

THE 7220 TRAVEL

COMPLETE DISNEYLAND

PLANNING GUIDE

MAKE DISNEYLAND YOURS

Family-first strategies for Disneyland Park, Disney California Adventure, hotels, Lightning Lane, dining, kids, multigenerational travel and more.

DISNEYLAND PARK ⇌ 5-MINUTE ESPLANADE ⇌ DISNEY CALIFORNIA ADVENTURE

THE 7220 TRAVEL APPROACH

Plan the experiences that matter. Leave room for the trip to surprise you. You are not trying to “win” Disneyland.

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Welcome: Make Disneyland Yours

Disneyland can be wonderfully simple compared with Walt Disney World - but simple does not mean automatic. The two parks are close together, the hotel decision is different, Park Hopper can be genuinely useful, and the Lightning Lane rhythm is not the same as Florida.

This guide is built around one idea: a good plan should remove stress, not replace your vacation with a schedule. Choose what matters to your family, understand the systems before you arrive, and leave enough flexibility to enjoy the moments you never planned.

DAVE'S FIRST RULE

Do not try to win Disneyland. You cannot ride everything, eat everywhere, see every character and catch every show in one trip. Pick priorities. Everything else is a bonus.

What this guide will help you decide

BEFORE YOU BOOK

- How many park days make sense
- 1 Park Per Day vs. Park Hopper
- Disney hotel vs. Good Neighbor/off-site
- Which airport and ground transportation fit your family
- When to make park and dining reservations

BEFORE EACH PARK DAY

- Your top 3 attractions
- Whether Lightning Lane adds value
- Rope drop vs. later start
- Where your midday reset will happen
- Where meals fit without running the day

The 7220 Travel planning lens

- Time is part of the budget. A cheaper hotel is not always cheaper if it creates long transportation days.
- Walking distance matters more at Disneyland than many first-timers expect.
- A tired family does not make better memories by forcing one more attraction.
- The internet has a "perfect" strategy for someone else. Build one for your family.

Don't Plan Disneyland Like Walt Disney World

If you already know Walt Disney World, your instincts can actually make Disneyland harder. Disneyland Resort is compact: Disneyland Park and Disney California Adventure face each other across the Main Entrance Esplanade, and Disney says the gates are about a 5-minute walk apart.

AT DISNEYLAND	WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR FAMILY
2 theme parks, gates facing each other	Park hopping can be practical instead of a transportation project.
Downtown Disney + 3 Disney hotels are walkable	You can build a trip with very little internal transportation.
Lightning Lane selections begin after park entry	You do not pre-select 3 attractions days before the trip.
Many nearby non-Disney hotels are walkable	Hotel strategy should include actual walking route, not just mileage.
Southern California weather varies by hour	Layers often matter more than ponchos.
Walt Disney's original park	History, scale and details are a big part of the Disneyland experience.

THE “FIVE-MINUTE” ADVANTAGE

If your ticket has Park Hopper benefits, switching parks can be as simple as crossing the Esplanade. That changes how you can handle dining, nighttime entertainment and attraction availability.

What stays the same

- Comfortable shoes still matter.
- Dining reservations can help - but too many can anchor your whole day.
- Popular attractions can build long waits quickly.
- You still need hydration, breaks and realistic expectations.
- The best family memory may not be something you scheduled.

Current park-hopping and walk-time information verified Sept. 11, 2026 using Disneyland Resort official guidance.

IMPORTANT DATES

Your Disneyland Planning Timeline

Disney changes procedures. Use this as your planning framework, then verify the Disneyland app and official website for your exact dates.

WHEN	WHAT TO DO
6-12+ MONTHS	Choose travel dates, trip length, rough budget and hotel strategy. Compare school calendars, seasonal events and airfare.
UP TO 180 DAYS	In 2026, Disney advertises theme park reservations opening up to 180 days ahead. Secure admission and required park reservations when your dates are firm.
60 DAYS	Book selected dining and popular reservable experiences. Dining reservations can currently open up to 60 days ahead.
30 DAYS	Finalize airport/ground transportation, stroller plan, mobility needs and park-day priorities. Check refurbishments.
7 DAYS	Lightning Lane Premier Pass can currently be purchased in the Disneyland app up to 7 days ahead, starting at 7:00 AM PT, subject to very limited availability.
1-2 DAYS	Check park hours, nighttime shows, weather, event-night closures and attraction refurbishments. Charge portable batteries.
PARK MORNING	Enter your reserved starting park. If using Multi Pass, make your first attraction selection after you enter. Single Pass purchases are also made after park entry.

DO NOT BUILD THE TRIP AROUND ONE DATE

Reservation windows tell you when you may book. They do not tell you what your family actually needs. Start with priorities, then use the booking windows to support them.

Sources: Disneyland Resort planning guidance, dining FAQ and Lightning Lane guidance. Reservation availability, products and policies can change.

