

Disney no longer magical to guests denied Disability Access Service

By [Andrew J. Campa](#) Staff Writer Sept. 1, 2024 6:30 AM PT



Disney fan Rosie Keiser, 55, stands for a portrait among curios in her Northridge home. Keiser suffers from multiple sclerosis and recently received a Disneyland Disability Access Service Pass.

(Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

Good morning, and welcome to the [Essential California newsletter](#). It's **Sunday, Sept. 1**. I'm your host, Andrew J. Campa. Here's what you need to know to start your weekend:

Eight-year-old Noah Roland lasted less than two hours inside Disney World's Magic Kingdom one June afternoon before suffering an [autistic meltdown](#).

Days earlier, he was denied Disney's Disability Access Service pass,

intended to help disabled individuals wait for rides outside long lines.

Northridge resident Rosie Keiser, who lives with multiple sclerosis, teared up outside the entrance lines of the Disneyland Resort in July.

She had been approved for the pass, but only after answering several "intrusive" health questions.

Lifelong Disney fan Farrah Evaguen, battling Stage IV small bowel adenocarcinoma, spent 14 hours over two days in two separate online interviews hoping Disney would approve her pass. She was denied twice.

The trio join a variety of individuals who spoke to The Times — those rejected and accepted — for a Disability Access Service, or DAS, pass.

Some feel betrayed by the company known for its inclusivity and are reconsidering patronizing its parks.

What is the Disability Access Service pass?

The DAS pass, created in 2013, allows Disneyland and Disney World users to avoid standby lines. A pass holder registers on the park app or with a guest relations member for a specific ride and is given a return time.

Other parkgoers pay extra — up to \$35 — to join the Lightning Lane, with normal wait times of [five to 25 minutes](#), according to various bloggers who track times. DAS pass holders can use the Lightning Lanes for free.

That can mean a drastic difference in wait times for some rides.

Disneyland guests wanting a DAS pass can speak online with a park representative two to 30 days before arrival, or they can meet with a guest relations employee at the park.

Why did Disney change DAS?

A Disneyland spokesperson said changes to DAS were necessary because of overuse.

The company said pass usage had tripled since 2019.

The spokesperson, who asked not to be named, said the DAS pass was just one of several accommodations Disney offers but would not comment on whether the company felt the system was being abused.

The changes, which went into effect May 20 at Disney World and June 18 at Disneyland, reduced eligibility. The accommodation is for “a small percentage of guests who, due to a developmental disability like autism or similar, are unable to wait in a conventional queue for an extended period of time,” [according to Disney’s new guidelines](#).

Previous [standards were much broader](#): “guests who have difficulty tolerating extended waits in a conventional queue environment due to a disability.”

Who was affected by the change?

A group calling itself DAS defenders [started an online petition](#) asking Disney to reverse course.

“By excluding many disabled individuals from these cherished experiences, Disney sends a clear message that the rights and needs of the disabled community can be overlooked,” the group wrote in its petition, which has 31,000 signatures.

DAS defenders claim Disney is now excluding “cancer patients, veterans with PTSD, Parkinson’s, Multiple Sclerosis, those with rare diseases and more.”

What does Disney say those denied DAS can do?

A Disney spokesperson said other accommodations exist to meet the needs of guests who have disabilities but are rejected for the pass; [according to the park’s website](#), those include a sensory experience guide to indicate which parts of the park have loud noises, darkness and bumpiness, which rides are fast and which lift off the ground. Disney also offers sign language interpreters, wheelchair and scooter rentals, assistive handheld captioning and video captioning on some rides, and dialogue and narration of scripts on others.

Park accommodations also include allowing a stroller to carry a “disability tag” that permits it to be pushed through the standby lines; otherwise, strollers have to be parked while riders stand in the queue.

(Courtesy of Debbie Perez.)

Probably not returning

Debbie Perez's resting heart rate reached 118 beats per minute at California Adventure on July 5.

A normal person's rate is [between 60 and 100](#), with higher tallies potentially leading to chest pain and fainting, [among several medical issues](#).

Earlier that day, Perez was told during her DAS interview and denial that the pass "was for individuals with developmental disabilities."

Perez has sideroblastic anemia, a blood disorder she says requires monthly transfusions. She's prone to heart palpitations and shortness of breath when she overheats, while a heart murmur puts her at risk of cardiac arrest.

"If I'm standing in the heat for too long, my heart rate increases to 150 beats per minute, which is critical," she said.

With a DAS pass, Perez said she rode an individual attraction and then rested at a restaurant or gift shop while controlling her heart rate.

Without a DAS pass, however, she's considering not renewing her annual pass.

Perez fell in love with Disney ever since first visiting from the Philippines as a 4-year-old in 1978. She and her husband make bimonthly pilgrimages from Livermore to Anaheim.

"To me, Disneyland always stood for family," said Perez, who turns 50 next month. "I love Disney, but I'm not willing to risk my life for Disney."

For more on Disney's DAS change, [check out my article from Tuesday](#)