



# Take the money worries out of a trip to Disney World

Live it up in the Magic Kingdom for a reasonable price

**W**alt Disney World, in Orlando, Fla., is a fantastic destination for family fun, but the costs for lodging, admission and food may dampen the mood for the grown-ups. Try these savvy strategies to save. *By Caren Weiner Campbell*



## Lodge for less

Find a fun hotel at a good price.

**✓ Look into Disney's value resorts.** Rooms at the All-Star Movies, All-Star Music, All-Star Sports and Pop Century resorts go for as little as \$82 a night. As at all the Disney hotels, guests enjoy themed pools, free transportation to all parks, and four "Extra Magic Hours" at one park each day (one in the morning and three in the evening). The bonus time lets you come home for an afternoon nap or swim without fearing you're squandering irreplaceable hours of fun.

campsite with running water, grill and electricity can be had for \$46 a night. The 750-acre campground (which also offers costlier cabins) is just across a lake from the Magic Kingdom. It hosts nightly campfires with sing-alongs and screenings of classic Disney films, and boasts a sandy beach and shaded bike trails (you can rent bicycles or bring your own).



Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground



All-Star Music Resort

**✓ Go camping.**

Outdoorsy types can pitch a tent or park their RV at Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground, where a

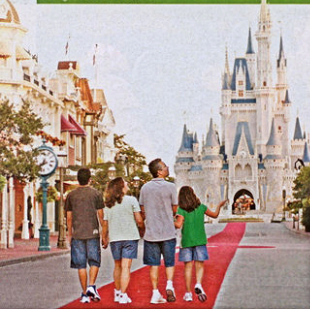
**✓ Stay at a non-Disney hotel.**

Search travel sites such as [www.sidestep.com](http://www.sidestep.com) and [www.mousesavers.com](http://www.mousesavers.com) for less expensive hotels in nearby Kissimmee and Lake Buena Vista. Many run free shuttles to the parks.

**✓ Split your stay.**

Bunk with Disney for the days you'll spend at the Disney theme parks, and then move to lower-priced lodgings when you're ready to focus on other Orlando sights.





## Buy the best tickets

Passes are pricey, so buy only the options you'll use.

**✓ Plan ahead.** The "Magic Your Way" base ticket (starting at \$67 plus tax for a one-day adult pass) admits you to only one theme park—Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Disney-MGM Studios or Animal Kingdom—per day. Note that each is considered a separate park, so plan accordingly. If you want more flexibility to, say, hit the Magic Kingdom for a ride on Space Mountain and then pop over to Disney-MGM Studios for a live performance of *Beauty and the Beast*, consider the Park Hopper Option (a one-time fee of roughly \$45 per ticket). To visit such Disney attractions as Blizzard Beach and Typhoon Lagoon, plus Downtown

Disney's Pleasure Island, DisneyQuest or the Wide World of Sports Complex, add the Water Park Fun & More Option (a one-time fee of about \$50 per ticket). When you book your trip, find out if there are any promotions going on; these sometimes include discounts on extra ticket options.

**✓ Get an annual pass.** If you're going to be at Disney World for more than 11 days over the course of a year, it may be worth investing in an annual pass. (For ages 10 and up, the cost starts at \$434 plus tax.) You get 365 days of unlimited admission to all four theme parks.

## Budget your meals

Compromise by splurging on one meal a day and cutting costs on others.

**✓ Take advantage of the fridge in your room.** At the Disney value resorts you need to request a fridge—possibly for a small fee—but many hotels provide them for free. Buy and store your own milk, yogurt, juice and pantry goods. Eat cereal or muffins in the room for breakfast. Then, before you head to the parks, stash some small snacks in a backpack for travel between parks. Freeze bottles of water overnight and take a few with you to drink throughout the day.

**✓ Fire up the grill.** Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground and many motels in the Orlando area (like Kissimmee's Days Inn Maingate East) have built-in grills and picnic tables for guest use. Stop by a grocery store for hot dogs or chicken and have a cookout dinner.

**✓ Enjoy a lunchtime feast.** For lunch choose a favorite fancy Disney World restaurant such as Disney-MGM Studios' Hollywood Brown Derby or Epcot's Le Cellier Steakhouse and Les Chefs de France. You can enjoy the same dishes you would eat for dinner—for far less money.

**✓ Share your servings.** Many Disney World restaurants dish out portions that are big enough for two, especially two kids. Order shareable meals like the half-chicken and barbecue ribs combo at Cosmic Ray's Starlight Café in the Magic Kingdom, or the half-chicken meal at the Animal

Kingdom's Tusker House Restaurant & Bakery.

**✓ Pursue promotions.** Many Orlando-area eateries, such as Beef 'O' Brady's ([www.beefobradys.com](http://www.beefobradys.com)), Roadhouse Grill ([www.roadhousegrill.com](http://www.roadhousegrill.com)) and Shoney's ([www.shoneys.com](http://www.shoneys.com)), regularly feature kids-eat-free days, as do some hotel chains, like Holiday Inn ([www.holidayinn.com](http://www.holidayinn.com)). And remember, many hotels offer complimentary breakfast.



## Is a package right for you?

Consult the Disney World Web site ([disneyworld.disneygo.com](http://disneyworld.disneygo.com)) to decide if a package suits your needs.

- ▶ Factor in all family members. The Dining Plan option, a prepaid credit good for two on-site meals and one snack per person per day, probably is not worth the (nonrefundable) cost if your young kids eat only PB&J.
- ▶ Before you buy any vacation packages, figure out the approximate cost of buying everything—hotels, airfare, meals—separately.
- ▶ Packages may be convenient, but they don't always give you the best deal since you often can't combine them with outside discounts (like those offered by AAA).

Reality Check

I did it!

“I bought clearance items at a local Disney store and doled them out to my kids during our trip; we saved a lot on souvenirs.”

—Sharon Cornacchini, 40, Zionsville, Ind.

