

## Bonus: The Disney World Episode

Hi there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is a bonus episode: The Disney World Episode. My family of five went to Disney World for the first time in February of 2023, and I'm going to share with you the 13 things I'm glad we did and the four things we could've done without.

We'll start with the 13 things I'm glad we did.

Number one, get a travel agent. A friend we go to the pool with a literal Disney travel agent, and he was amazing. His name is Darren Watson, and his agency is called Go Now Travel Company. We'll put a link in the show notes if you're in the market, but he was fantastic. He's the loveliest person, he's obsessed with Disney, he knows all the things, but he asked the right questions. He didn't make assumptions on what we wanted to do. He asked what all of our individual kids were into, and when I told him that we didn't do rides or movies, he did not flinch and helped us make great decisions.

I recommend a travel agent for three reasons. One, they know more than you do. Always. Two, a good one is happy to answer any questions whenever you need them. Darren answered my questions while I was at the resort the night before we were going to a theme park where I was like, "Darren, um, how do we get to the park? Are there shuttles?!" And he did not ever make me feel stupid about any question, he answered them enthusiastically, and checked in several times to make sure everything was going well. A good travel agent will answer your questions. And three, travel agents are free. At least a lot are. They're paid by the resorts and hotels and destinations, not by you. It's literally free expertise. I love travel agents, and Darren is an excellent one.

Which leads me to the second and third things I'm glad we did that were both at Darren's suggestion. Two, we stayed at a Disney resort, and three, we got Magic Bands. Let's start with the resort. The resort was a bit more expensive than a hotel, but there are so many different tiers of a resort experience that you can get by without spending a larger fortune than Disney already costs. But several of the many pros to staying at a resort are one, built-in transportation to and from the parks that is so easy; two, the cast members (which is what every Disney employee is called) are so ready to help you have a great *Disney* experience whereas hotel workers don't have the same kind of vested interest, and three, resort guests get into the parks an hour before everybody else. That was actually super rad.

Now to three, the Magic Bands. Magic Bands are not required at Disney, most people I saw had them. They're basically your ticket into everything, and they offer enhancements at certain places in the park. But mostly it was great that any of the five of us could open our room door with our magic band, that our park passes were scanned from our bands, and that we could pay for things with them too. They're designed to be easy and really were. Totally worth the extra

price for us. Plus the kids kept their bands as souvenirs which is cute. I'm not a souvenir person or a nostalgic person, but I'm glad they are, and they kept their Magic Bands.

The fourth thing I'm glad we did was to get a grocery delivery to our resort the day we arrived. We did order so much that the cast member was like "let me get a cart for all of this," but grocery delivery - we did ours from the closest Walmart - was so easy to do. You just choose your resort as the delivery location, and the resorts all have places where those groceries wait for you. Then somebody can help you take them to your room if you need to. We got tiny bottled waters, snacks, and breakfast stuff. So cereal, fruit, bread and butter, and instant oatmeal. Milk, juice, and some snacks. I'll talk about snacks in a minute. But having food in the room was amazingly helpful and way cheaper than trying to find breakfast on the resort when we were trying to make a bus or when we slept in.

Five, I'm glad we used the My Disney app, especially the park map. That thing is magical. You can select what you want to see by category, so you can see where all the characters are at the park. You can see how long the waits are at different rides. You can obviously see where you're going. It's also the app you use if you buy a Lightning Lane pass for a day which I'll also get to in a minute. But that app was our saving grace. I checked it constantly to find whatever we needed. Really solid and great to have downloaded before you need it rather than scrambling for it when you're stressed out because the line for some ride is two hours and you already walked all the way over there.

Six, I am so glad we leaned into seeing characters instead of forcing the kids to ride rides. As I already mentioned, my kids are not ride people, and they're not movie people. It's a weird choice to go to Disney World with those two things being true, but this trip was partly a gift so we rolled with it.

That being said, the characters at Disney are a delight. We waited in line for more than a dozen of them, and every single interaction really was quite magical. My favorite wasn't even a real person. It was a BB8 robot in a super rad Star Wars area, and I oohed and aahed like I saw a puppy. But it was BB8! And he made his noises and stuff and we got a picture! It was so fun. But the characters really were such a great choice, even for our older boys. Everybody leaned into it. So if your family is a bit tired from rides or doesn't have more than a carousel in them, pull up that character map on the app and just go meet people. So worthwhile for us.

