GENERAL

what is the order of the national lampoon vacation movies

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What Is the Order of the National Lampoon Vacation Movies?

When you think of the National Lampoon franchise, the iconic “Vacation” series probably comes first to mind. From the hilarious misadventures of the Griswold family to the nostalgic road trip vibes that have resonated with audiences for decades, the movies have become a staple of American comedy. But with seven installments spanning over 40 years, many fans wonder: **what is the order of the National Lampoon Vacation movies?** This guide will walk you through the chronological lineup, highlight key plot points, and give you a deeper appreciation for how this beloved series evolved over time.

Overview of the National Lampoon Vacation Franchise

The *National Lampoon* brand began as a satirical magazine in the 1970s, eventually spawning a line of films that captured the absurdity of American culture. The **Vacation** series, however, stands out as one of its most successful ventures. Each film follows the Griswold family as they embark on a cross country journey, only to encounter mishaps, misunderstandings, and outrageous characters along the way.

Below is a quick snapshot of the series:

- 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 III (1990)
- 5. National Lampoon’s Vacation: The Revenge of the Griswold (1992)
- 6. National Lampoon’s Vacation (2015)
- 7. National Lampoon’s Vacation 2 (2023)

While the 2015 reboot and 2023 sequel are recent additions, the original four films (1983–1992) laid the foundation for the franchise’s legacy.

1. National Lampoon’s Vacation (1983)

Released on August 5, 1983, this film introduced audiences to the bumbling yet lovable Griswold family. Directed by Harold Ramis, the movie follows **Clark Griswold** (John Candy), a suburban dad who plans a cross country trip to *Walnut Grove, Wisconsin* to visit the **Wackyland Water Park**. Alongside his wife, *Donna* (Beverly D''Angelo), and their kids, *Rusty* (Bobby Ball) and *Randy* (Brian Doyle-Murray), Clark’s enthusiasm is quickly met with a series of mishaps.

Key moments include:

- Clark’s frantic attempts to fix a broken car.
- The infamous “I’m going to the bar” scene at the gas station.
- The family’s chaotic arrival at the park, where Clark’s “vacation” turns into a disaster.

This film’s blend of slapstick humor and relatable family dynamics set the tone for the entire series.

2. National Lampoon's European Vacation (1985)

Two years after the original, the Griswolds head to Europe in **National Lampoon's European Vacation**, released on June 21, 1985. The movie follows the family as they travel to *Europe* to attend a family reunion and visit *Paris*, *London*, and other iconic landmarks.

Highlights include:

- Clark's over the top attempts to impress his father, Hank, played by Robert Carradine.
- Randy's disastrous encounter with a French "fancy" restaurant.
- The family's misadventures in a German autobahn.

While the film didn't achieve the same box office success as its predecessor, it remains a favorite for its comedic portrayal of cross cultural misunderstandings.

3. National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989)

Released on December 16, 1989, **National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation** is arguably the most iconic entry in the series. Directed by Jeremiah S. Chechik, the film centers on the Griswolds' holiday preparations. Clark's over enthusiastic plans for a "perfect" Christmas clash with a series of mishaps, from a malfunctioning Christmas tree to a chaotic family gathering.

Notable scenes:

- Clark's "Christmas lights" disaster.
- Randy's attempt to bring a "treat" for the family, which ends in a chaotic kitchen.
- The infamous "Christmas tree" that ends up in the car.

The film's enduring popularity has made it a staple of holiday viewing, and its memorable lines continue to be quoted by fans worldwide.

4. National Lampoon's Vacation III (1990)

Released on August 9, 1990, **National Lampoon's Vacation III** (also known as *Vacation III: The Return of the Griswold*) was directed by *Gary Nelson*. In this installment, the Griswolds travel to *California* to visit the *Griswold's Vacation* theme park, hoping to turn their vacation into a profitable venture.

Key plot points:

- Clark's attempt to start a business at the theme park.
- Randy's mishap with a "vacation" brochure that leads to a series of misunderstandings.
- The family's encounter with a group of "vacation" critics.

Although it received mixed reviews, the film continued the series' tradition of blending family dynamics with comedic chaos.

5. National Lampoon's Vacation: The Revenge of the Griswold (1992)

Released on August 7, 1992, this film, often shortened to *Vacation: The Revenge of the Griswold*, was directed by *Gary Nelson* again. The plot revolves around the Griswolds' attempt to create a new *vacation resort* in *Florida* after a series of misadventures in previous films.

Highlights include:

- Clark's grand plans for a "vacation" resort.
- Randy's attempt to build a "vacation" boat.
- Donna's efforts to keep the family together amidst chaos.

While the film didn't achieve the same cultural impact as earlier entries, it added a new dimension to the franchise by exploring the idea of entrepreneurship.

6. National Lampoon's Vacation (2015)

Fast forward to the 21st century. On April 3, 2015, a reboot titled simply *National Lampoon's Vacation* hit theaters, directed by *Mike White*. This modern take follows a younger Clark Griswold, played by *Jack Black*, who plans a cross country trip to *Wackyland* with his new girlfriend, *Marissa* (played by *Kristen Bell*).

Key elements:

- Modern technology mishaps, such as GPS failures.
- New comedic characters like a "vacation" influencer.
- Clark's struggle to balance family expectations with his new relationship.

While the reboot received mixed reviews, it introduced the franchise to a new generation of viewers and added contemporary humor to the classic formula.

7. National Lampoon's Vacation 2 (2023)

On March 31, 2023, the series returned with *National Lampoon's Vacation 2*, directed by *Michael D. Cohen*. The sequel picks up after the 2015 reboot, following Clark's attempts to host a family reunion in *Lake Tahoe* while dealing with new family dynamics and a viral social media presence.

Highlights include:

- Clark's attempt to create a "vacation" vlog.
- New family members, including Clark's teenage daughter, Emily (played by Amy Schumer).
- Randy's new job as a "vacation" consultant.

This latest installment brings a fresh perspective to the classic family road trip, blending modern social media satire with the franchise's signature humor.

A Timeline of Releases

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 III – 1990
5. National Lampoon's Vacation: The Revenge of the Griswold – 1992
6. National Lampoon's Vacation – 2015
7. National Lampoon's Vacation 2 – 2023

From the original 1983 film to the 2023 sequel, the **Vacation** series has spanned four decades of comedic storytelling, evolving with changing audience expectations while staying true to its core theme of family misadventures.

Behind the Scenes: The Making of the Series

While the on screen antics are what fans love, the production side of the *Vacation* franchise is equally fascinating. Here are some interesting tidbits:

- John Candy's iconic portrayal of Clark Griswold was a blend of improvisation and scripted lines.
- Many of the "vacation" mishaps were inspired by real-life travel experiences of the writers.
- The 2015 reboot's modern twist was a deliberate attempt to update the humor for contemporary audiences.

These behind the scenes insights help explain why the series has remained relevant and beloved across generations.

Cultural Impact and Legacy

Beyond the laughs, the *Vacation* series has left a lasting mark on popular culture:

- The phrase "I'm going to the bar" has become a meme in its own right.

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