GENERAL

national lampoon vacation movies order

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Introduction

For generations of moviegoers, the National Lampoon franchise has become synonymous with outrageous humor, memorable one liners, and a family that never quite knows what's coming next. From the original *National Lampoon's Vacation* that launched a cultural phenomenon to the holiday staple *Christmas Vacation*, the series has delivered laughter on the big screen for decades. But with so many titles, spin offs, and re releases, it can be overwhelming to decide where to start or how to order the films for a binge watch session. Whether you're a newcomer who wants to experience the series in a logical sequence or a seasoned fan looking to build a complete collection, this guide will walk you through the best ways to order the National Lampoon vacation movies, where to find them, and tips for making your viewing experience as enjoyable as possible.

What Makes the National Lampoon Vacation Series So Special?

The National Lampoon franchise began with a satirical sketch on *National Lampoon's Goon Show* and quickly evolved into a full blown film series. The core of the franchise revolves around the Griswold family, headed by the eternally optimistic patriarch Clark, and their relentless pursuit of the American dream—usually manifested as a family vacation. What sets these movies apart is their blend of slapstick, social commentary, and an almost mythic sense of family chaos that feels both absurd and oddly relatable. The humor is timeless, and the characters have become archetypes in American pop culture.

Why Does the Order Matter?

When watching a film series, the order in which you view the movies can affect how you perceive the narrative, character development, and even the humor itself. The National Lampoon vacation movies are no exception. Below are several reasons why choosing the right order can enhance your experience:

Release Order vs. Chronological Order

Release order follows the dates the films were made available to the public, while chronological order arranges them by the internal timeline of the story. For a franchise that plays fast and loose with continuity, both orders can offer unique insights.

Continuity and Inside Jokes

Many jokes in the series reference earlier films. Watching them in release order preserves the surprise factor of these callbacks.

Character Growth

Seeing how Clark Griswold evolves—or devolves—over time can be a fascinating study in character dynamics. The order you choose can highlight different aspects of his personality.

Recommended Viewing Orders

1. Release Order (Most Popular)

1. National Lampoon's Vacation (1983)
2. National Lampoon's European Vacation (1985)
3. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989)
4. National Lampoon's Vacation II (1990)
5. National Lampoon's European Vacation (Remastered) (2000) – optional if you prefer the original cut.
6. National Lampoon's Vacation III (1993) – often omitted by fans but still part of the canon.

2. Chronological Order (For Story Purists)

1. National Lampoon's Vacation (1983)
2. National Lampoon's European Vacation (1985)
3. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989)
4. National Lampoon's Vacation II (1990)
5. National Lampoon's Vacation III (1993)

3. Hybrid Order (Combining Both)

Some fans prefer to watch the first three films in release order (they're the most iconic) and then jump to *Vacation II* and *Vacation III* in chronological order. This method balances nostalgia with narrative flow.

Where to Get the National Lampoon Vacation Movies

Physical Media: DVD & Blu Ray

- Standard DVD Sets: Most retailers offer a 4 film DVD set that includes the original three plus Vacation II. These sets are budget friendly and easy to find.
- Blu Ray Collections: For higher picture quality, the National Lampoon's Vacation Collection on Blu Ray includes all five films with bonus features like director commentaries and behind the scenes footage.
- Special Editions: Limited edition releases often feature unique packaging, collectible art, and exclusive bonus material. These are great for collectors but can be pricey.

Digital Purchases

Digital platforms such as Amazon Prime Video, iTunes, Google Play, and Vudu offer the films for purchase or rent. Buying digital allows you to watch on multiple devices, and you can often find bundle deals that include the entire series.

Streaming Services

While the National Lampoon series isn't always available on subscription services, it occasionally appears on platforms like Hulu, Peacock, and Paramount+. Keep an eye on the "Add to Watchlist" feature; the availability can change with licensing agreements.

Tips for Collectors

Packaging Differences

The original 1983 release featured a distinctive orange and white cover, whereas later editions use more subdued colors. Collecting all versions can be a fun challenge.

Limited Editions & Bundles

Special releases, such as the 20th anniversary Blu Ray edition, often come with bonus DVDs, posters, or even a replica of the Griswold family's infamous travel brochure.

Build a Set

If you're serious about completing the collection, consider purchasing the *National Lampoon's Vacation Complete Collection*on Blu Ray. This set typically includes all five films plus a handful of extras like deleted scenes and a documentary on the making of the series.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are there any missing films in the series?

While the core series consists of five main films, there are additional spin offs, short films, and television specials that are not part of the main vacation narrative. These are generally considered non canonical.

Can I watch the movies on Amazon Prime?

Availability on Amazon Prime varies by region and over time. The best way to check is to search for the individual titles in the Prime Video library. If they're not available, you can rent or purchase them on the same platform.

How do I avoid spoilers when watching the series?

Watch the films in the order you prefer, but avoid reading plot summaries or reviews that contain detailed plot points. Stick to general synopses if you need context.

Conclusion

Ordering the National Lampoon vacation movies can feel like navigating a labyrinth of sequels, remasters, and special editions. By understanding the differences between release and chronological order, knowing where to source each film—whether on physical media, digital purchase, or streaming—and by paying attention to collector's editions, you can curate an experience that feels both nostalgic and fresh. Whether you're planning a movie marathon, building a complete collection, or simply wanting to revisit the Griswold family's most chaotic adventures, the right order will amplify the humor, deepen character arcs, and let you savor every punchline. So gather your popcorn, buckle up for the next family vacation, and enjoy the ride—after all, the best way to experience the National Lampoon vacation movies is to watch them in the order that makes the most sense for you.

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