Tickets, Park Reservations & Park Hopper

Disneyland Resort currently sells 1- to 5-day tickets. Guests ages 3+ need valid admission and a park reservation for the same park and date. Ages 10+ use adult ticket pricing; ages 3-9 use child pricing; children age 2 and under do not need a theme park ticket.

1 PARK PER DAY	PARK HOPPER
• Best when you want a simpler, slower day • Works well for 2-day trips with one full day in each park • Can save money compared with Hopper • Less temptation to chase wait times across both parks	• Lets you visit both parks on the same day • Useful because the gates are about a 5-minute walk apart • Great for repeating favorites or switching nighttime entertainment • Helpful on 3+ day trips when you want flexibility

2026 PARK HOPPER UPDATE

As of June 9, 2026, Disneyland's current official FAQ says there is no park-hopping time restriction. Enter your reserved starting park first; after that, you may hop to the other park at any time, subject to capacity.

Important: some older Disney pages and third-party articles may still mention an 11:00 AM hopping time. When this guide was verified, Disney's current "Multiple Parks" FAQ stated there is no waiting period. Check the app for your travel dates.

Before you hit "purchase"

- Confirm your dates and park reservation availability.
- Decide whether Hopper is solving a real problem or just adding cost.
- If buying Lightning Lane Multi Pass as a ticket add-on, make sure every traveler who needs it is covered.
- Do not lock in a park plan without checking special-event nights and operating hours.

Verified Sept. 11, 2026. Official Disneyland ticket and Multiple Parks FAQs are listed in Sources.

How Many Disneyland Days Do You Need?

There is no universal “right” number, but there is a meaningful difference between seeing Disneyland and having time to enjoy it.

PARK DAYS	BEST FOR	7220 TRAVEL TAKE
1 day	A local stop, repeat visitors, very limited time	Choose one park. Trying to “do both” can turn the day into a highlight reel instead of a vacation.
2 days	First visit with tight schedule	One full day per park. Hopper is optional, not essential.
3 days	Most first-time families	Sweet spot: 2 Disneyland-focused days + 1 DCA-focused day, with Hopper flexibility if budget allows.
4 days	Families with young kids, grandparents or a slower pace	Allows shorter park days, repeat favorites and less pressure to force every attraction.
5 days	Disney-focused vacation or very relaxed pace	Excellent for breaks and repeats, but consider whether a rest/SoCal day adds more value than a fifth full park day.

DAVE'S DEFAULT FOR A FIRST TRIP

Start by pricing 3 park days. It gives you enough time to learn the resort on Day 1, adjust on Day 2, and revisit favorites on Day 3 without planning open-to-close every day.

Add a travel day on each end when you can

A late flight into Southern California followed by rope drop is a rough way to start. Likewise, a full park day followed by a red-eye home can erase the recovery you thought you were getting. Protect arrival and departure days when the budget and school calendar allow it.

Set Up the Disneyland App Before You Go

At Disneyland, your phone can be your ticket wallet, park map, wait-time board, dining tool, Lightning Lane planner, PhotoPass hub and hotel key. Set it up before you are standing at the turnstile.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Download/update the Disneyland app | ☐ Save a payment method |
| ☐ Sign in to the correct MyDisney account | ☐ Practice finding the map and wait times |
| ☐ Link every traveler's admission | ☐ Learn Mobile Food & Beverage Ordering |
| ☐ Confirm park reservations | ☐ Know where "Lightning Lane Passes" lives |
| ☐ Link the hotel reservation if applicable | ☐ Pack a portable charger + cable |
| ☐ Turn on needed notifications | ☐ Screenshot critical confirmations as backup |

Who controls the plans?

For larger families and multigenerational groups, decide who will manage Lightning Lane and dining before the trip. Too many people changing plans can create chaos; one "app captain" with a backup usually works better.

PHONE-FREE MOMENTS ARE PART OF THE PLAN

Once the app has done its job, put it away. The goal is to reduce friction around the experiences you care about - not turn the vacation into a refresh button.

Where to Stay: The 3 Disneyland Resort Hotels

Disneyland Resort currently has three Disney hotels. The reason to pay the premium is usually not “free transportation.” It is location, access, atmosphere and convenience.

HOTEL	WHY FAMILIES CONSIDER IT
Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa	Premium proximity; direct access to Disney California Adventure; strong choice when midday breaks need to be truly easy.
Disneyland Hotel	Classic Disneyland history and theming; convenient access through Downtown Disney and the nearby Monorail option into Disneyland Park when operating.
Pixar Place Hotel	Pixar-forward theming and resort-hotel benefits; useful for families who want the Disney hotel experience at a different price point than Grand Californian.

