

A guide to saving on your Disney vacation in Orlando, Florida

After numerous trips to Disney World and having tried many ways to save money with each trip, we tried to pen-down some of the proven ways one can save money on their Disney vacation in Orlando, Florida. So, enjoy this free guide.

1. Be flexible with your flights

Be flexible with your flights and possibly fly from a smaller regional airport when flying to Orlando (MCO). Consider flying to Sanford International Airport (SFB) as an alternative. Saturday travel is economical than Friday as business travelers frequent on Fridays.

2. Pack wisely

Bring what you need from home if possible. While you can buy almost anything in Orlando, you wouldn't want to waste time shopping for each and every item you need. Remember time is money when you are on vacation. Print a handy copy of "Disney Vacation Packing Check-List" from the Downloads page of our website at: <http://www.emeraldislandrentals.com>

3. Rent a car

While there are parking fees that are often frowned at the parks, the advantages of having a car handy are numerous. While traveling with kids, you want to be on your schedule (or on your kids' schedule) and not depend on the schedule of shuttles. While shuttles are great for going to the parks, they won't be there when your kid is sick and you need to run to the drug store at the middle of the night, right? If you don't have a car and need a taxi at late hours, that will cost you a small fortune and the inconvenience of having to find one.

4. Know your options for Disney park tickets

There are so many combinations of tickets available for Walt Disney World. Only you can decide as to what ticket best suits your needs and budget. Fundamentally there are eight types of tickets as given below:

1. Magic Your Way – Base Ticket – Expires in 14 days
2. Magic Your Way – Base Ticket – Never Expires
3. Magic Your Way – Park Hopper Ticket – Expires in 14 days
4. Magic Your Way – Park Hopper Ticket – Never Expires
5. Magic Your Way – Base + Water Park Ticket – Expires in 14 days
6. Magic Your Way – Base + Water Park Ticket – Never Expires
7. Magic Your Way – Park Hopper + Water Park Ticket – Expires in 14 days
8. Magic Your Way – Park Hopper + Water Park Ticket – Never Expires

On top of the above, you have the adult and kid variations. Each of the above options can be purchased from anywhere for 1 – 10 days.

Park Hopper Ticket: Allows you to visit multiple parks on the same day. In our opinion, this is not needed unless you are pressed for time and visit multiple parks on the same day. After all, you are on a vacation and want to relax as opposed to running from park to park. If you cover

all the attractions, each park takes a day in itself. If you have time left, you can always visit other attractions such as Disney Downtown, Gator Land etc. You can visit the same park twice on a given day without this option (be sure to check with the agent before leaving the park).

Base Ticket versus non-Expiring Ticket: This is purely personal depending on whether or not you plan to visit Disney often. Non-Expiring tickets are more expensive than expiring tickets (expires in 14 days).

How many days? The more number of days you buy, the less you pay per day for any of the above options. If you are planning to come to Disney often (which we hope you do), you could purchase the longest duration you can afford with the non-expiration option. This is what we do for our own family. But, please consider this option wisely as you don't want to hang on to the tickets for 20 years and lose them eventually. By the way, by purchasing the additional days that you might not use during this trip, you also locked the rates in today's dollars. Disney ticket prices always seem to be going high even during the times of recession. But, don't lose your tickets!

5. Pick the right place to buy your Disney tickets

Know who you are buying your tickets from. You can buy the Disney park tickets from a million places in Orlando area, but most of them are tied to a sales presentation of a Time Share purchase. These advertisements will promote a timeshare in a presentation that lasts four hours over a breakfast and in return you get a couple of discounted tickets to theme parks for as low as 25\$. Sounds like a deal? Wrong! You are on a vacation to have fun and not to be cornered in to buying a timeshare in Florida. You can use those four hours in a theme park and get every penny out of the ticket for that day (and multiply that with the number of people in your party who must wait for your return from the sales presentation). Or you can even spend some quality time with your family in the pool or spa/hot tub.

At the moment www.undercoveytourist.com has a promotion on the tickets and their rates are lower than the rates you will pay at the gate. You can see a link to their website on our own website at <http://www.emeraldstrandrentals.com/Orlando-Florida-Vacation-RentalDL.htm>. Bottom-line; buy your tickets in advance from a reputable agency to avoid waiting in the queue at the park's ticket office. If you don't have the tickets in advance and don't have the time to investigate the deals ahead of time, buy them from the ticket office at the parks and not in a gas station on the way to the parks.

6. Stay at the right place

There are many options to stay in the Disney area and the choice of hotels and vacation homes is vast.

For the same money or even less you could stay in a full size vacation home and have a lot more living space than 300 sq ft of hotel room.

You can read the full article here on our website:

<http://www.emeraldstrandrentals.com/Renting-Disney-Villa-Versus-Hotel-Suite.htm>

If you are a family of four, you need two hotel rooms (total of 600 sq ft of living). You can rent a three bedroom home for much less price (total of 1300 sq ft) and have separate bedrooms as well as private bathrooms.

In addition to getting more room for your money, you can prepare meals and save even more. Our vacation homes include a fully functional kitchen, dining and separate living spaces. If you are staying at our pool home, kids will have hours of fun in the pool at no additional expense. We also offer PS2 game system and games as a standard on our homes.

