

A woman with blonde hair in a ponytail is performing a handstand in a large, modern gym with a wooden floor and large windows. She is balancing on an open book on the floor. The text 'PART 1' is centered above the main title 'PRACTICAL STUFF'. A large, diagonal watermark 'COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL' is overlaid across the image.

PART 1

# PRACTICAL STUFF

# PLANNING BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME



There's certainly no scarcity of information on Walt Disney World. There are more than 8,000 books in print (according to Amazon.com), hundreds of dedicated Web sites and blogs, numerous videos and DVDs, and a growing phalanx of podcasts pertaining to this well-known destination. And then, of course, there are "alternative methods" for finding out what you want to know.

We've boiled down the best sources of information on Walt Disney World to a manageable few, each described in this chapter. If you're interested in "alternative methods," we recommend *The Unofficial Guide to Channeling Deceased Members of the Disney Family*.

In addition to this guide, we recommend the following resources:

1. **THE UNOFFICIAL GUIDE TO WALT DISNEY WORLD** by Bob Sehlinger and Len Testa is the most comprehensive guide to Walt Disney World in print and contains field-tested touring plans that will save you more than four hours a day standing in line. The *Color Companion* is designed to work in conjunction with *The Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World*.

2. **THE WALT DISNEY TRAVEL COMPANY FLORIDA VACATIONS BROCHURE AND VIDEO/DVD** This resource describes Walt Disney World in its entirety, lists rates for all Disney resort hotels and campgrounds, and describes Disney World package vacations. The brochure and video/DVD are available from most travel agents or by calling the Walt Disney Travel Company at ☎ 407-828-8101 or 407-934-7639, or by visiting [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com). Be prepared to hold if you inquire by phone.

3. **THE DISNEY CRUISE LINE BROCHURE AND DVD** This brochure provides details on vacation packages that combine a cruise on the Disney Cruise Line with a stay at Walt Disney World. Disney Cruise Line also offers a free DVD that tells all you need to know about Disney cruises and then some. To obtain a copy, call ☎ 800-951-3532 or order online at [disneycruise.com](http://disneycruise.com).

4. **THE UNOFFICIAL GUIDE TO WALT DISNEY WORLD WEB SITE** Our Web site, [TouringPlans.com](http://TouringPlans.com), offers a free online trip organizer, more than 100 different touring plans, and updates on changes at Walt Disney World, among other features. The site is described more fully later in this chapter.

5. **ORLANDO MAGICARD** If you're considering lodging outside Walt Disney World or if you think you might patronize attractions and restaurants outside the World, it's worthwhile to obtain an Orlando Magicard, an Orlando Vacation Planning Kit, and the *Orlando Official Vacation Guide* (all free) from the Orlando Visitors Center. The Orlando Magicard can be conveniently downloaded from a new Web site, [orlandoinfo.com/magicard](http://orlandoinfo.com/magicard). To order the *Official Vacation Guide*, call ☎ 800-643-9492 (allow four weeks for delivery). For more information and materials, call ☎ 407-363-5872 or visit [visitorlando.com](http://visitorlando.com). Both telephone numbers are staffed during weekday business hours.

6. **FLORIDA ROOMSAVER GUIDE** Another good source of discounts on lodging, restaurants, and attractions throughout the state is the *Florida RoomSaver Guide*, published by Exit Information Guide. The guide is free, but you will be charged \$3 (\$5 shipping to Canada) for handling. To order, call ☎ 352-371-3948 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST, or go to [travelerdiscountguide.com](http://travelerdiscountguide.com). Similar guides to other states are available at the same number. The [roomsaver.com](http://roomsaver.com) Web site has hotel coupons that you can print off your computer.



22 7. **KISSIMMEE VISITOR'S GUIDE** This full-color visitors guide is one of the most complete available and is of particular interest to those who intend to book lodging outside Walt Disney World. The guide features ads for rental houses, time-shares, and condominiums, as well as a directory of attractions, restaurants, and other useful info. To receive a copy, call the Kissimmee Convention and Visitors Bureau at ☎ 800-327-9159, or check out [floridakiss.com](http://floridakiss.com).

8. **GUIDEBOOK FOR GUESTS WITH DISABILITIES** If you have disabled individuals in your family or group, check out each park's *Guidebook for Guests with Disabilities*, available online at [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com).

Request information as far in advance as possible, and allow four weeks for delivery. Follow up if you haven't received your materials within six weeks.

## Walt Disney World on the Web

Disney's official Web site, [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com), offers much of the same information as the Walt Disney Travel Company's vacation brochure, but the brochure has better pictures. Now you can purchase theme-park admission and make resort and dining reservations on the Internet. The site also offers online shopping, weather forecasts, and information on renovations and special events. Supposedly the Disney Web site

is updated daily, but we frequently find errors on it.



### Other Recommended Web Sites

*Unofficial Guide* coauthor Len Testa combs the Web looking for the best Disney sites. Here are his recommendations. If you surf while ironing, try not to incinerate the clothes.

### BEST OFFICIAL THEME-PARK SITE

The official Walt Disney World Web site ([disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com) or [disneyworld.disney.go.com](http://disneyworld.disney.go.com)) recently underwent its third major overhaul in four years. It gets our nod as the best official park Web site over the official sites for Universal Studios ([universalorlando.com](http://universalorlando.com)) and SeaWorld ([seaworld.com](http://seaworld.com)). All three sites contain information on ticket options, park hours, and the like, but Disney's site is the most comprehensive and best organized. On the minus side, however, the site remains bogged down by multimedia gimmickry that causes pages to load slower than Space Mountain's standby line in July.

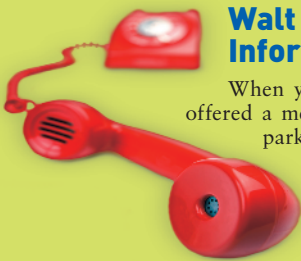
**BEST GENERAL UNOFFICIAL WALT DISNEY WORLD WEB SITE** Deb Wills's [AllEars.net](http://AllEars.net) is the first Web site we recommend to friends who are interested in making a trip to Disney World. It contains information on virtually every hotel, restaurant, and activity in the World. Want to know what a room at a Disney resort looks like before you book one? This site has photos—sometimes for each floor of a resort. The site is updated several times per week and includes menus from Disney restaurants, ticketing information, maps, and such.

**TOURINGPLANS.COM** The Web companion to our Disney World *Unofficial Guides* is chock-full of useful features. For instance, we've designed 140 Disney-theme-park touring plans, in addition to those featured in this book, that include variations for holidays, seniors, Extra Magic Hours, and those who like to sleep in. If our plans aren't quite what you're looking for, [TouringPlans.com](http://TouringPlans.com) lets you create your own, either from scratch or by using one of ours as a template (we'll automatically include restaurant information, hidden Mickeys, attraction trivia, park hours, and weather

forecasts), and share it with family and friends. As of this writing, around 30,000 reader-contributed plans are available on the Web site free of charge.

**BEST MONEY-SAVING SITE** We humbly suggest that Mary Waring's **mousesavers.com** is the kind of Web site for which the Internet was invented. The site keeps an updated list of discounts and reservation codes for use at Disney resorts. The codes are separated into categories such as "For anyone," "For residents of certain states," and so on. The site also lists discount codes for rental cars and non-Disney hotels in the Orlando area.

**BEST DISNEY DISCUSSION BOARDS** The best online discussions of all things Disney can be found at **mousepad.mouseplanet.com** and **disboards.com**. With tens of thousands of members and millions of posts, these discussion boards are the most active and popular on the Web. Posting a question on any aspect of an upcoming trip is likely to get you helpful responses from lots of folks who've been in the same situation.



## Walt Disney World Main Information Number

When you call the main information number, you will be offered a menu of options for recorded information on theme-park operating hours, recreation areas, shopping, entertainment complexes, tickets and admissions, resort reservations, and directions by highway and from the airport. If you are using a rotary telephone, your call will be forwarded to a Disney information representative. If you are using a touch-tone phone and have a question not covered by recorded information, press eight (8) at any time to speak to a Disney representative.

