorail, and then get another chair without paying twice. If you need a wheelchair for an extended stay, you can prepay at a rate of \$8 per day and show your ticket at the pickup stations. Ferries are accessible as well.

Not all attractions are entirely accessible; some have auxiliary entrances and require guests to transfer to the ride system from their chairs. You must be able to make the transfer yourself or with help from a member of your party: Disney cast members are not allowed to physically shift disabled guests.

There are Braille guidebooks and maps of the parks available, some closed captioning, and some signed theatrical performances every day. You can arrange for an interpreter to accompany you to a theme park if you call a week ahead. In fact, following an agreement between Disney and the Justice Department, the company has been adding sign-language interpreters, captioning systems, audiotaped tours, handheld hearing aids (now newly enhanced for amplified audio), and other audiovisual aids at rides and shows; ask cast members for assistance. The handheld devices, about the size of a BlackBerry or Palm Pilot, can be picked up at any of the four theme parks; they're free, but you have to put down a \$100 deposit. Disney techs are working on similar aids with audio descriptions of attractions for the visually handicapped. The maps of each theme park also have symbols that warn you where or at which attractions you may have to transfer in and out of your wheelchair or cart or can't use at all.

All Disney parking lots have designated handicapped parking areas. In addition, there is at least one TDD phone for the hearing impaired at the Guest Relations office outside all the major theme parks, also marked by symbols on the park maps; most of the pay phones have optional volume controls (and a wheelchair-height phone as well). There is a whole booklet of information for visitors with impaired sight, hearing, or mobility; call Specialized Functions at ☎ 407-939-7807 (TTY 407-939-7670), or pick one up at Guest Relations when you rent wheelchairs.

Guide dogs and other service animals are permitted in the parks, although they are restricted from some more potentially unsettling attractions. Otherwise, it's the kennel for the pooch, even for Paris Hilton's dog.

As mentioned, Disney does not impose any needs test on those who use the wheelchairs or electric carts, but if you do see someone using a chair for pushing packages, or jumping in and out when they don't think Disney employees are watching, you can either report it to a nearby greeter or just make your disapproval known.

Those guests with various other sorts of injuries, such as neck or back problems, or those prone to vertigo or motion sickness, should heed all the posted warnings at the more phys-

ically challenging rides, such as Star Tours, Dinosaur, Test Track, *The Twilight Zone* Tower of Terror, and Body Wars. Ask the cast members; in some cases, they may suggest you sit in the middle of a car instead of the front and so on.

Smoking is prohibited inside any building, dining area, or waiting area (meaning the queues at attractions) and aboard buses, monorail cars, and ferry boats. But

smoking is not banned along the streets, at open-air cafes or garden spots, bars, swimming pools, and such.

There are first-aid stations in each of the big four parks: next to the Crystal Palace in the Main Street area of the Magic Kingdom; in the Odyssey Center on the left as you move from Epcot toward the World Showcase; in the Guest Relations building at Disney-MGM Studios; and near the base of the Tree of Life at the Animal Kingdom. If you have a medical emergency, doctors are on call for 24-hour service; dial 911, contact the hotel operator for assistance, or call **Sand Lake Hospital ☎ 407-351-8500** for medical help.

If you lose your prescription medication, **Turner Drugs** (☎ 407-828-8125) will get you a refill and have it delivered to your hotel, but you will probably need your doctor's phone number for confirmation and they won't bill your insurance. Diabetics should ask to have their insulin refrigerated at resort hotels.

Finally, those with special dietary requirements, including medical restrictions and kosher or vegetarian needs, can dine at most table-service restaurants with 24 hours' advance notice (although it doesn't hurt to call ahead, especially for the fancier restaurants); however, there are more vegetarian options available these days on a full-time basis if you ask around.

 **unofficial TIP**
If you are allergy-sensitive, watch out for spring; after all, if you think about it, Walt Disney World is one of the largest cultivated gardens around.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS

UNDER THE VISA WAIVER PROGRAM (VWP), citizens of 27 countries do not need a U.S. visa for business or tourism visits of less than 90 days. However, if you will be receiving any compensation for your services or activities (for example, lectures, presentations, and the like), you may need to apply for a visa; you may also apply for one if you feel more confident that way. Contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for more information.

To enter the United States without a visa, VWP travelers must have a machine-readable passport, and those issued after October 26, 2005, must have an integrated chip with information from the e-Passport data page. There may be a small border fee for those entering at a land port of entry.