IMPORTANT 2026 CHANGE

The old 30-minute Early Entry hotel benefit ended January 5, 2026. The current hotel benefit is one complimentary Lightning Lane entry per registered Guest age 3+ to one eligible Multi Pass attraction during the Resort stay. It does not include Single Pass attractions or the other Multi Pass benefits.

When on-site can be worth it

- You know your family will take midday hotel breaks.
- A short walk matters more than extra room space.
- You value Disney theming and resort time as part of the vacation.
- You are traveling with young kids, grandparents or mobility considerations where proximity reduces friction.

Hotel benefits verified Sept. 11, 2026. Benefits, eligible attractions and procedures can change.

Good Neighbor & Off-Site Hotels: Ask Better Questions

Disney promotes 50+ approved Good Neighbor Hotels in 2026. But “near Disneyland” can mean very different things in practice. For many families, the real question is not “Disney or non-Disney?” It is “what will our mornings, breaks and nights actually feel like?”

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
What is the actual walking route?	A hotel can look close on a map but require a long entrance route, street crossing or shuttle.
Can everyone handle that walk twice a day?	The walk feels different after 20,000 steps, with a stroller or at 11:30 PM.
Is breakfast included?	Can save both money and morning decision-making.
Room layout / sleeping surfaces?	Family fit matters more than a pretty lobby. Confirm real bedding and occupancy.
Pool + downtime quality?	A “rest day” only works if the hotel supports rest.
Parking / resort / destination fees?	Compare total trip cost, not the headline nightly rate.
Shuttle frequency and stroller rules?	A shuttle that does not fit your schedule can become the most stressful part of the trip.

DAVE'S HOTEL RULE

Do not confuse miles with convenience. At Disneyland, I would rather know the walking route, door-to-gate time and family fit than simply know a hotel is “0.7 miles away.”

Your hotel priorities

Circle your top three: WALKABILITY | PRICE | BREAKFAST | POOL | ROOM SPACE | DISNEY THEMING | MIDDAY BREAK ACCESS | PARKING | QUIET

Getting to Anaheim & Getting Around

Unlike Walt Disney World, you do not need to build your Disneyland vacation around resort buses. Once you are in the resort area, walking can do a surprising amount of the work.

AIRPORT	APPROX. DISTANCE / USE CASE
John Wayne (SNA)	Disney lists SNA first among nearby airports; approximately 15 miles from the Resort. Often the easiest airport to price first.
Long Beach (LGB)	A compact airport roughly 13 miles away by straight-line/typical references; worth comparing for schedule and airfare.
Los Angeles (LAX)	Approximately 40 miles. Often has the most flight options, but traffic and transfer time can be significant.
Ontario (ONT)	Another Southern California option; can make sense depending on airfare and where else you are visiting.
San Diego (SAN)	Approximately 96 miles. Useful for a combined San Diego + Disneyland trip; rail options can connect San Diego and Anaheim.

THE RESORT ITSELF IS COMPACT

Disney lists Disneyland Park, Disney California Adventure, Downtown Disney and all three Disneyland Resort hotels as walkable from one another.

Ground transportation checklist

- Compare rideshare/private transfer/rental car total cost - including car seats, parking and hotel fees.
- If using a rental car only for part of the trip, consider whether you actually need it on park days.
- Build traffic time into airport transfers. Southern California mileage is not the same thing as drive time.
- For multigenerational groups, choose the option that minimizes transfers and luggage handling, not just the cheapest quote.

Airport and walkability details: Disneyland Resort official transportation guidance. Distances are approximate; traffic varies.

Disneyland Park: Your Strategy

Disneyland Park rewards families who combine priorities with wandering. The park is smaller than Magic Kingdom, but it is dense with attractions, history and details. Avoid zig-zagging across the park for every small wait-time change.

HIGH-PRIORITY ZONES

- Fantasyland: classics + younger-kid density
- Tomorrowland: Space Mountain, Star Tours and more
- Adventureland / New Orleans Square: Indiana Jones, Pirates, Haunted Mansion area
- Bayou Country: Tiana's Bayou Adventure and nearby favorites
- Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge: Rise of the Resistance + Smugglers Run

SLOW-DOWN ZONES

- Main Street, U.S.A.: details, shops, Walt history
- Sleeping Beauty Castle walkthrough and central hub
- Mickey's Toontown: family play + Runaway Railway
- Frontierland / Rivers of America area: atmosphere and breaks
- Galaxy's Edge: explore the land instead of treating it as two rides

A practical first-timer approach

1. Pick 3 "must-do" attractions for the whole family before the trip.
2. At rope drop, start in one zone instead of crossing the park repeatedly.
3. Use Lightning Lane to reduce friction around the attractions that matter - not to chase every possible booking.
4. Protect a midday reset if your group is fading.
5. Save at least one evening for the park after dark; lighting and atmosphere change the experience.