## Important Walt Disney World Addresses

**Compliments, Complaints, and Suggestions**  
Walt Disney World Guest Communications  
P. O. Box 10040  
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830-1000

**Convention and Banquet Information**  
Walt Disney World Resort South  
P.O. Box 10000  
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830-1000

**Merchandise Mail Order**  
(Guest Service Mail Order)  
P.O. Box 10070  
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830-0070

**Walt Disney World**  
**Central Reservations**  
P.O. Box 10100  
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830-0100

**Walt Disney World Info/**  
**Guest Letters/Letters to Mickey**  
P.O. Box 10040  
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830-0040

**Walt Disney World**  
**Educational Programs**  
P.O. Box 10000  
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830-1000

**Walt Disney World Ticket**  
**Mail Order**  
P.O. Box 10140  
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830-0140

24 **Important Walt Disney World Telephone Numbers**

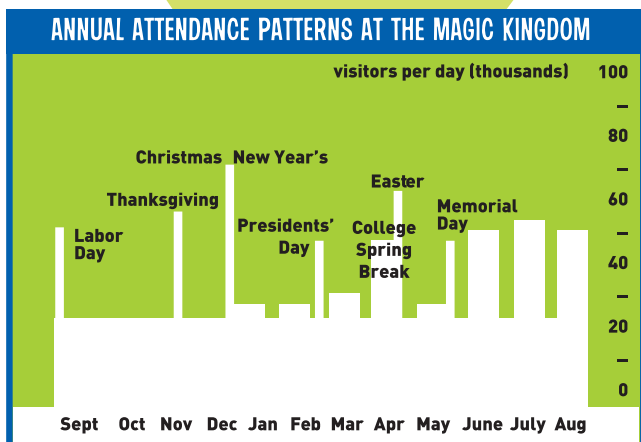
General Information	☎ 407-824-4321
Accommodations/Reservations	☎ 407-934-7639 or 407-824-8000
Convention Information	☎ 407-828-3200
Dining Advance Reservations	☎ 407-939-3463
Disabled Guests Special Requests	☎ 407-939-7807
Lost and Found	☎ 407-824-4245
Merchandise Guest Services Department	☎ 407-363-6200
Resort Dining and Recreational Information	☎ 407-939-3463
Telecommunication for the Deaf Reservations	☎ 407-939-7670
WDW Information	☎ 407-939-8255
Walt Disney Travel Company	☎ 407-828-3232

## WHEN TO GO TO WALT DISNEY WORLD

### Selecting the Time of Year for Your Visit

Walt Disney World is busiest Christmas Day through New Year's Day. Also extremely busy are Thanksgiving weekend, the week of Presidents' Day, the first full week of November, spring break for colleges, and the two weeks around Easter. What does busy mean? As many as 92,000 people have toured the Magic Kingdom alone on a single day during these peak times! While this level of attendance isn't typical, it is possible, and only those who absolutely cannot go at any other time should challenge the Disney parks at their peak periods.

The least busy time to visit is from after the Thanksgiving weekend until the week before Christmas. The next slowest times are November through the weekend preceding Thanksgiving, January 4 through the first week of February, and the week after Easter through early June. Late February, March, and early April are dicey. Though crowds have grown markedly in September and October as a result of special promotions aimed at locals and the international market, these months continue to be good for weekday touring at the Magic Kingdom, Disney's Hollywood Studios, and the Animal Kingdom, and for weekend visits to Epcot.







## The Downside of Off-season Touring

Though we strongly recommend going to Walt Disney World in the fall, winter, or spring, there are trade-offs for visiting at these times. The parks often open late and close early during the off-season. When they open as late as 9 a.m., everyone arrives at about the same time, which makes it hard to beat the crowds. A late opening coupled with an early closing drastically reduces the hours available to tour. Even when crowds are small, it's difficult to see a big park like the Magic Kingdom or Epcot between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Early closing (before 8 p.m.) also usually means that evening parades or fireworks are eliminated. And, because these are slow times at Disney World, some rides and attractions may be closed for maintenance or renovation. Finally, central Florida temperatures fluctuate wildly during the late fall, winter, and early spring; daytime lows in the 40s and 50s are not uncommon.

Given the choice, however, small crowds, bargain prices, and stress-free touring are well worth risking a little cold weather or a couple of closed attractions. So much easier is touring in the fall and other off periods that our research team, at the risk of being blasphemous, would advise taking children out of school for a week at those times rather than battling the summer crowds. We should tell you, however, that teachers don't like this idea one little bit.

## Crowd Conditions and the Best and Worst Parks to Visit for Each Day of the Year

Each year we receive more than 1,000 e-mails and letters inquiring about crowd conditions on specific dates throughout the year. Readers also want to know which park is best to visit on each day of their stay. To make things easier for you (and us!), we provide a calendar on our Web site, [TouringPlans.com](http://TouringPlans.com), and keep it totally updated for you. For each date, we offer a crowd-level index based on a scale of one (1) to ten (10), with 1 being least crowded and 10 being most crowded. Our calendar takes into account all holidays, special events, and more, as described below. The same calendar lists the best and worst park(s) to visit in terms of crowd conditions on any given day. All you have to do is look up the days of your intended visit on the calendar.

## Extra Magic Hours

Extra magic hours is a perk for families staying at a Walt Disney World resort, including the Swan, Dolphin, and Shades of Green properties, and the Hilton hotel in the Downtown Disney Resort Area. On selected days of the week, Disney resort guests will be able to enter a Disney theme park one hour earlier, or stay in a particular theme park up to three hours later than the official park-operating hours. Theme-park visitors not staying at a Disney resort may remain in the park for Extra Magic Hour evenings but cannot experience any rides, attractions, or shows. In other words, they can shop and eat.

► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** Whatever edge resort guests gain by taking advantage of early entry is offset by horrendous crowds later in the day. During busier times of year, regardless of your hotel, avoid any park on the day it's scheduled for early entry.

## 26 **Summer and Holidays**

If you visit on a nonholiday midsummer day, arrive at the turnstiles 30 minutes before the stated opening on a non-early-entry day. If you visit during a major holiday period, arrive 35 to 60 minutes ahead of the official opening time. Hit your favorite rides early using one of our touring plans, and then return to your hotel for lunch, a swim, and perhaps a nap. Don't forget to have your hand stamped for re-entry when you exit. If you are interested in the special parades and shows, return to the park in the late afternoon or early evening. Work under the assumption that, unless you use FASTPASS, early morning will be the only time you can experience the attractions without long waits. Finally, do not wait until the last minute in the evening to leave the park. The exodus at closing is truly mind-boggling.

Epcot is usually the least crowded park during holiday periods. Expect the other parks to be mobbed. To save time in the morning, purchase your admission in advance. Also, consider bringing your own stroller or wheelchair instead of renting one of Disney's. If you are touring Epcot or the Magic Kingdom and plan to spend the day, try exiting the park for lunch at one of the nearby resort hotels. Above all, bring your sense of humor and pay attention to the morale of your party. Bail out when it gets to be more work than fun.



## **MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME AND MONEY**

### **Allocating Money**

How much you spend depends on how long you stay at Walt Disney World. But even if you only visit for an afternoon, be prepared to drop a bundle. We've already told you about some Web sites that show you how to save money on lodging, and in Part Four, you'll find tips for economizing on meals. This section will give you some sense of what you can expect to pay for admission, as well as which admission option will best meet your needs.

## Walt Disney World Admission Options

In an effort to accommodate vacations of various durations and activities, Disney offers a number of different options for admission 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, as well as DisneyQuest.

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 chunk of change.

### Magic Your Way



Magic Your Way applies to both one-day and multiday passports and begins with a Base Ticket. Features 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, DisneyQuest, and the like) are available as individual add-ons to the Base Ticket.

There is also a volume discount. The more days of admission you purchase, the lower the cost per day. Base Tickets can be purchased for a one-day park admission or multiple days, up to ten days. You cannot use a Base Ticket to visit more than one park per day. When this guide was published, Base Tickets ran about \$85 for an adult one-day ticket, \$166 for a two-day ticket, and \$233 for a three-day ticket. Beyond three days, ticket prices increase only a fraction.

In fact, a ten-day ticket is only \$25 more than a three-day ticket!

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.

### Base Ticket Add-on Options

Three add-on options are offered with the Base Ticket, each at an additional cost. All prices referenced below include sales tax. Disney raises admission prices every year, usually in late July or late February, but sometimes in both.

**PARK HOPPING** Adding this feature to your Base Ticket allows you to visit more than one theme park per day. The cost is about \$56 on top of the price of any Base Ticket. It's an exorbitant price for one or two days, but it becomes more affordable the longer your stay. As an add-on to a Seven-day Base Ticket, the \$56 flat fee (including tax) would work out to \$8 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** 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 Ten-day Base Ticket and used only four days this year, the remaining six days could be used for admission at any date in the future. The no-expiration option ranges from about \$20 with tax for a Two-day Base ticket to about \$224 for a Ten-day Base Ticket. This option is not available on one-day tickets.

► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** In our estimation, considering the time value of money, buying the no-expiration option is pretty much a sucker play.

