

How to make the most of your day at Disneyland Resort Paris

Getting into the park is actually one of the most difficult and confusing parts of the whole process. In almost all cases, if you're visiting for less than three days, book online in advance, if you are staying for three or more days, consider buying an annual pass at the gate—but always check prices, current offers and annual pass blackout dates in advance before you go.

You can book online and print your own tickets. This is almost always cheaper than buying them at the park—often including an extra day in the park for the same price as at the gate. What's more, it allows you to bypass your first queue of the day—the ticket counter, which can often take more than one hour to clear at peak times. Booking online from inside France using the french Disneyland page, and your hotel address can also be significantly cheaper, but may be subject to additional restrictions, and may require delivery of tickets, rather than printing them. Numerous third party online ticket sellers exist, and can provide significant savings compared even to the official Disney online ticket prices. Careful research of available online offers from different resellers can yield huge savings. Booking from French resellers and travel agents is usually cheaper than doing so in your home country, but be careful to ensure that they are legitimate and reputable and do not have any problematic terms and conditions before booking. Annual passes are very affordable at Disneyland Paris, and are almost always worth their cost if you are staying off site, and visiting for more than 3 days.

The Francillien Passport is perfect if you are visiting Disneyland as part of a larger trip to Paris. It costs €135 and allows free access to both parks for a full year (minus 85 blackout dates) Purchase this on day one, and then visit the rest of Paris for the first two days (You cannot enter the park until two days after purchasing it), then return to Disneyland at the end of your visit. In addition to your entry costs, you save money at most restaurants, on gifts and get access to a few other special features. If you need access to the park on the same day, the €179 Fantasy pass is a good deal. With less blackout dates than the Francillien pass (just 45 days per year), it costs around the same as a three day park ticket.

It offers all of the above features, plus Extra Magic Hours (get into the park 2 hours early, and beat the queues for the most popular attractions and meet-and-greets), free on-site parking and much more besides. If you happen to be visiting on a blackout date (or you intend to visit the park a lot during the year, or are buying a lot of gifts) the €223 Dreams pass offers an awful lot for your money, including no Blackout dates, additional discount in the stores, free stroller hire and luggage storage, and more. All of this is still cheaper than a 5 day park ticket.

All three passports also offer savings on Disneyland hotels (up to 35% at certain times) and are therefore usually worth exploring even if you are planning on staying at a disney hotel. The savings can be significant. Disneyland Paris offers a Sponsorship (parrainage) scheme, where current Passport Holders can sponsor people buying passports. New passport holders will receive 10% off the price of an annual passport, making this even more affordable. Sponsors must visit the Annual Passport office with the purchasers, so several online sites collate lists of when Passport Holders are visiting the park, and available to sponsor people. The most comprehensive can be found [here](#).

Many Non-Disney branded and non-partner hotels in the Marne-la-Vallee area, and especially big-brand hotels in Val d'Europe nonetheless have special offers on Disneyland park tickets. Always ask at your hotel reception desk what deals they have before leaving for the park. If you haven't booked in advance, don't worry, you have another option to avoid the queues.

Visit the Disneyland Hotel near the entrance, and speak to the concierge. Explain that you need to use the business centre. They will tell you to use your room key, just explain that you aren't a hotel guest (or that you don't have it with you) and they will let you in anyway. Internet access and printing does cost money—around €5 should be sufficient—but will allow you to book tickets online, and bypass the queues. It also has great quality coffee, and is a really nice place to sit, so is probably worth it just for that.

; , You can get a feel for both parks (The Disneyland Park and the Disney Studios park) in a single day, but ideally, you will want to give yourself at least one day in the Studios park, and two to three days in the Disneyland Park, and even more time if you plan on trying all of the most popular attractions that the park has to offer.

If your ticket includes Extra Magic Hours (Dream and Fantasy passports,

and Disney Hotel packages) make the most of these. You can enter the park two hours before the park opens to the public, and queues are greatly reduced. Not everything is open during that time, but most of the major attractions are. Like it or not, queuing is a significant part of any trip to Disneyland. There are, however, many ways to limit the amount of time wasted in queues.

