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National Lampoon Vacation Movies Order

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The Ultimate Guide to the National Lampoon Vacation Movies Order

For over three decades, the Griswold family has been the benchmark for disastrous, side-splitting road trips and holiday mishaps. From the iconic station wagon to the endlessly optimistic Clark Griswold, the **National Lampoon Vacation movies** remain a staple of American comedy. Whether you are a first-time viewer planning a marathon or a longtime fan looking to refresh your memory, understanding the **National Lampoon Vacation movies order**is essential for the best viewing experience. This guide will walk you through the film series in both release order and chronological story order, providing context, box office highlights, and tips on where to watch each installment.

A Brief History of the Griswold Family on Screen

The franchise began in 1983 with a simple premise: take a normal, slightly neurotic father (Clark Griswold, played by Chevy Chase), his devoted wife Ellen (Beverly D'Angelo), and their two children, Rusty and Audrey (originally played by Anthony Michael Hall and Dana Barron), and send them on a cross-country journey to the fictional "Walley World" theme park. Written by John Hughes (based on his short story "Vacation '58") and directed by Harold Ramis, the original film was a massive hit. Its success spawned a series of sequels, a spin-off, and even a 2015 reboot. Knowing the **National Lampoon Vacation movies order** helps you appreciate how the characters evolved and how the comedy shifted from relatable road-trip chaos to more over-the-top set pieces.

Complete National Lampoon Vacation Movies in Order (by Release Date)

The simplest way to watch the series is by theatrical release. This allows you to see the natural progression of the franchise, from the grounded humor of the first film to the wackier, sometimes divisive later entries. Below is the **National Lampoon Vacation movies order** from first to last.

1. National Lampoon's Vacation (1983)
2. National Lampoon's European Vacation (1985)
3. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989)
4. Vegas Vacation (1997) – officially titled Vegas Vacation: National Lampoon's Vacation
5. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation 2: Cousin Eddie's Island Adventure (2003) – a made-for-TV sequel
6. Vacation (2015) – a reboot/sequel focusing on an adult Rusty Griswold

Note that the 2003 TV movie is often omitted from definitive lists due to its lower quality and lack of Chevy Chase involvement (except for a brief cameo). However, for completeness, it is included in the chronology. The 2015 film is a soft reboot, but because it directly references the original story and follows Rusty's family, many fans consider it part of the same universe.

1. National Lampoon's Vacation (1983)

The film that started it all. Clark Griswold loads his family into the "Wagon Queen Family Truckster" and sets off from Chicago to California. Along the way they encounter a legless mechanic, a dead aunt tied to the roof, and the infamous "Moose" incident. This original installment is often considered the best of the series, blending heartfelt moments with cringe-comedy. It established the **National Lampoon Vacation movies order** as a franchise built on family love and sheer bad luck.

2. National Lampoon's European Vacation (1985)

In this sequel, the Griswolds win a trip to Europe through a game show. Clark's misadventures continue as he drives on the wrong side of the road in England, causes chaos at a French restaurant, and loses the family in Italy. While not as critically acclaimed as the first film, it remains a fan favorite for its fish-out-of-water humor and the introduction of the "European edition" of the Griswold chaos.

3. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989)

Arguably the most beloved holiday comedy of all time. Here, Clark decides to host a "fun, old-fashioned family Christmas" in his own home. What follows is a cascade of disasters involving a sappy tree, an RV towing mishap, and Cousin Eddie (Randy Quaid) emptying his sewer tank. This movie gained a second life on cable television and is now a Christmas classic. It also significantly boosted the overall popularity of the **National Lampoon Vacation movies order**.

4. Vegas Vacation (1997)

After a long hiatus, Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo returned as Clark and Ellen Griswold, now with Rusty and Audrey as teenagers (played by Ethan Embry and Marisol Nichols). The family heads to Las Vegas, where Clark tries to win big, Audrey gets a job (sort of) as a showgirl, and Rusty befriends a casino host. This film has a lighter, more sitcom-like feel but still delivers laughs. It also features a memorable cameo by Wayne Newton.

5. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation 2: Cousin Eddie's Island Adventure (2003)

This direct-to-TV sequel focuses on Cousin Eddie and his family, not the Griswolds. Chevy Chase appears only in a brief frame story. Most fans disregard it when discussing the main **National Lampoon Vacation movies order**, but it is technically part of the franchise.

6. Vacation (2015)

A reboot directed by John Francis Daley and Jonathan Goldstein. Instead of Chevy Chase in the lead, we follow an adult Rusty Griswold (Ed Helms) who decides to take his own wife (Christina Applegate) and two sons on a road trip to Walley World. Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo make cameo appearances as Clark and Ellen. The film is raunchier and more modern, but it pays homage to the original with callbacks and a similar structure. It is a direct sequel/reboot, so it sits at the end of the **National Lampoon Vacation movies order**.

Alternative Viewing Order: Chronological Story Order

If you want to watch the Griswold family story in the internal timeline of the films, the **National Lampoon Vacation movies order** changes slightly. The story begins with the original 1983 film (set in summer), then European Vacation (the following summer), then Christmas Vacation (set the same year as European Vacation? Actually, Christmas Vacation takes place in 1989, but the characters haven't aged much; it's loosely two years after the European trip). Then Vegas Vacation (set in 1997, when Rusty and Audrey are teenagers). The 2015 vacation film is set many years later, with Rusty as a father.

However, the exact internal chronology is messy. Many fans simply watch in release order because the films do not have a tight continuity. For the definitive **National Lampoon Vacation movies order**, stick with release order, but place *Christmas Vacation* between *European Vacation* and *Vegas Vacation* for emotional payoff.

Should You Include "Cousin Eddie's Island Adventure"?

Absolutely not if you want a pure Griswold story. That film is a spin-off and not essential to the **National Lampoon Vacation movies order**. It is included only for completionists.

Where to Watch the National Lampoon Vacation Movies

Streaming availability changes frequently, but as of 2025, most of the core films are available on major platforms. The original *National Lampoon's Vacation* is often on HBO Max or Amazon Prime. *Christmas Vacation* appears annually on Netflix or Hulu during the holiday season. For the full **National Lampoon Vacation movies order**, you may need to rent or purchase digital versions from services like Apple TV, Google Play, or Vudu. Physical media collections (Blu-ray box sets) remain a great option for fans who want the entire series in high definition.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Vacation Franchise

Is there a correct order to watch the Vacation movies?

Yes, the recommended **National Lampoon Vacation movies order** is release order: '83, '85, '89, '97, 2015. This allows you to see the progression of the characters and humor.

Are all the Vacation movies National Lampoon films?

The first three were officially produced under the National Lampoon banner. *Vegas Vacation* was also branded as National Lampoon's. The 2015 film is simply titled *Vacation* and does not have the National Lampoon branding, but it is part of the same franchise.

Which Vacation movie is the most popular?

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation is arguably the most popular due to its annual holiday television reruns. But the original 1983 film holds a special place in comedy history.

Will there be another Vacation movie?

There has been no official announcement. However, given the enduring popularity of the **National Lampoon Vacation movies order**, a future sequel or reboot is always possible.

Tips for a Perfect Griswold Movie Marathon

- Binge in release order – This is the most satisfying for context and inside jokes.
- Pair with snacks – Think Jelly Belly jelly beans, a "very special" fruitcake, or a ridiculous amount of Chinese takeout.
- Don't skip "Christmas Vacation" – Even in summer, it adds heart to the series.
- Embrace the 2015 reboot – It isn't the original, but it's a fun homage.
- Watch the deleted scenes – Many a Griswold moment was left on the cutting room floor.

Conclusion

The **National Lampoon Vacation movies order** is a journey through American comedy history. From the dusty roads of the 1983 classic to the glittering lights of Las Vegas and the snow-covered Chicago suburbs, Clark Griswold's relentless optimism and spectacular failures have entertained generations. Whether you watch them for the first time or the fiftieth, these films remind us that family vacations are never perfect—but they are always memorable. So grab your MapQuest (or Google Maps), pack the family, and enjoy the ride. Just be careful of the dog.

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