**WATER PARK FUN AND MORE (WPFAM)** This option gives you a single admission to one of Disney's water parks (Typhoon Lagoon or Blizzard Beach), the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, DisneyQuest, or the Oak Trail Golf Course. The cost is a flat



\$56 (including tax). Except for the one-day WPFAM ticket, which gives you two admissions, the number of admissions equals the number of days on your base ticket. For example, if you buy an Eight-day Base Ticket and add the WPFAM option, you get eight WPFAM admissions. What you can't do is, say, buy a Ten-day Base Ticket with only

three WPFAM admissions or a Three-day Base Ticket with four WPFAM admissions. You can, however, skip the WPFAM option entirely and buy an individual admission to any of the minor parks that interest you. This option is almost always the best deal if you want to visit only one of the venues mentioned previously.

## 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. Tax included, Annual Passes run about \$525 for adults and about \$465 for children ages 3 to 9. A Premium Annual Pass, at around \$660 for adults and \$585 for children ages 3 to 9, provides unlimited admission to Blizzard Beach, Typhoon Lagoon, DisneyQuest, and Oak Trail Golf Course, in addition to the four major theme parks.

► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** The longer your Disney vacation, the more you save with the Annual Pass.

## How To Get The Most From Magic Your Way

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 theme-park ticket with five pluses 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 ESPN Wide World of Sports, you're almost always better off purchasing that admission separately rather than in the WPFAM option.

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.)

## 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 and certain Walt Disney World-area grocery stores, and from independent ticket brokers. Offers of free or heavily discounted tickets abound, but they generally require you to attend a time-share sales presentation. Magic Your Way tickets are likewise available at Disney Stores and at [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com).

If you're trying to keep costs to an absolute minimum, consider using an online ticket wholesaler, such as [mapleleaffickets.com](http://mapleleaffickets.com), [theofficialticketcenter.com](http://theofficialticketcenter.com), or [undercovertourist.com](http://undercovertourist.com), especially for trips when you plan to spend five or more days in the theme parks. All tickets sold at these sites are brand-new, and savings can range from \$7 to more than \$25, depending on the ticket and options chosen.

The Official Ticket Center, Maple Leaf Tickets, and Undercover Tourist also offer discounts on tickets for almost all central-Florida attractions, including Disney World, Universal Orlando, SeaWorld, and Cirque du Soleil. Discounts for the major theme parks range from about 6% to 8.5%. 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 choices and find you the least-expensive ticket options for your vacation. Visit [TouringPlans.com](http://TouringPlans.com) for more details.

## For Additional Information on Passes

If you have a question or concern regarding admissions that you would like addressed by a living, breathing human being, call Disney Ticket Inquiries at ☎ 407-566-4985, or e-mail [wdw.ticket.inquiries@disneyworld.com](mailto:wdw.ticket.inquiries@disneyworld.com). If you need current prices or routine information, you're better off calling ☎ 407-824-4321 for recorded admission info, or visiting [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com).

## ALLOCATING TIME

### Which Park To See First?

This question is less academic than it appears, especially if there are children or teenagers in your party. Children who see the Magic Kingdom first expect more of the same type of entertainment at the other parks. At Epcot, they're often disappointed by the educational orientation and more serious tone (many adults react the same way). Disney's Hollywood Studios offers some pretty wild action, but the general presentation is educational and more adult-oriented. Though most children enjoy zoos, animals can't be programmed to entertain. Thus, children may not find the Animal Kingdom as exciting as the Magic Kingdom or Disney's Hollywood Studios.

First-time visitors should see Epcot first; you will be able to enjoy it fully without having been preconditioned to think of Disney entertainment as solely fantasy or adventure in nature. See the Animal Kingdom second. Like Epcot, it's educational, but its live animals provide a change of pace. Next, see Disney's Hollywood Studios, which helps all ages make a fluid transition from the educational Epcot and Animal



Failure to plan your time well can have serious consequences—  
just ask Cinderella.



Kingdom to the fanciful Magic Kingdom. Also, because Disney's Hollywood Studios is smaller, you won't walk as much or stay as long. Save the Magic Kingdom for last.

## Operating Hours

Disney runs a dozen or more schedules each year. Call ☎ 407-824-4321 for the exact park-operating hours in effect on the days of your visit before you arrive. Off-season, parks may be open as few as eight hours (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) a day. At busy times (particularly holidays), they may be open from 8 a.m. until 2 a.m. the next morning.

## Official Opening versus Real Opening

Operating hours quoted when you call are "official hours." Sometimes, the parks actually open earlier. If the official hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., for example, Main Street in the Magic Kingdom might open at 8:30 a.m. and the remainder of the park will open at 9 a.m. Disney publishes hours of operation well in advance but allows itself the flexibility to react daily to gate conditions. Disney traffic controllers survey local hotel reservations, estimate how many visitors to expect on a given day, and open the theme parks early to avoid bottlenecks at parking facilities and ticket windows and to absorb the crowds as they arrive. At day's end, rides and attractions shut down at approximately the official closing time. Main Street in the Magic Kingdom remains open 30 minutes to one hour after the rest of the park has closed.

## The Cardinal Rules For Successful Touring

Even the most time-effective touring plan won't allow you to cover two or more major theme parks in one day. Plan to allocate at least an entire day to each park (an exception to this rule is when the parks close at different times, allowing you to tour one park until closing and then proceed to another park).

## One-day Touring

A comprehensive one-day tour of the Magic Kingdom, the Animal Kingdom, Epcot, or Disney's Hollywood Studios is possible but requires knowledge of the park, good planning, and plenty of energy and endurance. One-day touring doesn't leave much time for sit-down meals, prolonged browsing in shops, or lengthy breaks. One-day touring can be fun and rewarding, but allocating two days per park, especially for the Magic Kingdom and Epcot, is always preferable. Successful touring of any of the Disney parks hinges on three rules:

### 1. Determine in Advance What You Really Want to See

To help you set your touring priorities, we describe the theme parks and every attraction in detail in this book. In each description, we include the authors' evaluation of the attraction and the opinions of Disney World guests expressed as star ratings. Five stars is the highest rating. Finally, because attractions range from midway-type rides and horse-drawn trolleys to high-tech extravaganzas, we have developed a hierarchy of categories to pinpoint an attraction's magnitude:

## Super-Headliners

The best attractions the theme park has to offer. Mind-boggling in size, scope, and imagination. Represent the cutting edge of attraction technology and design.

The Tower of Terror at Disney's Hollywood Studios is one of the park's super-headliner attractions. To house the ride, Disney built a 1930s-style hotel—complete with gardens, lobby, and gift shop—almost 200 feet tall. Inside are some of Disney's most sophisticated special effects. And, of course, the hotel's elevators go up, down, backward, and forward.



## Headliners

Full-blown multimillion-dollar themed adventures and theater presentations. They are modern in technology and design and employ a full range of special effects.

Big Thunder Mountain Railroad in Frontierland is one of several headliner attractions in the Magic Kingdom. This mellow roller coaster, disguised as a runaway mine train, is a visual feast, though you have to feast fast. After writing about Big Thunder for more than 20 years, we still discover new details every time we ride.

## Major Attractions

Themed adventures on a more modest scale but which incorporate state-of-the-art technologies, or larger-scale attractions of older design.

Star Tours at Disney's Hollywood Studios is a pioneer when it comes to the use of flight-simulation technology in theme parks. Featuring the robot stars of the *Star Wars* film series, Star Tours offers a wild ride, great visuals, and some big laughs.



### Minor Attractions

Midway-type rides, small “dark” rides (cars on a track, zigzagging through the dark), small theater presentations, transportation rides, and walk-through attractions.

The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh is a dark ride, a genre that evolved from “Old Mill” and spook-house rides at amusement parks and carnival midways. Pooh at the Magic Kingdom is unique in that it’s designed to be lighthearted and funny as opposed to frightening.



© Barrie Brewer

### Diversions

Exhibits, both passive and interactive, such as playgrounds, video arcades, and street theater.

Even though it costs \$1 per play, the Frontierland Shootin’ Arcade is one of Walt Disney World’s most enjoyable diversions.

► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** Meeting characters, posing for photos, and collecting autographs can burn hours of touring time.



## 34 2. Arrive Early! Arrive Early! Arrive Early!

Theme parks don't begin the day in gridlock. In fact, they usually don't hit their peak attendance until about 1 or 2 p.m. Guests arrive continuously from the time the turnstiles open through the day. As a rough approximation, about 800 guests are on hand for park opening. Once admitted, these guests will have the run of a park designed for more than 60 times that number. As the day wears on, waits of more than an hour become common at the most popular attractions. But, by that time those who arrived early will have all the big attractions in the rearview mirror.

Arriving early is the single most important key to efficient touring and avoiding long lines. First thing in the morning, there are no lines and fewer people. The same four rides you experience in one hour in early morning can take as long as three hours after 10:30 a.m. Eat breakfast before you arrive; don't waste prime touring time sitting in a restaurant.