Visit high profile rides and meet-and-greets during Extra Magic Hours, parades and mealtime hours. If you are staying for more than one day, and have already seen the parades, queue times can often be cut in half by joining them in the 30 minutes before, and during the main parade, but balloon immediately after their conclusion. Eating early or late, and queuing during mealtime can also save some time. Use FastPass tickets where available, and consider FastPass Premium if you are an avid ride user. It costs €60, but can pay for itself in time saved, especially if you only have a short stay. If you, or a member of your party have any kind of disability, speak to Guest Services about how they can help you. In many cases, you may be allowed to bypass the queues and enter through the "Exit" gate on most rides, shows and Meet and Greets. Similarly, if you experience any kind of disappointment (e.g., ride breakdown, significantly longer queues than those indicated) Guest Services can, at their discretion, issue one or more single-use queue jump tickets, which will also allow you to enter through the exit gates. Queues for the Disneyland Railroad are significantly longer at the entry gates (and often Discoveryland) than at other stations. If you just want to ride it for the grand tour of the park (rather than to get somewhere in particular) then it is usually worth getting on at the FrontierLand or FantasyLand stations. Both stations are set back from the main park area, and a little and off the beaten track so relatively few people stumble into the queues at these stations without going there deliberately. Both stations even include limited seating areas, compared making the queue even more bearable. When visiting with small children, always take advantage of the Baby Swap service on rides for which children are too small. This will allow one of you to queue, while the other waits with the child, and can then enter through the exit or fastpass queue as soon as the first rider leaves. This reduces queuing times significantly, and, as an added bonus, means that a single FastPass ticket can be used by both parents (if the cast member is in a good mood of course). Single Rider lines can significantly reduce wait times if you don't mind too much who you sit with.

Single rider queues are available on many rides, and often result in a more than 50% reduction in wait times. You can, of course, queue as a group, and will possibly still end up in the same cart or carriage as your friends, but they can't and won't guarantee that you will sit together. You can often walk into most timed shows a few minutes prior to their advertised start time, so queuing is usually unnecessary for these. The main exception to this is "Disney Junior Live on Stage" in the Studios park, which usually fills around 10-15 minutes before the show start time, due to a hosted children's dance party with Princess Sofia and Jake from "Jake and the Neverland Pirates" in the waiting area. Visiting the park off peak—avoiding weekends and European school holidays—where possible will significantly reduce wait times for top-tier attractions.

Some French national public holidays can be very busy—over 50% of visitors on any given day are French. However, where those public holidays also coincide with blackout days for Francilien or Fantasy annual passports, this is largely mitigated against. As many visitors are local to Île-de-France, and hold these passports, many will not be able to visit on blackout dates. If you are visiting on a French public holiday, make sure you check if it is also a blackout date—if it is not, you're in for a very busy day. However, certain religious public holidays, eg Easter Sunday and Monday, are taken very seriously in France, and are considered a time for family and friends. Most French businesses, including public transport, completely shut down, or run at greatly reduced capacity. This means getting to the park, and getting food etc. off site is very difficult for locals. Therefore, these dates are also usually blackout dates, so visiting on these dates can lead to a surprisingly empty park. However, beware, Disney will also be operating with a reduced staff, meaning meet-and-greet's, parades and shows etc. may all be less frequent and less spectacular than usual.

Break up long queuing by regularly choosing walk-on rides and walk-in shows, with very short queues, such as "It's a Small World", "Casey Jr." or "Le Pays des Contes de Fées". Psychologically, it will feel like you've done much more with your time, and future queues won't feel quite so bad. One of the biggest draws of Disney parks is meeting the characters. Top-tier stars, like the Disney Princesses and Mickey Mouse can have very long queues, but there are ways meet more stars in less time.

Buy an autograph book early in your visit. There is nothing more disappointing

than seeing a character out and about, and not having anything for them to sign. You may not see them again, so ensure you have it with you at all times. Most Disney Princesses can only be met at the Princess Pavilion, or during Character Dining Experiences. Occasionally, a single princess may be available at an advertised location (e.g. Merida is currently available for a few hours each morning in Frontierland) but generally, you will never find them wandering around.