DO NOT MISS THE HISTORY

This is the park Walt Disney actually walked. If someone in your family is more interested in design, architecture or history than characters, Disneyland Park gives them plenty to notice.

Disneyland Park Height Requirements

Check height requirements before a child falls in love with an attraction they cannot yet board. Disney can remeasure at the attraction; shoes, hats and “close enough” are not a strategy.

MINIMUM	ATTRACTIONS
32" + accompanied by rider 54"+	Autopia (54" to ride alone)
35"	Gadget's Go Coaster
38"	Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run
40"	Big Thunder Mountain Railroad; Space Mountain; Tiana's Bayou Adventure; Star Tours; Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance
42"	Matterhorn Bobsleds
46"	Indiana Jones Adventure

If one child cannot ride

Ask about Rider Switch. Disney currently describes Rider Switch as available at attractions throughout both parks. Bring the entire group to the attraction greeting Cast Member; Party 2 is limited to a maximum of two people under the current process.

TURN HEIGHT LIMITS INTO A PLAN - NOT A DISAPPOINTMENT

Give the non-rider something specific to look forward to: a nearby attraction, snack, play area or character. “You cannot ride” lands very differently when it is followed by “Here is what we get to do.”

Height requirements and Rider Switch process verified Sept. 11, 2026. Check the Disneyland app for changes.

Disney California Adventure: Your Strategy

Disney California Adventure is not “the second park.” It has some of the resort’s biggest headliners, excellent food, strong nighttime atmosphere and lands that reward exploring.

HEADLINER AREAS

- Cars Land: Radiator Springs Racers + nighttime neon atmosphere
- Avengers Campus: WEB SLINGERS, Guardians nearby, character action
- Pixar Pier: Incredicoaster + Toy Story Midway Mania
- Grizzly Peak: Soarin’ + Grizzly River Run
- Hollywood Land: indoor entertainment and family-friendly breaks

EASY FAMILY WINS

- The Little Mermaid - Ariel’s Undersea Adventure
- Monsters, Inc. Mike & Sulley to the Rescue!
- Mater’s Junkyard Jamboree and Luigi’s Rollickin’ Roadsters
- San Fransokyo Square for food + a reset
- World of Color when offered - but plan viewing intentionally

CARS LAND AFTER DARK

If your schedule allows it, see Cars Land in daylight and after the neon comes on. It is one of those “the land itself is the attraction” moments.

DCA routing tip

Do not let a changing wait-time board pull you from Cars Land to Pixar Pier to Avengers Campus and back again. Pick a zone, experience it, then move. Less crisscrossing usually creates a better day even if your theoretical ride count is slightly lower.

Disney California Adventure Height Requirements

MINIMUM	ATTRACTIONS
32"	Mater's Junkyard Jamboree; Luigi's Rollickin' Roadsters
40"	Jumpin' Jellyfish; Guardians of the Galaxy - Mission: BREAKOUT!; Radiator Springs Racers; Silly Symphony Swings (tandem); Soarin'
42"	Goofy's Sky School; Grizzly River Run; selected Redwood Creek Challenge Trail elements
48"	Incredicoaster; Silly Symphony Swings (single swing)

Build “together time” around no-height-requirement attractions

- The Little Mermaid - Ariel's Undersea Adventure
- Toy Story Midway Mania!
- Monsters, Inc. Mike & Sulley to the Rescue!
- Jessie's Critter Carousel
- Animation / indoor entertainment options when available
- Food and exploration through San Fransokyo Square

RIDER SWITCH IS NOT ONLY FOR “TOO SHORT”

Disney's current Rider Switch criteria can also apply when a Guest meets the boarding requirement but does not want to ride and cannot wait outside the queue alone, plus certain service-animal situations. Ask a Cast Member at the attraction.

Height requirements verified Sept. 11, 2026 using Disneyland Resort official FAQ. Attraction names and offerings can change.

Lightning Lane Without Letting Your Phone Run the Day

Disneyland's Lightning Lane system is different from Walt Disney World's advance-selection system. At Disneyland, Multi Pass selections begin after you enter a theme park.

PRODUCT	HOW IT WORKS
Multi Pass	Can be added in advance to eligible tickets or purchased same day after park entry, subject to availability. Make the first attraction selection after entering; after redemption or 2 hours after making the selection, choose another. Selections are one at a time.
Single Pass	Separate paid access for select high-demand attractions. Current choices: Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance and Radiator Springs Racers. Purchase after entering a park, subject to availability.
Premier Pass	One-time Lightning Lane entry to each available Lightning Lane attraction in both parks for one day, without scheduling arrival windows. Can currently be purchased up to 7 days ahead at 7:00 AM PT, in very limited quantities.

DAVE'S LIGHTNING LANE RULE

Start with your family's must-do rides, not an internet ranking. If Lightning Lane saves meaningful waiting on what matters, it is doing its job.