The earlier a park opens, the greater your advantage. This is because most vacationers won't rise early and get to a park before it opens. Fewer people are willing to make an 8 a.m. opening than a 9 a.m. opening. On those rare occasions when a park opens at 10 a.m., almost everyone arrives at the same time, so it's almost impossible to beat the crowd. If you visit during midsummer, arrive at the turnstile 30 to 40 minutes before opening. During holiday periods, arrive 45 to 60 minutes early.

Many readers share their experiences about getting to the parks before opening. From a 13-year-old girl from Bloomington, Indiana:

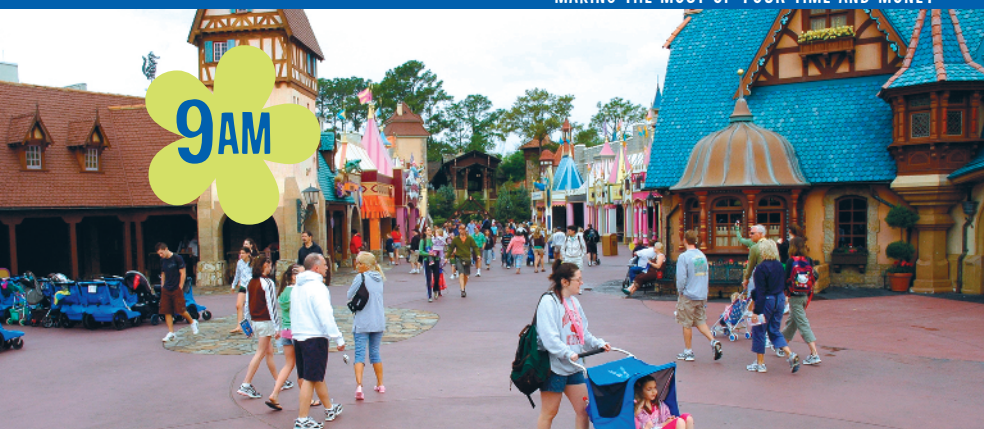
**Please stress this to your readers: If you want to ride anything with a short wait, you have to get up in the morning! If this is a sacrifice you aren't willing to make, reconsider a Disney World vacation. Most people say they will then be exhausted, but if [you] take a break at the hot part of the day, you'll be fine.**

## 3. Avoid Bottlenecks

In this guide we provide detailed information on all rides and performances, enabling you to estimate how long you may have to wait in line and allowing you to compare rides for their capacity to accommodate large crowds. In our sister guide, *The Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World* (which is revised twice a year), we provide touring plans for the Magic Kingdom, the Animal Kingdom, Epcot, and Disney's Hollywood Studios to help you avoid bottlenecks. The step-by-step plans are scientifically derived and field-tested and can save more than four hours of time in line in a single day. The touring plans in *The Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World* are the most time-efficient plans available anywhere.



9AM



11AM



1PM





36 **FASTPASS**

Your handout park map, as well as signage at respective attractions, will tell you which attractions are included in the FASTPASS program. FASTPASS attractions 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 get an early start 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, such as Kali River Rapids at the Animal Kingdom and Splash Mountain at the Magic Kingdom, until the warmer part of the day.

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► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** FASTPASS works remarkably well, mainly because FASTPASS holders get amazingly preferential treatment.

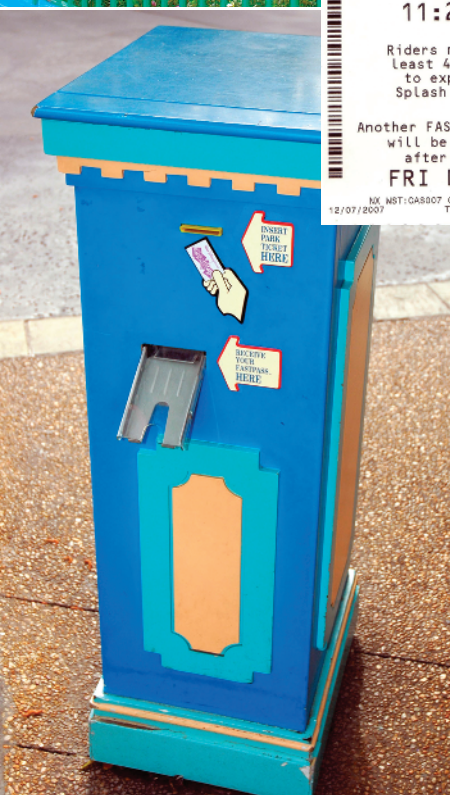
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## Understanding The FASTPASS System

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 TO USE FASTPASS** 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.

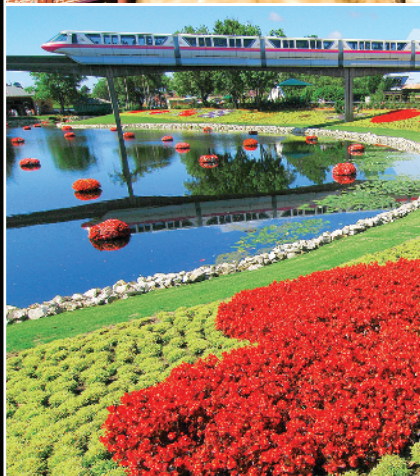
**FASTPASS RULES** Disney amended the rules so that now you can obtain a second FASTPASS soon after the first one is issued. Disney will specify on the first FASTPASS ticket how long you must wait—usually less than two hours—before getting another. Rules aside, the real lesson here is to check out the posted return time before obtaining a FASTPASS. If the return time is hours away, forgo the FASTPASS. An exception to this advice: Go ahead and get the FASTPASS if you really want to see an attraction, especially if it's a super-headliner, because sometimes those attractions run out of FASTPASSes. 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. Disney rarely enforces the expiration time on the return window, meaning that FASTPASSes are good from the beginning of the window until park closing.







Louisiana oysterman Spud LeBlanc has three pieces of advice he gives everyone. Number one is to stop and smell the roses at Walt Disney World. We agree. There's so much to savor and appreciate, but you'll miss it, Spud says, "if you run around like a beagle chasing a coon." What are Spud's other two bits of advice? Never buy a car from anyone wearing white shoes, and don't drive no ugly truck.



# Reader Questions We Can Answer

## Is Goofy a dog?



**Answer:** Well, he has ears like a dog and a canine snout, but he walks upright, talks, and is as socially well adjusted as most people. Plus, we've never seen him sniff **TOO MUCH INFORMATION!!**



# SPECIAL TIPS FOR SPECIAL PEOPLE

## Walt Disney World for Singles

Walt Disney World is great for singles. It is a safe, clean, and low-pressure environment. If you're looking for a place to relax without being hit on, Disney World is perfect. Bars, lounges, and nightclubs are the most laid-back and friendly you're likely to find anywhere. In many, you can hang out and not even be asked to buy a drink (or asked to let someone buy a drink for you). Parking lots are well lit and constantly patrolled. For women alone, safety and comfort are unsurpassed.

There's also no need to while away the evening hours alone in your hotel room. Between the BoardWalk and Downtown Disney, nightlife options abound. If you drink more than you should and are a Disney resort guest, Disney buses will return you safely to your hotel.

► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** Virtually every type of entertainment performed fully clothed is available at an amazingly reasonable price at a Disney nightclub.

## Walt Disney World for Couples



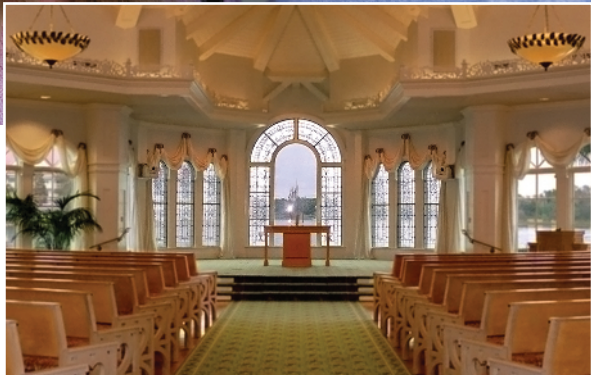
### Weddings and Honeymoons

Disney's intimate wedding (for a maximum of 18 guests, plus the bride and groom) includes a cake and Champagne toast for the couple and four guests, a personalized wedding Web site, a Disney wedding certificate, a photographer, an Annual Pass for the bride and groom, and a wedding album. Packages require a four-night stay at a Disney-owned and -operated resort; some ceremony locations have a limit of ten guests. The cost of this wedding package starts at about \$4,500, and also includes a musician, cake, bouquet, limousine ride, and wedding coordinator.

If you invite more than 18 guests, you must buy one of Disney's customized wedding packages, which start at \$10,000 (Monday through Thursday) and \$15,000 (Friday, Saturday, or Sunday), not including taxes and gratuities. If you're short on friends, you can rent Disney characters—there's even a volume discount!

