

And keeping them in sight at least 24 hours a day while there requires eternal vigilance. Although WDW is squeaky clean and one of the safest vacation places on earth, you still need to be a super monitor.

One of our family trips to WDW many years ago, we had the horror of losing our three-year-old daughter. She was only gone for five minutes, but they were the scariest moments of our lives. We made the mistake of taking our eyes off of her for a moment after joining the wall-to-wall crowd on the sidelines watching the daily parade.



After running around frantically, we finally saw her walking toward us very casually. When we berated her, she said she just wanted to talk to Minnie Mouse, who had strolled by us, followed by our daughter and a horde of other kids. Strangely enough, less than an hour later, we found a crying little Chinese girl who had lost her parents. We gathered her up and went looking for a security guard. Then, from out of the crowd rushed her mother, who grabbed the little girl and dashed away. No word of thanks, just a fleeting dirty look.

We were back to WDW on an average of once every two years as our kids grew up, and now we're about to try the scariest Disney ride of all. We're taking our grandkids with us to WDW without their parents. Since we're already seasoned visitors, we came up with a list of what grandparents should do when they venture into WDW along with the current kid generation.

1. Don't rush it. If you've driven or came by air, get to the hotel and relax. You don't need to go dashing to the park at once. If it was a long trip, insist on some beddy-bye time in the hotel room, even if it is just for an hour. Then, when everyone is refreshed, try a two- or three-hour visit. You couldn't possibly see everything at WDW if you were there for a month, so do just a few features the first day. Also, some hotel swimming and sunning can help relax everyone.

2. As for the hotel, book one on the WDW property. Yeah, we know there's a little motel about 20 miles away that has very reasonable prices. Pay the extra bucks to be at a Disney hotel, where it is just a short walk, boat ride or monorail away from all the action.

3. Be prepared as you were in your old Scouting days. WDW gets hot and hotter from about March to November. Have each grandkid carry a small, plastic sippy bottle of purified, not tap, water. Grandpop and grandmom also carry bigger, ice-cold bottles to refill when necessary. Carry simple eating supplies too, such as dried fruit, candy, cookies and crackers.
4. After consulting with the parents before you leave home, bring along all the pills, creams and medicines the kids need for normal ailments, as well as sunscreen and emergency drugs in case of the inevitable upset stomachs, burns, cuts and bruises. It is also a good idea to stop in at least one gift shop and buy each kid a small, age-appropriate gift, such as a teddy bear, Mickey doll, Disney logo clothing and whatever. If the clouds are rumbling, get some basic rain gear, just in case.
5. Also from your Scouting days, use the buddy system. Appoint one-on-one buddies who must stick together at all times, including bathroom visits. If the kids are very young, the grandparents must be the one-on-one buddies, as well as keep an eye on all of the kids all of the time.
6. Be stingy with the snacks and make up for it with healthy sit-down meals. Look for restaurants that feature Disney characters who roam through and amuse the kids. Stay away from fatty, greasy, over-salted foods, such as chips, popcorn and fries. Also, at the meals, encourage the kids to drink juices instead of sugary soft drinks.
7. Plan the day at Disney each morning, asking for input from the kids as you explain the options. And always remember that a day in the hot Florida sun should be broken into at least two four-hour segments. Insist on two rest periods a day. If the kids don't want to go back to the hotel room to rest, find a quiet spot at the park for 15-minute breathers. Getting away from all the excitement, we always liked the Pirates of the Caribbean, the Jungle Ride and the Haunted Mansion, where you can sit restfully and be wheeled around the attraction.
8. If you're taking very young kids, lucky you, get strollers and assign the older kids to take turns relieving the grandparents to give you some time to rest. For the very young kids, be sure you have plenty of throw-away diapers, and do the warm milk duties whenever they're required.
9. Night time at Disney is as exciting for kids of all ages as daytime, so set up a schedule of attractions to visit, including the nightly parade and fireworks displays over Cinderella's Castle and on some of the waterways. Also, very early morning and night may be the best times to get to the more popular rides and attractions, because the waiting lines are shorter. Get the kids back to the hotel at a reasonable hour and attempt to give everyone eight hours of uninterrupted sleep. Except, of course, the grandparent who has the midnight and 4 am diaper change and milk bottle duties.
10. Always keep in mind that WDW is an enormous place, with a dozen whole amusement parks dotting the far-flung property. Don't let the kids rush you and themselves around into exhaustion. Keep them close and always accounted for with the buddy system and cell phones. Allow plenty of rest time, relaxation at the hotel pool and casual, unrushed eating.

Of course, you'll want memories, so take along a digital picture and/or video camera. Also, get

several inexpensive cell phone or other small cameras for the kids to use. Many of our best memories of WDW are photos we took of the family together, as well as kids posing with Mickey, Minnie and other Disney characters. Whatever you do, make sure everyone enjoys it in good health.