

BY DANI MORITZ

haring in the "oohs" and "aahs" of Disney's world-famous nighttime spectaculars is the perfect way to end your day at Disney World. But, like with all things Disney, it takes a little preparation to achieve that picture-perfect fairy-tale ending—particularly when children are involved.

Fortunately, there are a few simple tips for ensuring a fabulous fireworks finale for the whole family.

PRE-SHOW TALK

Just like most Disney attractions have a pre-show to walk riders through what they're about to experience, it's a good idea to give your Mouseketeer a heads-up on what Disney fireworks are all about. Even if they've experienced firework shows before, it's unlikely they're fully prepared for the grandeur of a Disney nighttime spectacular. (Let's face it: Most *adults* aren't fully prepared.)

Let your little ones know to expect loud noises and bright lights coming from multiple areas, and make sure they know that it will get crowded.

Pro Tip: Introducing fireworks to little ears is always nerve-wracking, so you may want to show your child their very first fireworks outside of Walt Disney World. Consider a calmer alternative like a local Independence Day show, or check out Disney fireworks from afar by viewing them at Disney Resort hotels like Disney's Polynesian Village Resort, Contemporary Resort, and Grand Floridian Resort & Spa. (Just make sure you have a dining reservation or resort stay to get in!)

WHAT TO BRING

Any Disney parent knows that the key to vacation success is packing the right supplies—and this is certainly true for enjoying Disney fireworks. So, grab your Mary Poppins bag and pack the essentials. This includes snacks, drinks, small toys, comfort items (like blankets), and kid-friendly earplugs if your child is a willing candidate. I've found that oversized hats that go over kids' ears will work as well to mute some potentially unnerving fireworks sounds.

Keep in mind that you'll likely be spending time waiting for fireworks to start, so you'll want to have items to keep them comfortable during the show but also items to keep them entertained while you wait for it to begin. (Get ready for a whole lot of "Is it time yet?")

You may also want to pack some glow-in-the-dark or light-up gear for your child—or else you might find yourself spending more than you'd like on Disney light-up merchandise. (You can save lots by pre-purchasing light-up and glow-in-the-dark gear at your local dollar store or even on Amazon.)

STAKE OUT YOUR SPOT

When traveling with kids, you'll want to select your fireworks viewing location based on two key criteria: proximity to the bathroom and ease of exit. Regardless of how many times you ask your child to go to the restroom before you find your spot, they'll notoriously have to go after your family has staked out their viewing location. Selecting a spot near a restroom just makes the inevitable a little easier.

More importantly, choose a spot that allows for an easy exit strategy. This way your family can avoid some of the overwhelming crowds when everyone is leaving the park and you can make a run for it if your fairy-tale ending turns into an epic nightmare.

If you're at Magic Kingdom, position yourself on Main Street, U.S.A. near the park exit (and the restroom). If you're at EPCOT and planning on using the Skyliner, consider the bridge between France and the UK, or grab a spot between Mexico and Canada if you're using other forms of transportation. Personally, I like to be near the Starbucks for access to both the restroom and the way out of the park.

FIREWORK FAREWELL

With any luck, these tips will help ensure the firework finale you're looking for. But never fear: Whether fireworks are love at first sight for your little one or it takes them some time, there will come a day when you can share in the magic of Disney's nighttime spectaculars—and all the "oohs" and "aahs" that accompany them.



BY TRISHA DAAB

MEET & EAT: During normal operations, Princess Aurora greets guests in the gazebo in the France Pavilion at EPCOT. Keep in mind: Aurora needs her beauty rest, so she keeps mostly daytime hours.

When awake, Princess Aurora also visits Cinderella's Royal Table in Magic Kingdom and Princess Storybook Dining at Akershus in EPCOT.

NOT SURE WHAT TO SAY? Ask the princess her favorite gown color, if she has had any fancy cakes, or how Samson is doing.

MAKE SURE TO: See Wonderful World of Animation, the nighttime show projected onto the Chinese Theatre at Hollywood Studios. During the romance sequence of this show, it looks like you could step inside Princess Aurora's kingdom.

BEYOND THE AUTOGRAPH BOOK:

Give her enough space, and she may sign Princess Aurora and even give your autograph book true love's kiss.

Aurora has a wonderful sense of humor. She'll get a kick out of it if you bring a small pillow, pajamas, eye mask, or slippers for her to sign.

Try a paper rose or little bird plush for memories of Briar Rose. Visit the shops at the France Pavilion for Princess Aurora merchandise you won't find anywhere else in the parks; she'll be happy to sign this as well.

Some character experiences, including meals and autographs, may still be impacted by modified operations. Check our blog or the My Disney Experience app for the latest.

PHOTO BY LAURIE SAPP