### Romantic Getaways

Disney World is a favorite getaway for couples, but not all Disney hotels are equally romantic. Some are too family-oriented; others swarm with convention-goers. For romantic (though expensive) lodging, we recommend Animal Kingdom Lodge and Villas, Bay Lake Tower at the Contemporary Resort, the Polynesian Resort, Wilderness Lodge and Villas, the Grand Floridian, BoardWalk Inn and Villas, and the Yacht Club and Beach Club resorts. The Alligator Bayou section at Port Orleans Riverside, a moderate Disney resort, also has sedate rooms.



© Jeff Bergman

## Quiet, Romantic Places To Eat

Quiet, romantic restaurants with good food are rare in the theme parks. Only a handful of locations satisfy both requirements: the Coral Reef, the terrace at the Rose & Crown, the corner booths at The Hollywood Brown Derby, and the upstairs tables at Bistro de Paris. Waterfront dining is available at Portobello and Fulton's Crab House at Downtown Disney, and Narcoossee's at the Grand Floridian Resort.

The California Grill, atop the Contemporary Resort, has the best view at Walt Disney World. If window tables aren't available, ask to be served in the adjoining lounge. Victoria & Albert's at the Grand Floridian is the World's showcase gourmet restaurant; expect to pay big bucks there. Other good choices for couples include Shula's Steakhouse at the Dolphin, Jiko at the Animal Kingdom Lodge, and the Flying Fish Cafe at the BoardWalk.

Eating later in the evening and choosing among the restaurants we've mentioned will improve your chances for quiet, intimate dining, but children—well behaved or otherwise—are everywhere at Walt Disney World, and you won't escape them.





**“Breaker 5, breaker 5, this is  
the Red Rattlesnake.  
We got ourselves a convoy!”**

## Walt Disney World for Seniors

Most seniors we interview enjoy Disney World much more when they tour with folks their own age. If, however, you're considering going to Disney World with your grandchildren, we recommend an orientation visit without them first. If you know first-hand what to expect, it's much easier to establish limits, maintain control, and set a comfortable pace when you visit with the youngsters.

Because seniors are a varied and willing lot, there aren't any attractions we would suggest they avoid. For seniors, as with other Disney visitors, personal taste is more important than age. We hate to see mature visitors pass up an exceptional attraction such as Splash Mountain because younger visitors call it a thrill ride. Splash Mountain, a full-blown adventure, gets its appeal more from music and visual effects than the thrill of the ride. Because you must choose among attractions that might interest you, we provide facts to help you make informed decisions.

### Getting Around

Many seniors like to walk, but a seven-hour visit to one of the theme parks normally includes four to eight miles on foot. If you aren't up for that much hiking, let a more athletic member of your party push you in a rented wheelchair. The theme parks also offer fun-to-drive electric carts (convenience vehicles). You can rent a cart at the Magic Kingdom in the morning, return it, go to Epcot, present your deposit slip, and get another cart at no additional charge.

### Senior Lodging

If you can afford it, stay in Walt Disney World. If you're concerned about the quality of your accommodations or the availability of transportation, staying inside the Disney complex will ease your mind. The rooms are some of the nicest in the Orlando area and are always clean and well maintained. Plus, transportation is always available to any destination in Disney World at no additional cost. Disney hotels reserve rooms closer to restaurants and transportation for guests of any age who can't tolerate much walking. They also provide golf carts to pick up guests and deliver them to their rooms. Cart service can vary dramatically depending on the time of day and the number of guests requesting service. At check-in time (around 3 p.m.), for example, the wait for a ride can be as long as 40 minutes.

The Contemporary Resort and the adjacent Bay Lake Tower are good choices for seniors who want to be on the monorail system. So are the Grand Floridian and Polynesian resorts, though they cover many acres, necessitating a lot of walking. For a restful, rustic feeling, choose the Wilderness Lodge and Villas. If you want a kitchen and the comforts of home, book Old Key West Resort, the Beach Club Villas, Animal Kingdom Villas, or BoardWalk Villas. If you enjoy watching birds and animals, try Animal Kingdom Lodge and Villas. Try Saratoga Springs for golf.

RVers will find Disney's Fort Wilderness Campground pleasant. Several KOA campgrounds are also within 20 minutes of Disney World. None offer the wilderness setting or amenities that Disney does, but they cost less.



### Senior Dining

Eat breakfast at your hotel restaurant, or save money by having juice and rolls in your room. Follow with an early dinner and be out of the restaurants and ready for evening touring and fireworks long before the main crowd begins to think about dinner. We

- 44 recommend fitting dining and rest times into the day. Plan lunch as your break in the day. Sit back, relax, and enjoy. Then return to your hotel for a nap or a swim.

► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** Make your Advance Reservations for dining before noon to avoid the lunch crowds.

## Walt Disney World for Disabled Guests

Valuable information for trip planning is available at [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com). At Walt Disney World, each of the major theme parks offers a free booklet describing disabled services and facilities at that park. The Disney people are somewhat resistant to mailing you the theme-park booklets in advance, but if you are polite and persistent, they can usually be persuaded. The same information can be found on the Web site; click on “Guests with Disabilities” on the home page, at bottom right. Or get a booklet at wheelchair-rental locations in the parks. For specific requests, including specialized accommodations at the resort hotels or on the Disney Transportation System, call ☎ 407-939-7807 (voice) or 407-939-7670 (TTY). When the recorded menu comes up, press “1” on your phone. Calls to this number should be strictly limited to questions and requests regarding disabled services and accommodations. Other questions should be addressed to ☎ 407-824-4321.

### Visitors With Special Needs

**COMPLETELY OR PARTIALLY NONAMBULATORY GUESTS** may easily rent wheelchairs. Most rides, shows, attractions, restrooms, and restaurants in the World accommodate the nonambulatory disabled. If you’re in a theme park and need assistance, go to Guest Relations. A limited number of electric carts (motorized convenience vehicles) are available for rent. Easy and fun to drive, they give nonambulatory guests a tremendous degree of freedom and mobility.

Close-in parking is available for disabled visitors at all Disney lots. Request directions when you pay your parking fee. All monorails and most rides, shows, restrooms, and restaurants accommodate wheelchairs.

An information booklet for disabled guests is available at wheelchair-rental locations in each park. Theme-park maps issued to each guest on admission are symbol-coded to show nonambulatory guests which attractions accommodate wheelchairs.

Even if an attraction doesn’t accommodate wheelchairs, nonambulatory guests still may ride if they can transfer from their wheelchair to the ride’s vehicle. Disney staff, however, aren’t trained or permitted to assist in transfers. Guests must be able to board the ride unassisted or have a member of their party assist them. Either way, members of the nonambulatory guest’s party will be permitted to go along on the ride.

Because waiting areas of most attractions won’t accommodate wheelchairs, nonambulatory guests and their party should request boarding instructions from a Disney attendant as soon as they arrive at an attraction. Almost always, the entire group will be allowed to board without a lengthy wait.

**VISITORS WITH DIETARY RESTRICTIONS** can be assisted at Guest Relations in the theme parks. For Walt Disney World restaurants outside the theme parks, call the restaurant a day in advance for assistance.

**SIGHT-AND/OR HEARING-IMPAIRED GUESTS** Guest Relations at the theme parks provides complimentary tape cassettes and portable tape players to assist sight-impaired guests (\$25 refundable deposit required). At the same locations, TDDs are available for hearing-impaired guests. In addition to TDDs, many pay phones in the major parks are equipped with amplifying headsets. See your Disney map for locations.

Braille guide maps are available from Guest Relations at all theme parks. Closed captioning is provided on some rides, while many theater attractions provide reflective captioning. A sign-language interpreter performs at some live-theater presentations; for show information, call ☎ 407-824-4321 (voice) or 407-939-8255 (TTY).

**NONAPPARENT DISABILITIES** We receive many letters from readers whose traveling companion or child requires special assistance, but who, unlike an individual on crutches or in a wheelchair, is not visibly disabled. Some conditions—autism, for example—make it very difficult or even impossible to wait in lines for more than a few minutes, or in queues surrounded by a large number of people.

If you or someone in your touring party has a nonapparent disability, one of the first things to do is obtain a letter from the disabled party's primary physician that explains the specific condition and any special needs the condition implies. The doctor's letter should be explicit enough to fully convey the nature of the condition to the Disney cast member reading the letter. Bring your doctor's note to the Guest Relations window at any Disney theme park and ask for a Guest Assistance Card. This is a special pass designed to allow the disabled individual and his or her touring companions to wait in a separate, uncrowded area, apart from the regular queues at most attractions. One card is good for all four parks, so you do not need to obtain separate cards at each park. You should also pick up a copy of each park's *Guidebook for Guests with Disabilities* (also available online at [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com)).

► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** If you encounter a guest member who is unfamiliar with the Guest Assistance Card, just ask for a manager and explain your situation.