The Princess Pavilion is now only accessible by a special "FastPass" like ticket. This ensures that queues will be quite short during your visit—usually less than 20 minutes to meet a princess—and that you get plenty of face-time with them while you are there, however tickets are very limited. Tickets are distributed from 10:30 am next to the pavilion, but the queue usually begins to form at around 9:30. All tickets are usually gone by around 11:30 am, and anyone joining the queue after around 10:45 is very unlikely to get a ticket on a busy day. On very busy days, such as weekends and special events, even joining the queue at rope-drop at 10:00 am will not guarantee you get an entry ticket. In general, cast members will ask one family member to queue with entry tickets for all members wishing to visit the pavilion, to keep queues short. Like all fast-pass tickets, these tickets are valid for a 30 minute window, increasing in 5 minute increments. Unlike other fast-pass tickets, they are distributed by hand by cast members, and are stamped with the number of people wishing to visit. This means that different cast members may have tickets for different time slots, and, if the time slot offered is not suitable, it is always worth checking if another cast member has an earlier/later slot available. Cast members will usually try to accommodate this, but make no guarantees. Asking for a later slot is always easier than asking for an earlier one. If you are leaving Disneyland Paris before about 3:00 (e.g. when travelling home) you will need to be in the queue before around 9:30 am to stand a shot at getting a slot before you leave, and equally, if you are arriving into the park after about 11:30 there is usually no chance of seeing a princess on that particular day. Character dining at the Auberge De Cendrillon is likely to be your only option to guarantee a meeting with a Princess in this case.

Make the most of Extra Magic Hours. Not only are there more costumed characters out and about during this time, the queues for these characters are also much shorter. Don't waste time chasing down a character who has just left a meet and greet location, they simply can't stop for you—there are very strict

time limits for costumed characters, and if they stop for everyone, they will never get out of the park—but they will often sign your autographs as soon as they arrive back at their meet and greet location, if you have followed them back to it. It is often quicker to get autographs from characters that are out and about, rather than at advertised locations, but, there are of course never guarantees this way. A quiet word with a cast member may give you tips as to who is going to be out in the park, and at what time. It is often quicker to meet Mickey Mouse at the Toon Studio (in the Studio Park Backlot) than at his home in the main park. Queues for other characters stationed near Mickey at the Toon Studio are often even shorter still. When meeting characters out and about, is more important to catch the eye of their handler, rather than the character themselves. Helping a handler manage a rowdy crowd is a sure-fire way to get your own child near the head of the queue. Meals with characters are quite expensive, but guarantee your family significant facetime with characters, in a much more relaxed atmosphere. Often it is the only way to meet certain characters who do not appear elsewhere in the park. Disney Hotels no longer offer meet and greet's in the public areas of the hotels, however, as a result there are far more characters available in the park during Extra Magic Hours, and if you are there early enough, you can usually meet Mickey and Minnie, Donald, Goofy, Chip and Dale, and possibly others, all near the main entrance, in around an hour during Extra Magic Hours.

That said, if you are a hotel resident on a top-tier package, don't be afraid to ask the concierges for help completing your autograph collection. You may get tips as to who will be where at a given time, and, if you ask very nicely, may even get an extra special in-person visit in your room.

There are generally fewer characters out and about on hotter days, and they are far less likely to go out of their way to meet you at anywhere other than their appointed spots, so take advantage of the advertised times and places on warm days. Outside of peak season, and especially when Disneyland does not have a defined "Close of Park" event or show (e.g. Disney Dreams) characters are often stationed near exits on Main Street at closing time. This helps draw the crowd towards the exits, and is a great, if somewhat hectic, way to meet a lot of characters at once. And of course, if possible, visit Disney parks with small children, ideally in costume. In a crush to meet characters (where there is no organised queuing), crowds, characters and cast members are all more likely to allow a small child through.