Below is a list of the 27 VWP countries. For additional details and updates on the Visa Waiver Program, see the State Department's Visa Waiver Program Web site at **travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html**.

Andorra	Austria	Brunei	Finland	Germany
Iceland	Italy	Liechtenstein	Monaco	New Zealand
Norway	San Marino	Slovenia	Swede	United
Australia	Belgium	Denmark	France	Kingdom
Ireland	Japan	Luxembourg	Netherlands	
Portugal	Singapore	Spain	Switzerland	

Most citizens of Canada may enter without a visa by showing both proof of identity and citizenship; for the exceptions, see the Visa Web site. Permanent residents of Canada will need a visa unless their country of citizenship is listed in the VWP above. Citizens and permanent residents of Mexico generally need a nonimmigrant visa or Border Crossing Card. Citizens of Bermuda do not need a visa unless they have some criminal ineligibility; they need only proof of identity and (British) citizenship.

Check with the local consulate to see whether travelers from your country are currently required to have any inoculations; there are no set requirements to enter the United States, but if there has been any sort of epidemic in your homeland, there may be temporary restrictions.

If you need to exchange foreign currency, you can either do so at the airport or wait until you get to Walt Disney World. You may exchange money at the American Express offices outside the main Epcot entrance

 **unofficial TIP**
If you take prescription drugs containing narcotics or require injection by syringe, be sure to get a doctor's signed prescription and instructions.

and in the lobby of the Contemporary Resort hotels, or at the SunTrust Bank branches located on Main Street in the Magic Kingdom and across the street from the Disney Village Marketplace.

The dollar is the basic unit of American monetary exchange, and the entire system is decimal. The smaller sums are represented by coins. One hundred cents (or pennies, as the one-cent coin is known) equal one dollar; five cents is a nickel (20 nickels to a dollar); the ten-cent coin is called a dime (ten dimes to a dollar); and the 25-cent coin is called a quarter (four to a dollar). There are also dollar coins, which are roughly the same size as a quarter, but are gold colored rather than silver. Beginning with one dollar, U.S. money comes in bills in denominations of \$1, \$2 (rare), \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and so on, although you are unlikely to want to carry more than a few hundred dollars at a time. Unlike the currency in some countries, these bills are the same size and pretty much the same colors, but the numbers are prominent. Stick to \$20 bills for taxicabs and such; drivers rarely make change for anything larger.

Guide maps to the theme parks are available in French, German, Portuguese, Japanese, Spanish, and Italian. Even Pal Mickey, the stuffed tell-all doll who relates trivia and, more usefully, wait times, speaks six languages. Foreign language assistance is available at most Guest Relations offices (at Epcot's World Showcase, of course, there are native speakers at every "nation"). Some menus, especially at the nicer restaurants, are available in other languages. To arrange for an interpreter, call ☎ 407-824-4321.

Incidentally, international visitors in particular may be surprised to discover that smoking is prohibited in most buildings and restaurants throughout Walt Disney World and elsewhere in the United States: be sure to observe all signs, listen to announcements, or ask cast members whether smoking is permitted before you light up.

A CALENDAR *of* SPECIAL EVENTS

YOU DON'T REALLY NEED TO PICK A HOLIDAY for your trip to Walt Disney World, even if you are a parade freak. With a half-dozen parades, mini-concerts, light and laser shows, and fireworks displays every day, you'd be hard-pressed to avoid one. But if you want a little extra fun, and like to party with several thousand of your closest friends,

you might consider either **St. Patrick's Day**, which is, of course, especially popular on Pleasure Island, or **Halloween**, a personal favorite, when as many visitors as cast members get in costume, the various chefs seem to compete for jack-o'-lantern honors, and there are parties and special dinners all around. As we noted before, you can enjoy most of the **Christmas** fun, including the 4 million lights of the Osborne Family Christmas display at Disney-MGM Studios, candlelight processions, holiday menus, and even special Santa Mickey (et al.) merchandise for a lot less money and with a lot fewer companions in the weeks before the day itself.

You should take these special events into increased consideration as far as planning is concerned, however, because they're not exactly secrets anymore. For example, the **Epcot International Food and Wine Festival** has expanded to six weeks, and that alone should tell you something. Not only that, but tickets go on sale in early August, and the biggest events, such as the weekly Party for the Senses super-tastings with entertainment by Cirque du Soleil, sell out very quickly.