## GETTING THERE

### Directions

Motorists can reach any Walt Disney World destination via World Drive off US 192, via Epcot Drive off Interstate 4, or from FL 429 (see map on p. iv).

**WARNING!** I-4 is an east–west highway but takes a north–south slant through the Orlando-Kissimmee area. This directional change complicates getting oriented in and around Disney World. Logic suggests that highways branching off I-4 should run north and south, but most run east and west here.



#### FROM I-10

Take I-10 east across Florida to I-75 southbound. Exit onto Florida's Turnpike. Take FL 429 (toll) southbound off the Turnpike. Exit FL 429 at the Hartzog Road/Walt Disney World interchange in the direction of Walt Disney World. Follow the signs to your Disney destination. This is a revised routing based on the 2007 opening of a western entrance to Walt Disney World. It's much faster than continuing on the Turnpike to I-4 to reach Walt Disney World. Also use these directions to reach hotels along US 192—Irlo Bronson Memorial Highway.

#### FROM I-75 SOUTHBOUND

Exit I-75 southbound onto the Florida Turnpike. Continue south, exiting on FL 429 (toll)

- 46 southbound. Exit at the Hartzog Road/Walt Disney World interchange in the direction of Walt Disney World. Follow the signs to your Disney destination. As with the previous route, we've revised this one based on the 2007 opening of a western entrance to Walt Disney World. It's much faster than continuing on the Turnpike to I-4 to reach Walt Disney World. Also use these directions to reach hotels along US 192—Irlo Bronson Memorial Highway.

### FROM THE ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

There are two routes from the airport to Walt Disney World. Both take almost exactly the same amount of time to drive except during rush-hour traffic, when Route One via FL 417 is far less congested than Route Two via the Beachline Expressway. Also, Route One eliminates the need to drive on I-4, which is always horribly congested. Both FL 417 and the Beachline Expressway are toll roads, so make sure you have about three dollars' worth of quarters before leaving the airport. Route One: Leaving the airport, go southwest on the Central Florida Greenway (FL 417), a toll road. Take Exit 6 toward FL 535. FL 536 will cross over I-4 and become Epcot Drive. From here, follow the signs to your destination. Route Two: Take FL 528 (Beachline Expressway, a toll road) west for about 12 miles to the intersection with I-4. Go west on I-4 to Exit 67, marked Epcot/Downtown Disney, and follow the signs.

### FROM MIAMI, FORT LAUDERDALE, AND SOUTHEASTERN FLORIDA

Head north on Florida's Turnpike to I-4 westbound. Take Exit 67, marked as Epcot/Downtown Disney, and follow the signs.

### FROM TAMPA AND SOUTHWESTERN FLORIDA

Take I-75 northbound to I-4. Go east on I-4, take Exit 64 onto US 192 westbound, and follow the signs.



### Walt Disney World Exits off I-4

Going east to west (in the direction of Orlando to Tampa), four I-4 exits serve Walt Disney World.

**Exit 68 (FL 535/Lake Buena Vista)** primarily serves the Downtown Disney Resort Area and Downtown Disney, including the Downtown Disney Marketplace and Disney's West Side. This exit puts you on roads with lots of traffic signals. Avoid it unless you're headed to one of the preceding destinations.

**Exit 67 (Epcot/Downtown Disney)** delivers you to a four-lane expressway into the heart of Disney World. It's the fastest and most convenient way for westbound travelers to access almost all Disney destinations except Animal Kingdom and ESPN Wide World of Sports.



**Exit 65 (Osceola Parkway)** is the best exit for westbound travelers to access Animal Kingdom, Animal Kingdom Lodge, Pop Century Resort, All-Star Resorts, and ESPN Wide World of Sports.

**Exit 64 (US 192/Magic Kingdom)** is the best route for eastbound travelers to all Disney World destinations. For westbound travelers, it's the best exit for accessing the Animal Kingdom and ESPN Wide World of Sports.

**Exit 62 (Disney World/Celebration)** is the first Disney exit you'll encounter if you're headed eastbound. This four-lane, controlled-access highway connects to the so-called main gate of Walt Disney World.

## Transportation To Walt Disney World From The Airport

If you arrive in Orlando by plane, there are four basic options for getting to Walt Disney World:



**1. TAXI** Taxis carry four to eight passengers (depending on the type of vehicle). Rates vary according to distance. If your hotel is in Walt Disney World, your fare will be about \$50, not including tip. For the US 192 Maingate area, your fare will be about \$48. If you go to International Drive or downtown Orlando, expect to pay about \$30.

**2. SHUTTLE SERVICE** Mears Motor Transportation Service (☎ 407-423-5566; [mears-transportation.com](http://mears-transportation.com)) operates from Orlando International Airport. Although this is the shuttle service that will provide your transportation if airport transfers are included in your vacation package, you do not have to be on a package to

avail yourself of their services. In practice, the shuttles collect passengers until they fill a van (or sometimes a bus). Once the vehicle is full or close to full, it's dispatched. Mears charges per-person rates (children under age 3 ride free). Both one-way and round-trip services are available. Round trips to the World run about \$33 for adults and \$26 for children.

**3. TOWN-CAR SERVICE** Similar to taxi service, a town-car service will transport you directly from Orlando International Airport to your hotel. Instead of hailing a car outside the airport, however, the town-car driver will usually be waiting for you in the baggage claim area of your airline. Town-car companies we've had a good experience with include Tiffany Towncar Service (☎ 888-838-2161 or 407-370-2196; [tiffanytowncars.com](http://tiffanytowncars.com)) and Quicksilver Tours & Transportation (☎ 888-GO-TO-WDW or 407-299-1434; [quicksilver-tours.com](http://quicksilver-tours.com)). Round trips to the World run about \$110 to \$120.

**RENTAL CARS** Rental cars are readily available for both short- and long-term rentals. Most rental companies allow you to drop a rental car at certain hotels or at one of their subsidiary locations in the Walt Disney World general area if you do not want the car for your entire stay. Likewise, you can pick up a car at any time during your stay at the same hotels and locations without trekking back to the airport. A list of discount codes for rental cars also can be found at [mousesavers.com](http://mousesavers.com). With a little effort, you can often get a great deal.

48 Readers planning to stay in the World frequently ask if they will need a car. If your plans don't include restaurants, attractions, or other destinations outside of Disney World, the answer is a very qualified no. However, consider the following:

Plan to Rent a Car:

1. If your hotel is outside Walt Disney World;
2. If your hotel is in Walt Disney World and you want to dine someplace other than the theme parks and your own hotel;
3. If you plan to return to your hotel for naps or swimming during the day;
4. If you plan to visit other area theme parks or water parks (including Disney's).

► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** Sign up for your car-rental company's frequent-renter program before your trip. Most programs are free and let you skip long waits in line to receive your car.



## DISNEY'S MAGICAL EXPRESS

Disney's Magical Express is a free bus service that runs between the Orlando International Airport and most Walt Disney World hotels. All guests staying at a Disney-owned and -operated resort are eligible to use the service, even if the stay was booked independent of the Disney Travel Company. (Guests staying at the Swan, Dolphin, and Shades of Green are ineligible for Disney's Magical Express, as these hotels are independently owned.) In addition to transportation, Magical Express provides free luggage-delivery service between your airline and Disney hotel, except for flights arriving after 10 p.m., when you'll need to pick up your suitcases from baggage

claim.

You should receive special Magical Express luggage tags about two weeks prior to your departure date. Put a tag on any piece of luggage you plan to check with the airline. When you arrive at the airport, check the bags as you normally would. If you're traveling within the United States, you'll arrive in Orlando and follow the Magical Express signs to your bus; your luggage should be waiting in your hotel room when you check in. (International travelers must retrieve their bags to go through customs. After passing through customs, you'll also head for a bus. Your bags are returned to baggage claim and Disney takes over from there.) Behind the scenes, Disney baggage handlers work with your airline to retrieve suitcases marked with those special tags. All tagged luggage is sent to an airport warehouse, where it's sorted by destination and then loaded onto a truck for delivery. At the resort, the luggage is matched to your reservation. If your room is ready, then the luggage is delivered there; otherwise it's held by the bellhops until you can check in.

In practice the logistical challenge of matching totes and tourists is proving to be a bit more than Disney bargained for, with lost and delayed baggage marring the service's reputation.

# HOW TO TRAVEL AROUND THE WORLD

## Transportation Trade-Offs For Guests Lodging Outside Walt Disney World

Disney day guests (those not staying inside Disney World) can use the monorail system, the bus system, and the boat system. If, for example, you go to Disney's Hollywood Studios in the morning, and then decide to go to Epcot for lunch, you can take a bus directly there. The most important advice we can give day guests is to park their cars in the lot of the theme park (or other Disney destination) where they plan to finish their day. This is critical if you stay at a park until closing time.