While Children under 10 are encouraged to wear costumes, older children, teenagers and adults will not be allowed entry into the park in costume. Disney have a global policy in place when it comes to attire, and dressing up in costumes which could be confused with a cast member is a big no-no. Graphic t-shirts, mickey ears, and other branded Disney goods are fine of course, but anything which either mimics a disney character overtly, or could be confused with one inadvertently (eg, certain wedding dresses) will not usually be allowed past security. For 10-14 year old's who still look pretty young, you will probably get away with arriving in costume, especially if the child has younger siblings, but if you're going to try, make sure you bring a change of clothes just in case. Disneyland, perhaps unfairly, has a reputation for being a very expensive place to eat and drink, however this isn't entirely accurate.

Disney restaurants, in and out of the park, are actually relatively affordably priced, compared to outside restaurants. However in a country renowned for it's culinary excellence, it is perhaps understandable that they are considered expensive for the type and quality of food often served. Nonetheless, if budget is your primary concern, you will be hard pushed to find meals for cheaper elsewhere. Disney dining is broadly broken down into three tiers, "Affordable Takeaway" (€9-15), "Mid Priced Table-Service / Bar Food" (€13-25) and "Top-Tier dining / Buffet" (€28+). The difference in price between takeaway and the cheaper table service restaurants is minimal, but the difference in food quality can be significant, as are the levels of service you receive. Furthermore, many include unlimited cold drinks at these (look for "Open Drinks" on the menu) which more than offsets the difference in price if you have just one refill.

If you are considering using a fast-food takeaway restaurant in the park, the food at McDonalds in Disney Village is cheaper and of better quality. If you have the time to leave the park (approx. 10 minute walk), this is usually preferable on both counts. Because of the type of dishes they serve, and their small menu's, the food at mid priced table restaurants is generally served just as quickly as at counter service ones.

Bottled drinks in the park are expensive. Multipack drinks are available for much cheaper at the nearby Auchan supermarket at Val D'Europe (Via RER) or even at the Marne-La-Valee train station near the park entrance. Contrary to popular belief, you are very welcome to take outside food or drink into the

park, and eat there, and outside food and drink—other than alcohol, and drinks in glass bottles—are not going to be confiscated at the security check

Picnicking—a particular French pastime, which usually involves whole families bringing large hampers of food to eat in open areas over several hours—is only allowed in the grounds outside the park. This has led some to believe that outside food is strictly forbidden, as to most "picnicking" is synonymous with eating your own food outside. This is not the case though. Sandwiches, snacks and drinks can be brought into the park and eaten, and the restrictions would only apply to anyone taking up a lot of space in the park for an extended period of time.

Drinking water is readily available from water fountains throughout the park on hot days. Like most of Western Europe, the water is clean, fresh and perfectly safe to drink. Small bottles can also be filled at these fountains, though, by design, larger bottles can not easily be filled. Keep a small (300ml or so) bottle handy at all times. However, fountains may be switched off on cooler days, so ensure you still bring plenty of drinking water with you throughout the winter season. However, most restaurants will have a tap to fill water bottles inside them, and cast members in dining establishments will usually give you a cup of tap water on request. Even well after their 20th anniversary celebrations in 2012, Disney is continuing to all out to ensure your day is as memorable as ever well into 2015.

Daily parades are hugely popular, but very enjoyable. For their 20th Anniversary, Disneyland Paris hosted several parades, most of which continue to run in 2015. Their main parade (Disney Magic on Parade in the main park) feature a large number of stars, and is a must see attraction. The parade happens only once throughout the day, so ensure you take note of their time. Great views are available anywhere along the parade route, and additionally from the Main Street USA station. In both cases, you should stake out your spot at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the parade for unobstructed views, but any more than this is usually unnecessary. "Frozen: A Royal Welcome" is a horse-drawn mini-parade featuring Elsa and Anna from Frozen. It usually happens several times daily, and good views can be found anywhere along the parade route, and is a much more low-key affair than the main parade. As a horse drawn parade, it is a little more slow moving than the main parade, and allows great views of both princesses. Frozen Sing-along is an interactive, hosted sing-along featuring characters and dancers on-stage, at the Chaparral theatre in Frontierland. It is a well produced