Seven, I'm so glad we had a snack bag and didn't have rules about it. In our grocery order was a box of plastic baggies, and every morning before we left, we'd pack up a bunch of snacks in a small backpack that everybody took turns carrying. There were pretzels and crackers and whole apples and dried mango, and any time someone was hungry, they could get something from the snack bag. We did buy a lot of snacks at the park which I'll get to in a minute, but ultimately everybody snacked from the snack bag whenever they wanted something. Putting parameters on what you could eat and when you could it was too exhausting to manage, so we took away the management. We packed things that anybody could eat at any time, and it was such a great choice to keep the children from getting hangry.

Eight, I'm so glad we got as much ice cream as we did. This was the one snack we would buy whenever we saw it and whenever anybody wanted it: ice cream. Our entire family's favorite food moment and for some of us our favorite moment was on the first day after we watched the Indiana Jones show which my kids were mostly scared of, we walked out happy from the show and sort of glad it was over and walked right up to this dinosaur shaped soft serve ice cream shop by a big fountain. They just had chocolate and vanilla, and we all got our cups and cones at 11am and eat them in the slivers of shade we could find, and it was seriously the best. It was delicious ice cream for one, but the spontaneity of one kid sheepishly asking if we could get ice cream and us saying an enthusiastic yes and then eating it all together by this fountain was seriously so fun and weirdly special. And it led to us getting ice cream every day, sometimes twice. Whenever there was an ice cream shop and fairly hungry family, we'd stop. It was so fun.

Nine, I'm so glad we made lunch reservations. Most days we didn't make it at the parks past 4pm, but we also started every day by 8am or whenever that park let us in. When you have little kids, that's mostly how it goes I guess. So because we didn't stay in the parks into dinner, we would order dinner from one of the restaurants close to our resort, and we would focus on lunch being a really restful, restorative experience. Not just the food but the sitting down. I will say we lucked into a couple of our lunch reservations. Most restaurants were totally booked, but I snagged a couple of tables when I fully did not expect to. So all that said, I would make reservations at restaurants if you can, and your travel agent can help you do that, too. I don't even remember where we ate, but there was an Italian place in Hollywood Studios that we loved, and we also ate at the Lady and the Tramp restaurant in The Magic Kingdom. I don't remember details of things, so that's sadly all I've got for you. But a 1-2pm lunch reservation worked so well for us with the snack bag and the 11am ice cream. We could rest, talk about what we still had left to do, and have enough energy to make it another couple of hours.

Ten, I am so glad - like *so glad* - we went to the parade at Magic Kingdom. Holy moly that thing was amazing, and we honestly happened upon it. Every single day in front of Cinderella's castle, there is a parade at 12pm and at 3pm. I think we saw the one at 12pm, and it was incredible. The Adachi family loves parades, so we're easily impressed, but this parade was outrageous. So well done. So visually stunning. Great performances, and there were lots of places to see it well. We stood up on a railing coming up over the hill to Cinderella's castle because we heard a bunch of commotion, and it was just beyond. Please please please be sure you go see that parade. It's amazing and absolutely worth it.

Eleven, I'm so glad we brought water. I think there were places for you to get water, but they weren't obvious to me. We bought tiny water bottles as part of our grocery order, and we'd pack a few every day in that little backpack. It was so great to never have to hunt for water, and the little bottles were so much lighter than carrying around actual metal water bottles would've been. Staying hydrated at Disney feels super important, and we weren't even there in the summer. Drink a lot of water, and however you get it, just get it. We were happy with our choice to get it in the form of the tiny water bottles.

Twelve, I'm so glad we saw the fireworks. Well, I'm glad ¾ of the family did. The fireworks at Magic Kingdom and EPCOT are pretty great, but they start at 9pm or something. We left it up to Annie if she wanted to go back out to see them, but she usually goes to bed at 7:30pm and was tapped out. So I stayed home with her while Kaz took the boys, and they all loved it. Said it was one of their favorite parts. And because we're at a Disney resort, getting back and forth was really quick for them. Like, really quick. I expected them to be back after I went to bed, and they were not.

