

FODOR'S WALT DISNEY WORLD 2011: DISNEY NEWS

Mickey Mouse. Tinker Bell. Cinderella. What would childhood be like without the magic of Disney? When kids (and let's be honest, adults, too) want to go to "the" theme park, they're heading to Disney. Here you're walking amid people from around the world and meeting characters like Snow White and Donald Duck while rides whirl nonstop and the irrepressible "It's a Small World" tune and lyrics run through your head. You can't help but believe dreams really do come true here.

The secret to enjoying Disney is to have a good plan and the flexibility to take detours when magical moments occur. You probably can persuade your children to rush to the big-deal rides early in the morning when timing matters most, but don't expect them to keep up that pace all day. Cushion your itinerary with extra time, so they can pause when the spirit moves them. Let your motto be "quality over quantity." It's better to tour the parks in a relaxed fashion. Why disappoint your little ones by passing up the chance to hobnob with Princess Jasmine in your hurry to get to Pirates of the Caribbean— only to find a 30-minute wait at the ride entrance.

It's also important that your kids are involved in the vacation planning and are aware of the need for a park strategy. Let each family member choose one or two top rides or attractions for each park. Everything else should be icing on the cake. Run through the plan before you enter the park; if children know ahead of time that souvenirs are limited to one per person and that ice-cream snacks come after lunch, they're likely to be more patient than if they're clueless about your plans and dazzled by every merchandise cart they encounter.

What's New

In 2008 Disney closed the six Pleasure Island nightclubs at Downtown Disney to transform the area into a dining, shopping, family entertainment destination.

So far, a well-received restaurant, Paradiso 37, has opened, and a Latin chicken-restaurant chain, Pollo Campera, known for its healthful options, is slated to replace the Marketplace's McDonald's. Tethered on the West Side, the Characters in Flight helium balloon now affords 400-foot-high, 360-degree, fair-weather kingdom views. Disney's Wide World of Sports, south of Hollywood Studios off of Osceola Parkway, has been given an ESPN theme and name change to ESPN Wide World of Sports and will soon unveil a 100-lane bowling center.

Meanwhile, in the Magic Kingdom, Mickey's Toontown Fair is slated to close, making way for a Fantasyland expansion—the biggest thing to happen here since Mickey's Birthdayland opened in 1988 and then morphed into Toontown Fair. The "re-imagined" Fantasyland is expected to open in 2013 with a new Dumbo ride, a three-ring-circus tent, and a *Beauty and the Beast*-themed castle, complete with a library for Story Time with Belle. Over at Hollywood Studios, the force will be with you in a big way with the 3-D immersion version of the Star Tours attraction. Disney Cruise Line has expanded its fleet, with the new *Disney Dream*; a fourth vessel, the *Disney Fantasy*, is slated to launch in 2012. Disney also has more lodging, dining, and shopping area plans on the drawing board, so stay tuned. . . .