### All You Need To Know About Driving To The Theme Parks

**1. POSITIONING OF THE PARKING LOTS** The Animal Kingdom, Disney's Hollywood Studios, and Epcot parking lots are adjacent to the park entrance. The Magic Kingdom parking lot is adjacent to the Transportation and Ticket Center (TTC). From the TTC you can take a ferry or monorail to the Magic Kingdom entrance.

**2. PAYING TO PARK** Disney resort guests and Annual Pass holders park free. All others pay. If you pay to park, keep your receipt. If you move your car during the day to another theme park, you will not have to pay again if you show your receipt.

**3. FINDING YOUR CAR WHEN IT'S TIME TO DEPART** The theme-park parking lots are huge. Jot down the section and row where you park. If you are driving a rental car, jot down the license number (you wouldn't believe how many white rental cars there are).

**4. GETTING FROM YOUR CAR TO THE PARK ENTRANCE** Each parking lot provides trams to transport you to the park entrance or, in the case of the Magic Kingdom, to the TTC. If you arrive early in the morning, you may find that it is faster to walk to the entrance (or to the TTC) than to take the tram.

**50 5. GETTING TO ANIMAL KINGDOM FOR PARK OPENING** If you're staying on property and are planning to be at this theme park when it opens, take a Disney bus from your resort instead of driving. Animal Kingdom's parking lot frequently opens 15 minutes before the park itself—which doesn't leave you enough time to park, hop on a tram, and pass through security before park opening.

**6. HOW MUCH TIME TO ALLOT FOR PARKING AND GETTING TO THE PARK ENTRANCE** For Epcot and Animal Kingdom, it takes 10 to 15 minutes to pay, park, and walk or ride to the park entrance. At Disney's Hollywood Studios, allow 8 to 12 minutes; at the Magic Kingdom, it's 15 minutes to get to the TTC and another 20 to 30 to reach the park entrance via the monorail or the ferry. Allot another 10 to 20 minutes if you didn't buy your park admission in advance.

**7. COMMUTING FROM PARK TO PARK** You can commute to the other theme parks via a Disney bus, or to and from the Magic Kingdom and Epcot by monorail. You can also, of course, commute via your own car. Using Disney transportation or your own car, allow 45 to 60 minutes entrance-to-entrance one-way.

**8. LEAVING THE PARK AT THE END OF THE DAY** If you stay at a park until closing, expect the parking lot trams, monorails, and ferries to be mobbed. If the wait for the parking-lot tram is unacceptable, you can either walk to your car, or walk to the first tram stop on the route and wait there until a tram arrives. When some people get off, you can get on and continue to your appropriate stop.

**9. DINNER AND A QUICK EXIT** One way to beat closing crowds at the Magic Kingdom is to arrange an Advance Reservation for dinner at one of the restaurants at the Contemporary Resort. When you leave the Magic Kingdom to go to dinner, move your car from the TTC lot to the Contemporary Resort. After dinner, either walk (eight minutes) or take the monorail back to the Magic Kingdom. When the park closes and everyone else is fighting their way onto the monorail or ferry, you can stroll leisurely back to the Contemporary, pick up your car, and be on your way. You can pull the same trick at Epcot by arranging an Advance Reservation at one of the Epcot resorts. After IllumiNations when the park closes, simply exit the park by the International Gateway and walk back to the resort where your car is parked.

**10. SCORING A GREAT PARKING PLACE** Anytime you arrive at a park after noon, there will be some empty spots up front vacated by early arriving guests who have already departed.

## Taking a Shuttle Bus from Your Out-of-the-World Hotel

Many independent hotels and motels near Walt Disney World provide trams and buses. They're fairly carefree, depositing you near theme-park entrances and saving you parking fees. The rub is that they might not get you there as early as you desire (a critical point if you take our touring advice) or be available when you wish to return to your lodging. Also, some shuttles go directly to Disney World, while others stop at additional area lodgings. Each service is a bit different; check the particulars before you make reservations.

If you're depending on shuttles, you'll want to leave the park at least 45 minutes before closing. If you stay until closing and lack the energy to hassle with the shuttle, take a cab. Cab stands are near the Bus Information buildings at the Animal Kingdom, Epcot, Disney's Hollywood Studios, and the TTC. If no cabs are on hand, staff at Bus Information will call one for you.

## The Disney Transportation System

In the most basic terms, the Disney Transportation System is a hub-and-spoke system. Hubs include the TTC, Downtown Disney, and all four major theme parks (from two hours before official opening time to two to three hours after closing). Although there are some exceptions, there is direct service from Disney resorts to the major theme parks and to Downtown Disney, and from park to park. If you want to go from resort to resort or most anywhere else, you will have to transfer at one of the hubs.

If a hotel offers boat or monorail service, its bus service will be limited, meaning you'll have to transfer at a hub for many Disney World destinations. If you're staying at a Magic Kingdom resort served by the monorail (Polynesian, Contemporary–Bay Lake Tower, or Grand Floridian), you'll be able to commute efficiently to the Magic Kingdom via monorail. If you want to visit Epcot, you must take the monorail to the TTC and transfer to the Epcot monorail. (Guests at the Polynesian can eliminate the transfer by walking five to ten minutes to the TTC and catching the direct monorail to Epcot.)



GATE	DESTINATION	GATE	DESTINATION
1	Disney's Grand Slam Resort	6	Disney's Port Orleans - French Quarter
2	Disney's Saratoga Springs Resort	7	Disney's Boardwalk Resort
3	Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge	8	Disney's Yacht & Beach Club Resorts
4		9	Disney's Old Key West Resort
5	Disney's Port Orleans - Riverside	10	Disney's Wilderness Lodge



### Walt Disney World Bus Service

Disney buses have an illuminated panel above the windshield that flashes the bus's destination. Also, theme parks have designated waiting areas for each Disney destination. To catch the bus to the Caribbean Beach Resort from Disney's Hollywood Studios, for example, go to the bus stop and wait in the area marked TO THE CARIBBEAN BEACH RESORT. At the resorts, go to any bus stop and wait for the bus displaying your destination on the illuminated panel. Directions to Disney destinations are available when you check in or at your hotel's Guest Relations desk. Guest Relations also can answer questions about the transportation system.

Buses begin service to the theme parks at about 7 a.m. on days when the parks' official opening time is at 9 a.m. Generally, buses run every 20 minutes. Buses to all four parks deliver you to the park entrance. Until one hour before the park opens (before 8 a.m.



- 52 in this example), buses to the Magic Kingdom deliver you to the TTC, where you transfer to the monorail or ferry to complete your commute. Buses take you directly to the Magic Kingdom starting one hour before the park's stated opening.

To be on hand for the real opening time (when official opening is at 9 a.m.), catch direct buses to Epcot, the Animal Kingdom, and Disney's Hollywood Studios between 7:30 and 8 a.m. Catch direct buses to the Magic Kingdom between 8 and 8:15 a.m. If you must transfer to reach your park, leave 15 to 20 minutes earlier. On days when official opening is at 7 or 8 a.m., move up your departure time accordingly.

For your return bus trip in the evening, leave the park 40 minutes to an hour before closing to avoid the rush. If you're caught in the mass exodus, you may be inconvenienced, but you won't be stranded.

## Walt Disney World Monorail Service



Picture the monorail system as three loops. Loop A is an express route that runs counterclockwise connecting the Magic Kingdom with the Transportation and Ticket Center (TTC). Loop B runs clockwise alongside Loop A, making all stops, with service to (in this order) the TTC, Polynesian Resort, the Grand Floridian Resort & Spa, Magic Kingdom, Contemporary Resort, and back to the TTC. The long Loop C dips southeast like a tail, connecting the TTC with Epcot. The hub for all three loops is the TTC (where you usually park to visit the Magic Kingdom). The monorail system serving Magic Kingdom resorts normally starts operation an hour and a half before official opening. If you're staying at a Magic Kingdom resort and you wish to be among the first in the

Magic Kingdom at official opening (usually 9 a.m.), board the monorail at the times indicated below.

From the Contemporary Resort–Bay Lake Tower	7:45–8:00 a.m.
From the Polynesian Resort	7:50–8:05 a.m.
From the Grand Floridian Beach Resort	8:00–8:10 a.m.

If you're a day guest, you'll be allowed on the monorail at the TTC between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m. on a day when official opening is 9 a.m. If you want to board earlier, walk from the TTC to the Polynesian Resort and board there. The monorail loop connecting Epcot and the TTC begins operating at 7:30 a.m. on days when Epcot's official opening is 9 a.m. To be at Epcot when the park opens, catch the Epcot monorail at the TTC by 8:05 a.m.

► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** Monorails usually operate for two hours after the parks close. If a train is too crowded or you need transportation after the monorails have stopped running, catch a bus.