Multi Pass rhythm

ENTER PARK → choose first available Multi Pass attraction → redeem it OR wait 2 hours from selection → choose next → repeat one selection at a time. With Park Hopper admission, eligible selections can be made in both parks.

Photo value

Multi Pass and Premier Pass currently include unlimited downloads of eligible Disney PhotoPass digital photos from the park day, including select attraction photos and select in-park photographer images. Photo terms and availability can change.

Lightning Lane rules verified Sept. 11, 2026. Prices intentionally omitted because they vary by date and can change.

Current Lightning Lane Attraction Snapshot

DISNEYLAND PARK - MULTI PASS	DCA - MULTI PASS
• Autopia • Big Thunder Mountain Railroad • Buzz Lightyear Astro Blasters • Haunted Mansion • Indiana Jones Adventure • "it's a small world" • Matterhorn Bobsleds • Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway • Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run • Roger Rabbit's Car Toon Spin • Space Mountain • Star Tours • Tiana's Bayou Adventure	• Goofy's Sky School • Grizzly River Run • Guardians of the Galaxy - Mission: BREAKOUT! • Incredicoaster • The Little Mermaid - Ariel's Undersea Adventure • Monsters, Inc. Mike & Sulley to the Rescue! • Soarin' Across America • Toy Story Midway Mania! • WEB SLINGERS: A Spider-Man Adventure

SINGLE PASS ATTRACTIONS

Disneyland Park: Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance. Disney California Adventure: Radiator Springs Racers. Both are also included with Premier Pass when available.

Attractions can be added, removed, refurbished or unavailable on your visit. Treat this list as a planning snapshot, not a guarantee.

Current attraction list from Disneyland Resort Lightning Lane page, verified Sept. 11, 2026.

Disneyland Dining Without the Hangry Family

One of the easiest ways to wreck a park day is waiting until everyone is hungry before deciding where to eat. Decide which meals are experiences and which meals are simply fuel.

RESERVATION MEALS

- Book selected restaurants up to 60 days ahead
- Use table service for celebrations or restaurants you genuinely care about
- Character dining can combine food, a break and character interaction
- Do not schedule so many meals that the day becomes reservation-to-reservation

FLEXIBLE MEALS

- Use Mobile Food & Beverage Ordering at participating locations
- Order before the family hits crisis mode
- Use snacks strategically, especially with younger kids
- Check mobile walk-up availability for selected table-service restaurants

Character dining to research

- Minnie & Friends - Breakfast in the Park at Plaza Inn (park admission/reservation required).
- Goofy's Kitchen at Disneyland Hotel.
- Storytellers Cafe at Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa.
- Disney Princess Breakfast Adventures at Napa Rose.

Popular "is it worth it for us?" reservations

Blue Bayou, Lamplight Lounge, Carthay Circle Restaurant, Cafe Orleans and other signature experiences can be excellent - but only if the experience matters more to your family than the time commitment. Menus and availability change.

RESERVATION ≠ PARK ENTRY

An in-park dining reservation does not replace the requirement for valid theme park admission and the applicable park reservation.

Dining reservation window verified Sept. 11, 2026 using Disneyland Resort dining FAQ.

Rope Drop, Midday Reset & Late Nights

ROPE DROP WORKS WHEN...

- Your family naturally wakes early
- You can arrive without fighting about the morning
- Headliners matter enough to justify the effort
- You are willing to go to bed earlier the night before

LATE NIGHTS WORK WHEN...

- Kids are older or can sleep in
- Nighttime atmosphere matters
- You would rather avoid an early-morning battle
- Your family handles evening energy better than morning energy

The midday reset

- Leave when heat, crowds and fatigue start changing everyone's mood.
- Swim, nap, shower, change clothes, eat or sit somewhere quiet.
- Return with a family that actually wants to be in the park.
- If staying farther away, build a "park reset" using a long meal, indoor show or quiet zone instead of a full hotel return.

YOU PAID FOR THE VACATION - NOT FOR EXHAUSTION

Leaving the parks for three hours is not wasting money if it gives you six better hours later.

Park Hopper makes resets more flexible

Because the park gates are so close, an evening can be "dinner in DCA, then Disneyland at night" or the reverse. Use Hopper to increase flexibility - not to turn every wait-time change into a cross-park sprint.

Disneyland With Little Kids

- Snacks: bring familiar options. Hunger does not care that you are standing in front of the castle.
- Hydration: Southern California can be deceptively dry. Offer water before kids ask.
- Strollers: a child who has “outgrown” a stroller at home may appreciate one after miles of walking.
- Bathrooms: when one child needs to go, make it a family stop when practical.
- Height requirements: measure before the trip and check again in the app.
- Choice: let each child own one attraction, snack or experience.