Walt Disney World also hosts an increasing number of **pro- and high-level amateur sporting events** every year (they are one of the reasons the corporation constructed the huge Wide World of Sports complex) and some intriguing exhibitions and holiday celebrations as well. These have become sort of bargain indulgences, too, because fans of the NBA or Major League Baseball can see the hot prospects polishing their moves at the predraft camps or spring training, and at least some of the events are open to the public.

Following are their approximate dates; if any interest you, contact the Walt Disney World reservations folks for specific days. These events are not necessarily for Disney World visitors only, so ask if an event requires tickets and try to arrange to purchase them with your passes or other advance orders; otherwise you may find yourself locked out. Or ask about sports events packages by calling Disney Sports Travel at ☎ 407-939-7810. For AAU and other amateur competitions held at the Wide World of Sports, call ☎ 407-934-7200 or visit **www.aausports.org**.

Daily parade times are listed in the in-house publications, on the daily schedule boards within the parks themselves, or you can call the central telephone bank from your hotel room.

Incidentally, although we don't have space to mention most of them in this book, there are also several interesting festivals and events in the greater Orlando area, such as the spring Shakespeare Festival and performances by the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra; if you are interested in other events,

contact the Orlando–Orange County Convention and Visitors Bureau at ☎ 407-363-5871.

January

WALT DISNEY WORLD MARATHON (mid-January) This 26.2-mile race and a companion half-marathon follow a different track each year through the various theme parks (although some participants have complained it's more back roads than amusement views) with crowds of early-morning supporters and even costumed characters. A two-day sports expo is part of the warm-up; for information and registration, visit www.disneyworldsports.com.

February

SPRING TRAINING AND PRESEASON BASEBALL (mid-February) The Atlanta Braves open spring training at the double-decker stadium in Disney's Wide World of Sports with a 16-game Grapefruit League schedule. Both ticket packages and single-game tickets are available.

DAYTONA 500 (mid-February) The track is on the outskirts of Orlando, and the race is often accompanied by celebrity events, so race crowds overlap with Disney World crowds, especially on airplanes.

MARDI GRAS (February or March) Another extended party night—"Parti Gras"—at Pleasure Island, with jazz and Cajun and Creole food usually scheduled for the weekend before as well as Fat Tuesday itself.

March

ST. PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATIONS (March 17) Pleasure Island and Raglan Road Pub in Downtown Disney. Be there, be seen, be green (and the morning after, you just might be). Note that when St. Patrick's falls on a weekend, the party may run all three days.

EPCOT INTERNATIONAL FLOWER & GARDEN FESTIVAL (mid-March through May) Topiaries, roses (10,000 bushes of them), specialty gardens, and arrangements, children's activities, plus behind-the-scenes tours, "Flower Power" concerts with classic rock/pop acts, lectures, and demonstrations.

EASTER PARADE (late March to mid-April) The Magic Kingdom's Main Street turns into Fifth Avenue for a day, with a huge parade, huge crowds, plenty of TV cameras, and late hours.

April

U.S. MEN'S CLAY COURT CHAMPIONSHIP (mid- to late April) Top-ranked tennis players in both singles and doubles com-

petitions kick off the American clay-court season at Wide World of Sports; www.usta.com.

May

NBA PRE-DRAFT CAMP (late May through early June) Drills, games, and strength training at Wide World of Sports (not open).

MINNIE MARATHON (weekends in May) Women's endurance celebration, with a fun-run miler, a 5K, and a 15K on the first weekend, the Danskin women's triathlon the second weekend, and the Ironman 70.3 Florida the third weekend. For information and registration, visit www.disneyworldsports.com.

June

GAY DAYS Since 1991, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) people from around the world have converged on and around the World in early June for a long weekend of events centered around the theme parks. Today, Gay Days attracts more than 135,000 GLBT visitors and their families and friends. Universal Studios, SeaWorld, and Busch Gardens also participate. For additional information, visit www.gaydays.com.

STAR WARS WEEKENDS (every Friday through Sunday in June) *Star Wars* fans and (second-rank) cast members trek to MGM for *Star*-studded weekend confabs with daily autograph sessions, Jedi training, trivia contests, behind-the-scenes anecdotes, and big nightly finales.

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL FIRST-YEAR PLAYER DRAFT (mid-June) at Wide World of Sports (open to the public).

July

INDEPENDENCE DAY (July 4) As you would expect, fireworks, flags, and patriotic bands at all theme parks except Animal Kingdom and including Pleasure Island (cover charge required) and Downtown Disney (free), but also huge crowds and hellacious temperatures.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS TRAINING CAMP (late July to early August) The Florida football team's scrimmages and drills are free to the public.

