

# How to Take Kids to an Amusement Park Without Having a Meltdown

BY: Editors | Jun 13, 2019



When summer arrives, little ones suddenly have nothing to do but hang around at home—which means parents suddenly have nothing to do but think of things to do with kids. And one hot-weather ritual that helps drain their boundless energy is a day at the [amusement park](#).

Unfortunately, *planning* for a day at the amusement park can just as efficiently drain parents' energy. To help put some *amusement* back into it, we turned to two employees of a certain well-known theme park: Isabel, who drives the parking-lot bus, and RJ, a theme-park performer and one-time cohost of the amusement-centric Disfunction Podcast. Based on their combined years in the trenches, they let us know what works and what doesn't.

## Go At Non-Peak Hours.

"The first hour is the best time to get on that one ride you just have to go on," says Isabel. For parents of older kids who can stay up late, RJ recommends returning to the park a few hours before they close. "[Most] families have given up and already retreated to their resorts."



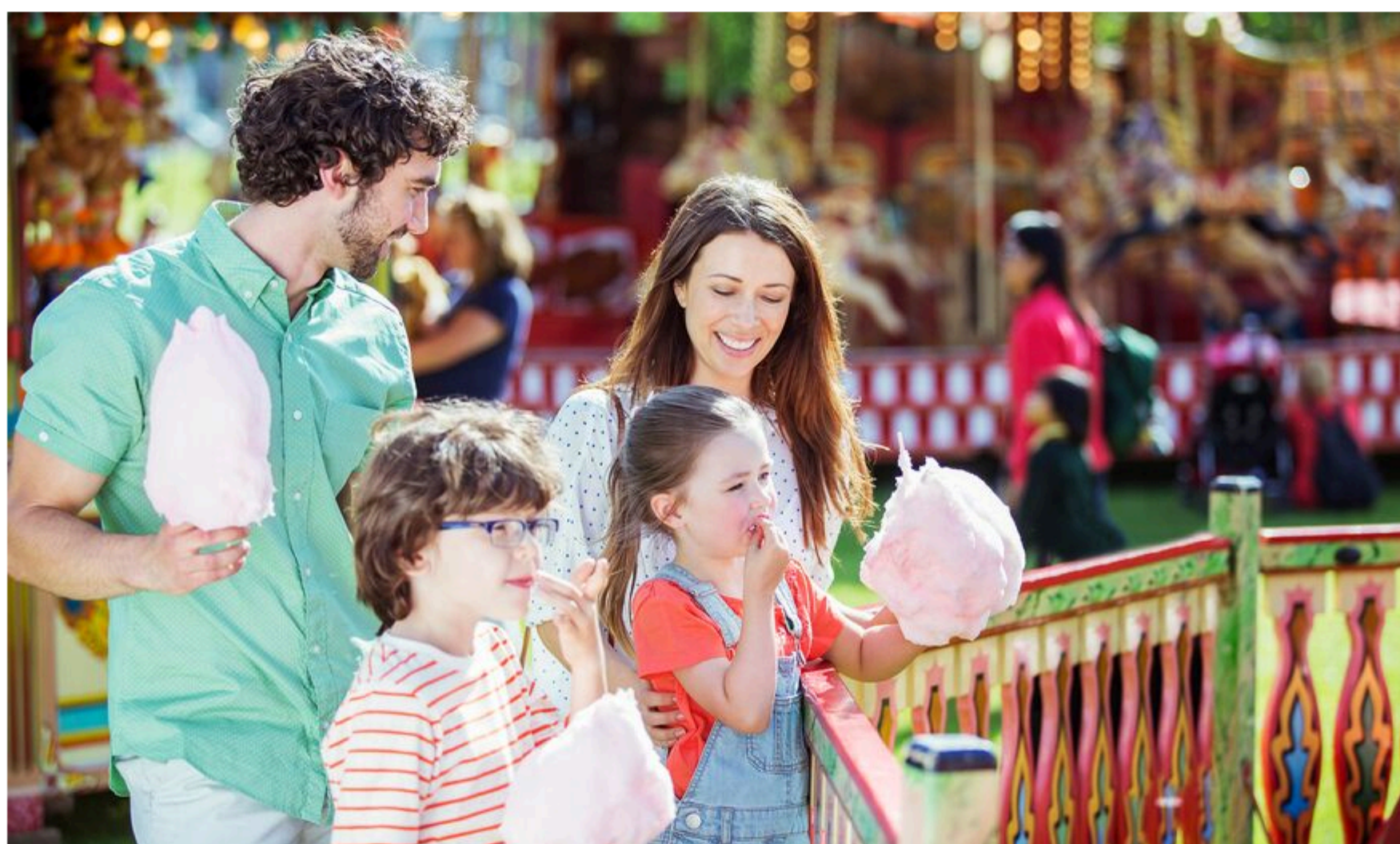
## Make It Easy To Find Your Car.

Take photos of its location, nearby signs, and the view from behind you (as if you're leaving the park).

One of RJ's past park gigs was in the parking lot, and at every shuttle stop, he was required to repeat the section number over and over "and over." Now he tells people, "Write it on your favorite child's forehead [if you have to]." All joking aside, charging the kids with remembering where the car is can help settle those end-of-the-day arguments over whether you parked in A12 or A13.

## Load Up A Backpack With Supplies.

RJ's packing list of just the essentials includes the following: a refillable water bottle for each person, sunscreen, bug spray, and a travel-size umbrella. Other additions might be extra clothing (including shoes and socks), towels, ponchos, sanitizing wipes, and plastic baggies to protect valuables. "And motion-sickness bags," smirks Isabel.



## Have A Food Plan Going In.

Some families bring their lunch and keep it in a cooler in the car. The pros are clear: you save money, avoid fatty park food, and have a built-in break in your day to cool off in the A/C.

However, at larger amusement parks this may take more time than it's worth. RJ advises people to research what's available at the park before you go; there are often healthier options than you might think. An alternative: pack snacks. That way, he says, "you have something to nibble on while you wait in line."

## Decide: Wagon Or Stroller?

Wagons have their advantages. With more space, you can fit more kids or even let one child lie down.

But they can also create issues of their own. Says RJ, "If you know you're gonna bring in a double-wide or a wheelbarrow to the parks, be mindful that you are going to a place where there will be hundreds, maybe thousands, of people around you [and] you're taking up a lot of room." Patience and extra awareness is key.

And Isabel cautions families to call ahead: "Certain parks do not allow wagons as they are a trip[ping] hazard."

## Give Your Kids A Say.

When it comes to the rides, says RJ, let your kids take the reins. "Don't feel pressured into doing something that you were told you *must* do if it's not what your kids want to do." If your eight-year-old wants to watch the show at the toddler park, that's cool. "And if little Charlie wants to do the carousel again and again and again, then by all means do let him. The memory of Charlie crying in the car-ride home could ruin all the other memories you made that day." You can even let them hold the map and lead the way.

Of course, providing some direction is helpful. "When my kids were small," says Isabel, "I kept them on their schedules." So try to fit a nap in when you can, even if it means taking a break and heading back to the resort or car.