7. Save on dining, groceries and entertainment

Now that you decided to rent a vacation home as opposed to a hotel room, you can pack more savings with a sensible dining approach.

To start off, we provide a welcome food pack with all weekly rentals to our guests. So, if you arrive late at night, coffee, eggs and bread are on us in addition to some more goodies. You can see a detailed listing on our website under the “Amenities” page.

Once you get settled, you can stop at the local Wal-Mart or Publix (local grocery store) and buy your groceries. The address and directions to these and other grocery stores in the area are given on the “Downloads” page of our website.

Based on your schedule, you might want to eat breakfast in the villa and possibly dinner as well. Since you will be in parks for most of the day, it makes sense to eat lunch in the parks. When you are out shopping, make sure you pick a lot of snacks, juices, crackers etc. to take with you to the parks. You could easily save a 100\$ or more with this approach. The temperature in Florida is very hot and you wouldn't want to take items that need refrigeration (such as cold cut sandwiches).

Go through the packing list we provided on the home page of our website titled “**Customized Disney vacation packing check-list**” to shop all your needs at once. After-all, you didn't come to Florida to shop Wal-Mart every day. 😊

Vacation doesn't mean that you have to eat every meal/dinner at home. There are plenty of restaurants around the Emerald Island Resort in a shopping area called Formosa Gardens shopping center. To stretch your dollar a bit more you can use gift certificates purchased from Restaurant.com where you can buy gift certificates to restaurants at a discounted price. In addition, there are always some coupons out there on the internet for Restaurant.com (sometimes for 80% discount). Do a search on Google for finding these coupons. Several times, I bought 25\$ gift cards for 3\$. There is a minimum spending requirement in most cases (for example, a 35\$ minimum), but that's still not bad. You need to print the certificate and take to the restaurant, so please do this at your home printer.

Visit the Club House at Emerald Island to grab a coupon booklet to the local restaurants. "I Love Orlando" magazine is one such booklet that has lots of coupons and discounts.

Print your own "Buy Local Orlando" card for savings at participating retailers from their site at: <http://www.buylocalorlando.net>. They provide savings coupons at many retailers.

Print your own copy of "Orlando Magicard" from the Orlando Info website at: <http://www.orlandoinfo.com>

If you are kids are older and your trip is not just about Disney parks, consider other local attractions. You can save more by buying a "Go Orlando Card", which gives you entrance into over 40 attractions, plus discounts for dining. You can find more details at: <http://www.smartdestinations.com>

Curb impulsive buying: The first thing kids want to do as they enter the theme parks is to buy a souvenir. Set them a daily limit and remind them that they might find something better later that day. The sooner you buy the goodies, the longer you have to haul them.

8. Savings are good...free is better

Hang-out at the Downtown Disney

Downtown Disney shopping area is a good place to hang-out for several hours. There is a huge Lego shop also that you can visit. Parking is free.

Club House Events

On those days when you are not in mood for going-out, stay low by staying back at the home doing a barbecue or visiting the Club House events. You can pick-up a schedule from the front desk.

Free Souvenirs

Scrap booking is a great idea to create your own souvenir using park maps, tickets and items made at Epcot at the Kidcot centers throughout the park. Of course, you wouldn't want to scrapbook your tickets if they have unused days, right?

9. Save your time - Time is money!

Plan your days wisely so that you don't waste the theme park ticket for a few hours on your arrival and departure days. Depending on your time of arrival, you can do the necessary shopping and relax to prep yourself for the following day's activities.

Consider going to a local attraction such as Gatorland on your departure day. It's fun for the whole family and you can spend easily 4-8 hours depending on your schedule. Alternate

attractions for the departure day are International Drive, Universal's CityWalk, Disney's Boardwalk and Downtown Disney.

When you go the parks, start early to beat the crowds. Magic Kingdom has a limitation on the number of visitors (after all, it's an island) per day and the park gets closed for new incoming visitors after a while. So, be there by the time park opens.

Plan your day so that you can cover all the important attractions of the park for that day and visit the most important ones in the beginning before the lines get too long. You can print the park maps from Disney website or request that they send them to your home in advance. Here is the link to order a DVD as well as maps to parks:

https://www.disneyvacations.com/dv/en_US/VacationPlanningDVD/index?sourcecode=10947&bhcp=1

If are visiting Universal Studios, you might want to purchase the Universal Meal Deal that enables you to eat and drink all day for a flat rate. You can buy these passes in advance from the Universal website at: <http://www.universalorlando.com>. The prices are \$19.99 for an adult pass and \$9.99 for kids pass.

10. Last but not the least.... stay at one of our vacation homes

We hope you enjoyed reading this article and will implement some of the strategies to save a buck or two (we hope you save a lot more). If you are already a guest with us, rest assured you are going to have a great time at our place. If you are still looking around, we assure you that we maintain the highest standards at our vacation homes. Our goal is to satisfy one guest at a time by providing affordable luxury homes within minutes from Disney. How close to Disney can you get...we are only 2.7 miles away!