September

NATIONAL FANTASY FAN CLUB (around Labor Day) The convention to end all conventions for Disney fanatics: a combination seminar, expo, flea market, trivia super-pursuit, and family reunion.

NIGHT OF JOY (early to mid-September) Contemporary-Christian music festival, after-hours at Magic Kingdom (separate charge). For tickets and information, call ☎ 407-W-DISNEY.

SUSAN G. KOMEN RACE FOR THE CURE (early to mid-September). Timed 5K plus fun runs. For information or to register, visit www.komencentralflorida.com.

MICKEY'S NOT-SO-SCARY HALLOWEEN PARTY AND PARADE (mid-September through first weekend in November) After-hours at the Magic Kingdom on select dates (separate admission charge). Trick-or-treating, costume contests, seasonal parades, fortune-tellers, and special fireworks. Most attractions open. For tickets and information, call ☎ 407-W-DISNEY (934-7639).

WALT DISNEY WORLD TRIATHLON (late September) USA Triathlon—sanctioned event includes 1.5K swim, 40K bike ride, and 10K run at locations throughout Walt Disney World, plus a kids' triathlon. For information and registration, visit www.disneyworldsports.com.

EPCOT INTERNATIONAL FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL (late September through mid-November) A bacchanalian event with special wines (and beers), delicacies, tasting seminars, special reserve dinners at various park and hotel venues, and cooking demonstrations (as well as a 10K “run for the taste”). For tickets and information, call ☎ 407-WDW-FEST (939-3378).

October

WALT DISNEY WORLD—CHILDREN'S MIRACLE NETWORK CLASSIC (late October or early November) Some of the top names in golf compete for a \$1.5 million purse; call ☎ 407-835-2525. The Classic Club Pro-Am, held concurrently, is open to all Gold Classic Club members brave enough to tee up with the pros.

TWILIGHT ZONE TOWER OF TERROR 13K (Late October) After-hours at Disney-MGM Studios. This Halloween-style nighttime race, new in 2007, follows a young actress and her unlucky husband on a jog from the Hollywood Tower Hotel into . . . well, who knows? Also a 6.5K run. Entry fee includes glow-in-the-dark race shirt and access to after-hours party and attractions. For information and registration, visit www.disneyworldsports.com.

HALLOWEEN PARTY (October 30 and 31) At Downtown Disney (free, more family oriented) and Pleasure Island (admission charge).

November

SUPER SOAP WEEKEND (early November) If you have only *One Life to Live*, you'd better spend at least one weekend of it here, where you can see those soap heroes and heroines up close, quiz the writers, and slam the doors on a few familiar sets. Of course, since Disney owns ABC, you're going to run into only the casts of that network's serials, but because they're among the most popular, you'll be plenty busy. Call ☎ 407-824-4321 or 407-397-6808.

FESTIVAL OF THE MASTERS (early or mid-November) A huge art exposition and sale, including some fairly established names in glassmaking, photography, sculpture, jewelry, printing, and digital art, as well as children's activities and live entertainment from House of Blues and Cirque du Soleil, among others, at Downtown Disney. For more information, call ☎ 407-824-4321 or visit www.disneyworld.com/art.

DISNEY'S MAGICAL HOLIDAYS (mid-November through New Year's) The Christmas lights go up, the candlelight processions begin, concerts warm up, the trees are lit every night (the Osborne Family's Spectacle of Lights in MGM Studios has 4 million lights by itself), characters put on special holiday dinner shows, and the prices are right. Storytellers and Santas from other cultures fill Epcot, and fireworks go holidayish. (Hanukkah and Kwanzaa customs also observed.) Other popular programs include the Candlelight Processional, at 5, 6:45, and 8:15 p.m. nightly at the American Gardens Theatre in Epcot, which features a celebrity narrator retelling the Biblical story of Christmas with a choir and orchestra performing traditional music (no additional charge); and sleigh rides from Wilderness Lodge (separate admission charge). Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party, after-hours at the Magic Kingdom, includes caroling, hot chocolate, fireworks, and holiday parades, 7 p.m. to midnight from the weekend after Thanksgiving until shortly before Christmas (separate admission charge). For tickets and information, call ☎ 407-W-DISNEY (934-7639).

December

NEW YEAR'S EVE (December 31) Epcot's World Showcase, the Magic Kingdom, Pleasure Island, Disney-MGM Studios, and BoardWalk all host extended-hours special parties and fireworks, along with several of the resort hotels.