By the way, we stayed at Saratoga Springs Resort. It's the chilliest, least expensive resort, and we liked it a lot.

And finally, the 13th thing I'm so glad we did was to not rush and stress. Now, granted this was easier for us because we didn't ride many rides. We didn't have to waste a lot of time in lines so we got to see pretty much everything we wanted to. But just the overall vibe of taking our time and enjoying what we saw and not forcing anything made for a really lovely Disney experience.

Please do not assume, however, that we did not have your normal Disney breakdowns. We absolutely did. In fact, be sure to check out the highlight on my Instagram profile of our Disney trip. And if you got the Latest Lazy Letter in March, you got to read the cotton candy story. It was not scene after scene of our family holding hands and lovingly laughing with each other. Absolutely not. But not having a rushed energy and being okay with only seeing what was most important was easily the best decision we made. It made everything magical because nothing was on a pedestal.

And as we close, these are five things we didn't really need to do or would've done differently.

Number one, we would've gone to Animal Kingdom instead of EPCOT, and if we had still gone to EPCOT, we would have gone to that *before* the other parks, not as our last park. Basically EPCOT is real boring to young kids after you've been in the most magical Magic Kingdom, at least that was true of our family. We skipped Animal Kingdom because we have a great zoo near us and didn't want to spend our time looking at animals we get to see a couple of times a year. However, we do love a zoo, and our kids didn't care about all the little countries you could walk to. Apparently we're not a fan of culture, so we would've skipped that. Or at the very least had started at Hollywood Studios, done EPCOT on day two, and Magic Kingdom on day three. We only did three days of parks on a five day trip.

Number two, we would've skipped using the Lightning Lane pass. Lightning Lane is a great setup where you can get one of the limited Lightning Lane spots so you can jump ahead in line on something, and then once you do that thing, you can pick your next thing. It's like a relay race of getting ahead in line. But when you do things that don't really have long lines, it's kind of a waste. We didn't need it. If you love roller coasters, it's without question worth it. If not, save that money.

Number three, we didn't get the Disney photo package, and I'm totally fine with that. Like I said, we're not super nostalgic. We don't have a lot of photo albums - any really - and I'm happy with the photos we grab from our phone. Now, were there a couple of places where it would've been nice to scan a band and let the professional photographer take our photo? Yes, especially in front of Cinderella's castle. That's a tough place to take a selfie and see everything. But it wasn't that important to us, so it wasn't a big deal that we skipped it. If having access and ease around photos matters to you, I think it's totally worth checking out.

Number four, we could've done without the oversight of having one adult have both cell phones. At one point, Kaz had the backpack which had my phone in it plus his own phone in his pocket. Sam, Annie, and I somehow got separated from him and Ben in the Star Wars area, and we could not find them for what felt like forever. It was unfortunate that he had both phones, so if you go with another adult and you're not wearing an Apple watch or something, please keep your own phone on your own person.

And finally number five which is pretty controversial, I could've gone without the pineapple Dole Whip. It didn't really like it. We actually tried three different flavors and waited in a very long line for them, and it wasn't worth it. If you remember from my stories, that was the same ice cream experience where I had to get change from a stranger so I could ask two people in the front of the line to take my four dollars to get another chocolate ice cream for me because Annie didn't know what a swirl was and hated that vanilla was messing up her chocolate ice cream in the cone I had just ordered and had stood in line a long time for. That was a whole situation. But if I ever go back which is unlikely, I'd skip the Dole Whip. You're allowed to hate me for that.

And that's the list! Magic Kingdom was absolutely our family's favorite park. We loved it so much. Hollywood Studios was also fantastic, and EPCOT was a bit of a bummer, again because it's a sad final park when you're tired, used to magic, and it's ten degrees hotter than it had been on the other two days. But Magic Kingdom was indeed full of magic. We loved it.

And that's the Disney episode! I hope some of these things help you as you think through your own trip to Disney if you ever take one, and more than anything, name what matters to you about the trip. Make all your choices in support of that. You don't have to do Disney the way other people do Disney. Enjoy it the way you want to.

Alright, y'all, thanks for listening! Until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't! I'm Kendra, and I'll see you on Monday.