

# Don't Blame the Mouse

By [Denise Schipani](#) Sent: Wednesday September 22, 2010



During our August trip to Disney World, my husband and 5- and 7-year-old sons received jaunty “First Visit!” buttons. When we got back, I wanted an “I Survived Disney Without Spending an Unholy Amount of Money!” button. Because, dang it, I deserved it—and the retail lessons I learned apply in the Magic Kingdom and surrounding areas.

- **Downplay expectations.** Like so many retail sorcerers, Disney is the master of marketing and product placement (hello rides that dump you off into gift shops!). But all I told my sons was that we were going to the big Disney theme park—and that there would be a pool at our hotel. Dazzled by that much, many of the extras—like being able to dress up as a pirate—passed them by.
- **Lay down a game plan.** Many Disney (and Target) veterans bemoan how much they spend, and shrug their shoulders as if to say, “You can’t fight the Mouse!” I beg to differ. I told my boys: There will be lots of goodies, *but WE only want certain very, very cool things, so we’ll just look a lot.* And it worked! I had a mommy-nirvana moment when my little guy, trying on a Goofy hat, told another shopper, “We’re not buying anything. We’re just looking.”

- **Let them spend...their own cash.** I let both kids take whatever amount they chose from their piggy banks (\$32 for the big guy; \$11 for his brother). They loved the idea of having their own wallets—and of getting change back after purchases. Their total haul was tiny: pens and postcards, key chains and lollipops.

Yes, my boys did beg for ice cream at 9 a.m. (hey, it's hot), but they were more enthralled with the Mad Tea Party ride than with the madness of buying, buying, buying. Oh, wait: they did make one other significant purchase; my husband and the boys sprang for a pair of tiny Mickey Mouse earrings with my birthstone, as a thank-you. So there's another lesson: How much fun it is to buy something for someone else.

**Bottom Line.** What's your defense against the Mouse and other spend-happy destinations?

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