show featuring both "in person" appearances from Elsa, Anna, Kristoff, and Olaf, as well as several other singing and dancing villagers from Arendelle, alongside clips from the movie "Frozen". The show happens in both English and French, multiple times a day (as many as 12 shows during high season) and the high-capacity theatre means that you can usually still find a seat just a few minutes before the start of the show. However, several rows of the best seats are reserved for (in the first instance) children who have purchased a special "Frozen" costume (Elsa or Anna) in the park, and any extra capacity is handed over to children who have come dressed in costume. This means that for an unobstructed view, you will want to join the queue at least 15 minutes before show time during busy shows. Disney Dreams is a multimedia nighttime spectacular, featuring fireworks, water effects music and video, and the "Light'Ears" light up Mickey Mouse ears available throughout the park. It uses Sleeping Beauty's castle as it's projection screen, so is best viewed as straight on as possible. A perfect spot for this will need to be claimed at least one hour in advance of the show during high season, though anywhere on Main Street will provide a good view, as long as you can get square to the castle. Though rides, characters, parades and shows are a the main reason for your visit, there is still lots more to do.

Visit the boutiques. Disney is full of shops, and shamelessly promote their wares at every available opportunity. This can be a real turn off to some, but spend even a little time in their shops and you'll quickly realise how beautifully designed they all are. Even if you don't buy anything, many of the shops, or boutiques as Disney refer to them, are just really nice places to explore, full of whimsy and charm. Meet some cast members. Everyone at Disneyland Paris is considered a cast member, not merely a staff member. Everyone, from the street cleaners to the top brass, are considered actors, playing their part in the creating the wonderful illusion that is Disneyland. Feel free to approach any of them, to engage with them. Most of them really love their jobs, and relish the chance to meet with visitors for a while. All cast-members are, at least, bilingual, with almost all of them speaking French and English, though many also have a basic grasp of many other european languages. Try your hand at Pin Trading. Disney have a vibrant and active pin trading community, and providing you follow the rules, all cast members with pins on their Lanyards are more than happy—in fact, required—to play along. Pin trading is a lot of fun, and a great way to meet cast members and other

guests. There are thousands of designs available, so even if you can't find one you like in store, soon enough, you'll have something that you really love. Several designs each year are only initially available on Cast Member's lanyards, so meeting them early, as soon as they start their shifts, is key to getting hold of these designs.

If you are new to trading, multipack sets are a quick and affordable way to grow your collection. While most serious traders won't be interested in trading for these, remember that Cast Members with pins on their Lanyards or trading cards have to. You can quickly diversify your collection, and maybe, just maybe, find something really rare and unique which the serious traders will go wild for.

Just walking the clean, litter free streets of Disneyland is a pleasure. Remember, unlike a city or town, everything at Disneyland has been placed there with a singular purpose. Everything that exists is the way it is because the Disney Imagineers decided it needed to be that way. With this in mind, a slow stroll around the park becomes an exciting experience.

Hidden Mickeys are placed throughout the park by the imagineers. Hidden Mickey's are anything which takes the form of the Mickey Mouse logo. Strictly, this is one large circle, and two smaller ones above it, though any triangle of circular or spherical objects is possibly also a hidden Mickey. Numerous online and printed guides to finding hidden Mickey's are available, but nothing is quite so exciting as discovering one for yourself—keep your eyes peeled.

Spend some time in Disney Village. Disney Village is a Disneyland's free shopping and entertainment complex. You do not need to be a ticket holder to enjoy this part of the park, or the public parts of hotels. This is a great way to extend your trip if you have part-days (travel days, for example) for which you cannot justify buying an entrance ticket to the park proper.

Disney Village is also home to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, a paid dinner-theatre attraction. If you cannot afford to see the show itself, it is usually worth trying to find out if they will be hosting free a mounted parade through the Disney village. Characters can be met in Disney Village, especially in restaurants. Meet-and-Greet meals are available outside of the park in Disney Village.