Baby Care Centers

Both parks have complimentary, staffed Baby Care Centers with nursing, changing and feeding areas. Disneyland Park's is at the end of Main Street, U.S.A. next to First Aid. DCA's is in San Fransokyo Square near Ghirardelli.

Rider Switch

Bring the entire party to the attraction greeting Cast Member and ask to use Rider Switch. Under Disney's current process, Party 1 rides while Party 2 - up to two people - waits, then eligible Party 2 riders return as directed without repeating the regular queue.

WHEN THE MELTDOWN STARTS

The answer is rarely “we need to hurry to the next ride.” Find shade or air conditioning. Get water. Eat. Sit. Sometimes the best Disneyland strategy is doing nothing for 20 minutes.

Baby Care Center and Rider Switch procedures verified Sept. 11, 2026.

Teens, Tweens & Multigenerational Groups

Teens and tweens

- Give them real ownership: one restaurant, one attraction, one evening priority.
- Use the compact resort to split safely and reunite at a clear landmark/time.
- Build in food and downtime; “older kid” does not mean “unlimited stamina.”
- Galaxy’s Edge, Cars Land, Avengers Campus, thrill rides, live entertainment and photography can all be hooks beyond characters.

Multigenerational trips

- Do not define togetherness as doing every attraction together.
- Choose 2-3 shared anchors per day: a meal, a classic attraction and a nighttime moment.
- Use Rider Switch, Single Rider (where offered) and split-party time to serve different thrill tolerances.
- Prioritize hotel location if grandparents or younger kids will return midday.
- Pick a meeting point before everyone separates - phone batteries fail.

THE BEST GROUP PLAN HAS “BRANCHES”

A group of 8 does not need an 8-person agreement on every hour. Plan the moments that matter together, then let smaller groups pursue different interests and reunite.

A simple daily group structure

TOGETHER: first attraction + lunch → SPLIT: 2-3 hours by interest → RESET: hotel or quiet break → TOGETHER: dinner/nighttime entertainment. Adjust to your family; the structure is what matters.

Accessibility, Mobility & Sensory Planning

Disneyland offers a range of accessibility services, but the right tool depends on the individual Guest and attraction. Avoid assuming one program solves every need.

Mobility

- Review attraction access requirements before the trip; some experiences require transfer from a wheelchair/ECV.
- Consider the full walking day when choosing a hotel, not just the park itself.
- Companion restrooms and accessibility services are available in both parks.
- If renting mobility equipment, understand return, charging and transportation logistics.

Disability Access Service (DAS)

Disney currently describes DAS as intended for Guests who, due to a developmental disability such as autism or similar, are unable to wait in a conventional queue for an extended period. Eligibility is determined through an individual conversation with Disney - not by a travel advisor, diagnosis list or this guide.

Current options include a live video conversation as early as 60 days before a park visit or an on-site conversation at the Accessibility Services Kiosk. Disney currently limits DAS registration to the registered Guest plus up to 3 additional party members (4 total).

DO NOT SELF-DIAGNOSE THE ACCOMMODATION

Describe the Guest's needs accurately and let Disney explain the services that fit. DAS is one tool among multiple accessibility options.

DAS and accessibility details verified Sept. 11, 2026. Policies are highly subject to change; verify directly with Disneyland Resort.

Southern California Weather & What to Pack

Anaheim is not Orlando. You may have warm afternoons and cool mornings/evenings on the same day. Rain is less routine than Florida's summer pattern, but weather can still disrupt plans. Check the forecast close to travel.

PARK BAG

- Portable phone charger + cable
- Refillable water bottle
- Sunscreen + lip balm
- Light layer for evening
- Prescription/regular medications
- Small first-aid basics
- Sunglasses / hat
- Snack backup
- Zip bag for electronics or wet items

PACK FOR THE TRIP

- 2 comfortable shoe options
- Socks that do not create hot spots
- Swimsuit if the hotel pool matters
- Light rain layer when forecast calls for it
- Small laundry/stain solution
- Cooling option for hot-weather dates
- Simple outfit layers instead of one "perfect" park outfit

COMFORTABLE SHOES > CUTE PARK SHOES

Your feet do not care what the Instagram photo looked like. Break in footwear before the trip; do not discover a new blister at lunchtime on Day 1.

Stroller strategy

Make the stroller easy to identify with a simple tag or ribbon. Cast Members can move strollers for operational reasons. Never leave valuables unattended. If renting off-site, verify pickup/return logistics with your hotel.

When Someone Gets Sick or Separated

When a kid gets sick

Kids do not care how much the vacation cost. If they are sick, overheated, exhausted or dehydrated, the right plan may be to stop the plan.

- Pack a thermometer and the age-appropriate medicines your family normally uses as directed.
- Know where First Aid is located in each park.
- Hydrate early; do not wait for headache or dizziness to become the warning sign.
- If symptoms are significant or concerning, seek qualified medical care - the itinerary is not the priority.
- Build enough flexibility that one parent can return to the hotel without “ruining” everyone else’s day.