## Walt Disney World Boat Service

Boat service connects Disney's Hollywood Studios with Epcot, stopping at the Swan and Dolphin Resorts, Boardwalk Inn and Villas, Yacht Club Resort, and Beach Club Resort and Villas en route. There is a resort launch service to the Magic Kingdom from the Polynesian, Contemporary and Bay Lake, Grand Floridian, and Wilderness Lodge Resorts as well as from the Fort Wilderness Campground. For day guests ferries serve as an alternative to the monorail from the TTC (Magic Kingdom parking lot) to the Magic Kingdom.



## CREDIT CARDS AND MONEY

American Express, Diners Club, Discover, Japan Credit Bureau, MasterCard, and Visa are accepted throughout Walt Disney World.

### A LICENSE TO PRINT MONEY



One of Disney's more sublime plays for separating you from your money is the printing and issuing of Disney Dollars. Available throughout Disney World in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10, and \$50, each emblazoned with a Disney character, the colorful cash can be used for purchases in Disney World, Disneyland, and Disney Stores nationwide. Disney Dollars can also be exchanged one-for-one with U.S. currency, but only while you're in Disney World. Also, you need your sales receipt to exchange for U.S. dollars. Disney

money is sometimes a perk (for which you're charged dollar-for-dollar) in Walt Disney Travel Company packages. What Disney hopes of course is that you'll take a pocketful of Disney bucks home and forget where you put them. Calculate the margin on that!

# PROBLEMS AND HOW TO SOLVE THEM



**CAR TROUBLE** Security will help if you lock the keys in your parked car or find the battery dead. For more serious problems, the closest repair facility is AAA Car Care Center near the Magic Kingdom lot (☎ 407-824-0976).

The nearest off-World repair center is Maingate Citgo (on US 192 west of Interstate 4; ☎ 407-396-2721). Disney security can help you find it. Farther away but highly recommended by one of our Orlando-area researchers is Riker's Automotive & Tire (5700 Central Florida Parkway, near SeaWorld; ☎ 407-238-9800; [rikersauto.com](http://rikersauto.com)). Says our source: "They do great work and are the only car place that has never tried to get extra money out of me 'cause I'm a woman and know nothing about cars. I love this place!"

**GASOLINE** There are three filling stations on Disney property. One station is adjacent to the AAA Car Care Center on the exit road from the TTC (Magic Kingdom) parking lot. It's also convenient to the Shades of Green, Grand Floridian, and Polynesian resorts. Most centrally located is the station at the corner of Buena Vista Drive and Epcot Resorts Boulevard, near the BoardWalk Inn. A third station, also on Buena Vista Drive, is across from the former Pleasure Island site in Downtown Disney.

**LOST AND FOUND** If you lose (or find) something in the Magic Kingdom, go to City Hall. At Epcot, Lost and Found is in the Entrance Plaza. At Disney's Hollywood Studios, it's at Hollywood Boulevard Guest Relations, and at Animal Kingdom, it's at Guest Relations at the main entrance. If you discover your loss after you have left the park(s), call ☎ 407-824-4245 (for all parks). Ask to be transferred to the specific park's Lost and Found if you're still at the park(s) and discover something is missing.



**RAIN** Weather bad? Go to the parks anyway. The crowds are lighter on rainy days, and most of the attractions and waiting areas are under cover. Showers, especially during the warmer months, usually don't last very long. Ponchos cost about \$7;



umbrellas, about \$13. All ponchos sold at Disney World are made of clear plastic, so picking out somebody in your party on a rainy day can be tricky. Walmart sells an inexpensive green poncho that will make your family emerald beacons in a plastic-covered sea of humanity.

► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** Rain gear is one of the few bargains at the parks. It isn't always displayed in shops; you have to ask for it.

## Medical Matters

**RELIEF FOR A HEADACHE** Aspirin and other sundries are sold at the Emporium on Main Street in the Magic Kingdom (they're kept behind the counter; you must ask), at retail shops in Epcot's Future World and World Showcase, and in Disney's Hollywood Studios and the Animal Kingdom.

**ILLNESSES REQUIRING MEDICAL ATTENTION** A Centra Care walk-in clinic is at 12500 South Apopka-Vineland Road (☎ 407-934-CARE). It's open from 8 a.m. to midnight weekdays and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekends. Centra Care also operates a 24-hour physician house-call service and runs a free shuttle (☎ 407-938-0650). Buena Vista Urgent Care (8216 World Center Drive, Suite D; ☎ 407-465-1110) comes highly recommended by *Unofficial Guide* readers.

EastCoast Medical Network (☎ 407-648-5252) has board-certified physicians available 24/7 for house calls to your hotel room. They offer in-room X-rays and IV therapy service as well as same-day dental and specialist appointments. They also rent medical equipment. Insurance receipts, insurance billing, and foreign-language interpretation are provided. Walk-in clinics are also available. You also can inquire about transportation arrangements to the clinics.

DOCS (Doctors on Call Service; ☎ 407-399-DOCS; [doctorsoncallservice.com](http://doctorsoncallservice.com)) offers 24-hour house-call service. All DOCS physicians are certified by the American Board of Medical Specialties.

**PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE** Two nearby pharmacies are Walgreens Lake Buena Vista (☎ 407-238-0600) and Winn-Dixie Pharmacy Lake Buena Vista (☎ 407-465-8606). Turner Drugs (☎ 407-828-8125) charges \$5 to deliver a filled prescription to your hotel's front desk. The service is available to Disney and non-Disney hotels in Turner Drugs' area. The delivery fee will be charged to your hotel account.

**DENTAL EMERGENCIES** Call Celebration Dental Group (☎ 407-566-2222).



## SERVICES

**MESSAGES** Messages left at City Hall in the Magic Kingdom, Guest Relations at Epcot, Hollywood Boulevard Guest Relations at Disney's Hollywood Studios, or Guest Relations at the Animal Kingdom can be retrieved at any of the four park facilities.

**LOCKERS AND PACKAGE PICK-UP** Lockers are available on the ground floor of the Main Street railroad station in the Magic Kingdom, to the right of Spaceship Earth



- 56 in Epcot, and on the east and west ends of the TTC. At Disney's Hollywood Studios, lockers are to the right of the entrance on Hollywood Boulevard at Oscar's Classical Car Souvenirs. At Animal Kingdom, lockers are inside the main entrance to the left. Lockers are \$5 a day plus a \$2 deposit.

Package Pick-Up is available at each major theme park. Ask the salesperson to send your purchases to Package Pick-Up. When you leave the park, they'll be waiting for you. Epcot has two exits, thus two Package Pick-Ups; specify main entrance or International Gateway. If you're staying at a Disney resort, you can also have packages delivered to your hotel's gift shop. If you're leaving within 24 hours, however, take them with you or use the in-park pick-up location.



**CAMERAS AND FILM** Camera centers at the major parks sell disposable cameras for about \$12 (\$19 with flash). Film is available throughout the World. Developing is available at most Disney hotel gift shops. You can also have images from your digital camera's memory card burned to a CD while you're in the parks. The cost is around \$13 for 120 images and around \$6.50 for an additional 120 images. Prints are around 75¢ each. You'll need to

leave your digital media with Disney while they create the CD, which typically takes around two to five hours, so make sure you've got extra media on hand.

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► **UNOFFICIAL TIP** Disney no longer offers film developing at the theme parks.

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**GROCERY STORES** Located in the Crossroads Shopping Center, across FL 535 from the Disney World entrance, Gooding's Supermarket is a large grocery. While its location makes it undeniably convenient, its gourmet selections (cheese, wine, and such) aren't nearly as extensive as they used to be, and if you're just looking for staples, you'll find the prices higher than the Tower of Terror, and just as frightening. For down-to-earth prices and a better selection, try Publix at the intersection of International Drive and US 192, or Winn-Dixie on Apopka-Vineland Road about a mile north of Crossroads Shopping Center.

If you don't have a car or you don't want to take the time to go to the supermarket, GardenGrocer ([gardengrocer.com](http://gardengrocer.com)) will shop for you and deliver your groceries. For orders of \$200 or more, there's no delivery charge; for orders less than \$200, the delivery charge is \$12; a minimum order of \$40 is required. Prices for individual items are pretty much the same as you'd pay at the supermarket. You can also order online at the Gooding's Web site ([goodings.com](http://goodings.com)); a \$50 minimum order is required, and a \$20 service charge applies.



# Where in the World?

Identify where each of these photos was taken.



A: Animal Kingdom Lodge, B: Big Thunder Mountain Railroad in Magic Kingdom's Frontierland, Dinoland U.S.A. D: Big Thunder Mountain Railroad in Magic Kingdom's Frontierland, C: Dinosaur in Animal Kingdom's