



Castaway Creek is the best lazy river EVER! PHOTO BY LAURIE SAPP

ADULTING AT DISNEY

AN IDEAL (AND MESSY) DATE AT TYPHOON LAGOON



BY RAIN BLANKEN

Ready to get to know your significant other a little better? Maybe more than you wanted to? My husband, Todd, and I have been to Disney's Typhoon Lagoon Water Park before with our kids, but we were eager to enjoy a "day date." Little did we know it would be some intense bonding time.

Sure, Typhoon Lagoon has all the obvious romance of running around in your swimsuits on a tropical island, but things *are gonna get real* on this date.

This is a messy, eye-opening day where

you will watch each other not-so-gracefully climb out of inner tubes, pick out waterslide wedgies, and lose all sense of what your hair was supposed to look like. Are you up for it? Let's dive in.

WHEN TO VISIT TYPHOON LAGOON

Whether you're trying to have a quiet moment in a lounge chair or waiting in line for the Crush 'n' Gusher water coaster, that timeless Walt Disney World rule stays true: Fewer crowds means having a better time and getting your ticket's worth.

Try to make the trip in mid-May or late-



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August. The weather is hot and the crowds are cut in half due to the school year. No matter what time of year, hit up this park on a weekday. Those locals (me) will be busy at work instead of accidentally ramming their inner tube into your face on the lazy river (also me, sorry).

If you can brave some chilly temperatures, show up right when the park opens, usually around 10:00 AM. The first two and last two hours of the day are always less crowded. I prefer showing up about 1:00 PM and staying until the park closes ... you can enjoy everything and have plenty of time to change after they



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kick everyone out of the water at 6:00 PM.

Note: To avoid the \$2 per towel rental fee, bring your own towels from home or your Disney resort. Lockers are \$10 for an all-day rental.

Most of the Typhoon Lagoon landscape is covered in sand and lounge chairs, so you'll be sure to find a spot on the "beach." There's even a sign at the front of the park to let you know which sections still have an abundance of chairs available.

TYPHOON LAGOON: THE RELAXING OASIS

I am fairly certain that Todd pictured our Typhoon Lagoon day as something like rubbing sunblock on my back, enjoying a cool drink, and lounging on chairs to the tune of steel drums.

But, being a ginger, I've always had an aversion to falling asleep anywhere near the sun, so we sought out some relaxing activities. We slipped into the Castaway Creek lazy river and floated serenely through lush foliage. The props along the water make you feel like you



really are in the aftermath of a crazy storm.

There are five exit points along the loop of Castaway Creek, making it an easy way to get around the entire park without walking in the heat. We eventually hopped out at the Ketchakiddee Creek exit to find the shaded Mountain Trail.

Here you can explore the rainforest in your bare feet as you make your way through the caves of the Forgotten Grotto, climb past waterfalls and bounce on rope bridges. It's a good opportunity to hold hands and debate which one of you would survive a trek through the jungle (not me).

After drying off a bit among the palm fronds, we jumped on the one-way Castaway Creek highway and headed to the Surf Pool. The edges of the pool are zero-entry, so you can sit and let the water gently wash over your legs while watching everyone else get destroyed by 6-foot waves.

SO HERE COMES THE ADVENTUROUS PART

Sitting in the calm surf wasn't enough for Todd, and soon I found myself neck-deep in water that refused to stay still. I wanted to be

swept up in the moment and pretend that warm pool water repeatedly sloshing into my mouth was one of my favorite things, but it just wasn't.

I retreated, but Todd stuck around, trying to catch one of the big kahunas. The waves at Typhoon Lagoon are no joke. I have witnessed my son be hit with a wave *that snatched the shirt off of him*. It ripped the seam clean up the side, chucking it into the air like a wet napkin. Glorious, but frightening. We hung that dead shirt on the wall and he told the tale for years.

After Todd had his fun getting waterlogged and knocked into strangers, I strategically suggested that we take on the waterslides.

Four of the slides at Typhoon Lagoon are single tube or body slides, so you can't ride together. But, as a date activity, it's pretty entertaining to go first, then wait by the mouth of the slide and listen to your partner screeching their way to an often-hilarious splashdown. Mayday Falls is the best one for this experience, as it's the longest and highest of the slides at the park.

Our favorite raft slide for two was the Crush 'n' Gusher. This water coaster has three different slides, so you can pick up the challenge of riding every single one. Our raft zipped up hills and fell down sharp drops. It had all of the thrills of a single-person body slide without those terrible

seams bumping your back on the way down.

The Crush 'n' Gusher empties out into a considerably tame pool that is perfect for reminiscing about the insane pitch of your husband's screams and checking each other for sunburn. I found that this is also the perfect setting to bat your eyelashes and ask for a literal bucket of ice cream.

TYPHOON LAGOON TREATS

Back in the midwest, our local pool served up frozen pizza and fun-sized bags of chips.

But, at Typhoon Lagoon, I was surprised to see Beef Empanadas, the Turkey Leg, a Sausage Sub, and the



An ice cream treat is perfect for sharing! PHOTOS BY RAIN BLANKEN



Under water pics, and couples tube slides are all must-dos. PHOTOS BY RAIN BLANKEN

Cuban Burger for the hearty eaters. And, something rarely seen in a pool setting—healthy choices like the Plant-based Picadillo Rice Bowl and the Tropical Salad with Chicken.

We were in the mood for something sweet, so we ordered the Frozen Tropical Storm Lemonade at the Leaning Palms (another great stop along the lazy river) and then headed next door to take on a challenge more intimidating than the inevitable wedgie on Mayday Falls: The Sand Pail sundae.

Yep, it's exactly what it sounds like—a sand pail filled with all the sundae fixin's and a cherry on top. A shovel is included, so we *literally shoveled it into our mouths* with wild abandon.

By this point in the date, you will have seen each other flopping in and out of inner tubes, squinting, screaming, and desperately trying to get water out of your nose, so don't worry: By the time you get to the Sand Pail sundae, you'll have no shame or secrets left.

If you're looking for some cheap food at Typhoon Lagoon, you're in luck ... there's a free option. You can bring in a cooler (no glass or alcohol) and there are a couple of designated picnic spots in the park, though you can also eat at your lounge chairs.

THE CALM AFTER THE STORM

Since Typhoon Lagoon closes shop in the early evening, you've got plenty of time to head across the

street to catch a movie at Disney Springs.

I brought along a change of clothes and everything I needed to do my hair and makeup. For the date, it was a great movie moment when I came out of the locker room to greet Todd, fully transformed from waterpark "drowned rat" into cute ear-wearing Disney princess.

So if you're looking for a date that will provide some intense bonding time, good food, and equal chances for adventure and relaxation, splash around together at Typhoon Lagoon. It's a great experience for couples, and will teach you valuable lessons about how much swimming you should do after consuming an entire bucket of ice cream. ♥