Family separation plan

- Take a quick photo each morning so you know exactly what everyone is wearing.
- Teach children to stay put when safe and find a Cast Member if separated.
- Choose a simple reunion point for older kids/teens.
- Put a parent/guardian phone number somewhere accessible for younger children without displaying unnecessary personal details.

Disney states that separated children in the parks are escorted by Cast Members to the nearest Baby Care Center / Lost Children facility while families are reunited.

THE VACATION CAN RECOVER

Missing a reservation or attraction is frustrating. Pushing a sick, exhausted or frightened family member to preserve the schedule usually costs more than changing the schedule.

Seasonal Events Can Change Your Park Day

Seasonal celebrations can be a reason to visit - and can also change hours, crowds and nighttime plans. Always check the calendar for your exact dates.

2026 EVENT / SEASON	DATES / PLANNING IMPACT
Halloween Time	Aug. 21-Oct. 31, 2026. Seasonal décor, overlays, food and entertainment across the resort.
Plaza de la Familia	Aug. 21-Nov. 2, 2026 at Disney California Adventure.
Oogie Boogie Bash	Select nights Aug. 18-Oct. 31, 2026 at DCA. Separately ticketed evening event; event nights affect regular park operations and crowd flow.
Holidays at Disneyland Resort	Nov. 13, 2026-Jan. 6, 2027. Seasonal entertainment, décor and food; holiday demand can affect pricing and availability.
Disneyland After Dark / other events	Dates and themes vary. Separately ticketed events can change evening strategy.

EVENT-NIGHT HOTEL TIP

If an event causes one park to close earlier to day Guests, Park Hopper can become more valuable - but it can also funnel more people into the other park. Plan the evening intentionally.

Current trip check - 48 hours before

Park hours | refurbishments | event nights | entertainment schedule | weather | dining | Lightning Lane availability | transportation / road conditions

2026 dates from Disney Parks Blog, verified Sept. 11, 2026. Event offerings and schedules can change.

Sample 3-Day Disneyland Family Itinerary

This is a structure, not a minute-by-minute touring plan. Swap priorities based on your family, park hours, attraction closures and dining.

DAY 1 - DISNEYLAND PARK: CLASSICS + ORIENTATION

- Morning: rope drop one priority zone; do not cross the park for every small wait difference.
- Midday: lunch + slower attractions / hotel break.
- Late afternoon: Toontown, Fantasyland or missed priorities.
- Evening: experience Disneyland after dark; choose fireworks/nighttime entertainment if offered.

DAY 2 - DISNEY CALIFORNIA ADVENTURE: HEADLINERS + FOOD

- Morning: Cars Land or your highest-priority headliner.
- Late morning: move by zone through Avengers Campus / Grizzly Peak / Pixar Pier.
- Midday: meal + reset; San Fransokyo Square can be an easy food stop.
- Evening: Cars Land neon + nighttime entertainment if offered.

DAY 3 - FAVORITES + PARK HOPPER FLEX DAY

- Start in whichever park has the most unfinished priorities.
- Repeat the family's favorite attraction - the "second ride" is often more fun because nobody is learning the queue/system.
- Use Hopper to finish favorites across both parks.
- End with the park/nighttime experience your family wants to remember.

KEEP ONE THING UNPLANNED

Leave an open block on Day 3. By then you will know what your family actually wants more of - and it may not be what you predicted six months earlier.

Sample 4-Day Itinerary + Rest Strategy

DAY	FOCUS
1	Disneyland Park - classics, learn the park, early night if travel fatigue is real.
2	Disney California Adventure - Cars Land, Avengers / Pixar priorities, nighttime atmosphere.
3	Lower-intensity morning or full rest block - pool, Downtown Disney, hotel meal; return for an evening if energy is good.
4	Park Hopper favorites day - repeat what worked, finish top priorities, protect a memorable final evening.

What counts as a “rest day” at Disneyland?

- Sleep in without apologizing for it.
- Pool time at a hotel where that is part of the value.
- Downtown Disney browsing and an unrushed meal.
- A short evening-only park visit rather than a 14-hour day.
- A Southern California side trip if your overall vacation is longer.

REST IS A STRATEGY, NOT A FAILURE

The purpose of a rest day is not to “do nothing.” It is to keep the rest of the vacation from turning into a tired march through expensive places.

Travel-day rule

When possible, do not schedule a major park day on arrival or departure day. Travel delays, luggage, hotel timing and tired kids are not theoretical. Protect the vacation by giving travel its own space.

The Non-Disney Spouse Survival Guide

If someone in the family is not excited about Disney, do not make “converting them” the goal. Ask what they would actually enjoy and build some of that into the trip.

Side quests for the person who does not care about princesses

LOOK FOR...	GIVE THEM...
• Walt Disney / park history • Architecture and changing design styles • Forced perspective, sightlines and landscaping • Star Wars details and lived-in worldbuilding • Cars Land rockwork and Route 66 references • Food and cocktails where appropriate • Night photography / neon / lighting	• A restaurant choice • A morning to sleep in • Permission to skip an attraction • Time to explore a land slowly • One “their thing” every day • A hotel/pool break without guilt • A role: photographer, navigator, snack scout

THE GOAL IS NOT DISNEY ENTHUSIASM

The trip succeeds when the family makes memories together. Someone can appreciate what Disneyland makes possible for the family without loving every character, attraction or tradition.

A Disneyland-specific hook

This is Walt Disney’s original park. For a non-Disney traveler who likes history, design, urban planning, engineering or architecture, that can be a much stronger entry point than “you have to ride this because TikTok says it is amazing.”

Your Family Disneyland Planning Worksheet

Before anyone starts optimizing wait times, answer these questions together.

PERSON	TOP ATTRACTION / EXPERIENCE	TOP FOOD / RESTAURANT	ONE THING THEY CAN SKIP
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____

Our family priorities

TOP 3 MUST-DOS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

TOP 3 RESTAURANTS / FOOD EXPERIENCES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

PARK RANKING BEFORE THE TRIP 1) _____ 2) _____

THE ONE THING THAT WOULD MAKE THIS FEEL LIKE A GREAT VACATION:

Hotel priorities - circle 3

PRICE | WALKABILITY | DISNEY THEMING | POOL | BREAKFAST | ROOM SPACE | QUIET | MIDDAY BREAK ACCESS | PARKING

The 7220 Travel Disneyland Planning Checklist

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Choose travel dates and trip length | ☐ Review mobility/accessibility needs |
| ☐ Set a realistic total vacation budget | ☐ Arrange airport/ground transportation |
| ☐ Choose Disney hotel vs. off-site | ☐ Build a weather/layer plan |
| ☐ Purchase appropriate park admission | ☐ Pack comfortable shoes |
| ☐ Make required park reservations | ☐ Pack portable chargers |
| ☐ Decide whether Park Hopper adds value | ☐ Plan at least one lower-intensity block |
| ☐ Download/update Disneyland app | ☐ Confirm dining and special experiences |
| ☐ Link tickets and hotel reservations | ☐ Check event nights and park hours |
| ☐ Identify each person's top priorities | ☐ Review refurbishments 1-2 days before |
| ☐ Mark the 60-day dining window | ☐ Take morning photo of kids/outfits |
| ☐ Review Lightning Lane options | ☐ Create family separation plan |
| ☐ Check attraction height requirements | ☐ Leave room for spontaneity |

BEFORE YOU WALK OUT THE HOTEL DOOR

Tickets/reservations linked? Phones charged? Portable battery? Water? Sunscreen? Layer? Medications? Top 3 priorities? Good. You do not need to carry the entire internet with you.

Ready to plan it with help?

A Disneyland vacation does not need more tabs open. It needs the right decisions in the right order. 7220 Travel helps families match the hotel, ticket strategy, park plan and pace to the people actually taking the trip.

Current Sources, Update Notes & Contact

Disneyland procedures, attraction offerings, reservation windows, event dates and paid products can change. This guide was verified September 11, 2026. Before travel, use the Disneyland app and official Disneyland Resort website as the final authority for your dates.

Official sources used for current planning details

Tickets / ages / park-entry requirements: <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en-ca/faq/tickets/ticket-prices/>

Park Hopper current rules: <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en-ca/faq/parks/multiple-parks/>

Planning / 180-day reservation guidance: <https://disney parksblog.com/dlr/guide-to-planning-a-disneyland-vacation/>

Lightning Lane passes and attraction list: https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en_CA/lightning-lane-passes/

Disneyland Resort hotel benefits: https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en_CA/hotels-overview/

Hotel Lightning Lane entry benefit: https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en_CA/guest-services/hotel-park-benefits/

Dining reservation window: <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en-ca/faq/dining/advance-reservations/>

Attraction height requirements: <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en-ca/faq/parks/height-requirements/>

Airports / getting to Disneyland: <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en-ca/guest-services/getting-here/by-plane/>

Rider Switch: <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en-ca/guest-services/rider-switch/>

Baby Care Centers / Lost Children: <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en-ca/guest-services/baby-center-lost-children/>

Disability Access Service: https://disneyland.disney.go.com/en_CA/guest-services/disability-access-service/

2026 Halloween / Oogie Boogie Bash: <https://disney parksblog.com/dlr/halloween-and-fall-celebrations-at-disneyland/>

2026 Disneyland calendar: <https://disney parksblog.com/dlr/disneyland-resort-2026-calendar-events-and-offers/>

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Plan unforgettable family adventures.

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