

A Treat for the Senses: Walt Disney World

by Mike Geoghan, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Chances are that if you are reading this, you are a fan of Walt Disney World and you have been there more than once or twice. I mean, who isn't a fan? It's a place of magic, wish-fulfillment and its fun for ALL ages. For you, this "tour" of mine will be a trip down memory lane. And while you may think of other "sense"-ational experiences, I'm certain you'll recognize and possibly share a few of my personal favorites.

Now if you've never been to "The World," well then you may be the perfect person to read this little "tour" because it is something of a checklist for your first trip to Disney World; things to be aware of and things you will never forget. With all due respect to Jiminy, let your senses be your guide...

TAKING IN THE "SIGHTS"

Without question, the one sight that leaves an indelible mark on Magic Kingdom visitors is Cinderella Castle. In fact it's the one sight that makes your inner-self wake up and scream, "I'm at Walt Disney World!" Spaceship Earth at Epcot, the Tree of Life at Disney's Animal Kingdom, and to a much-lesser degree, The Sorcerer's Hat at Disney's Hollywood Studios all produce this feeling. They are each park's "calling card." If you've been to the parks, you have a picture of you and/or a member of your family standing in front of them.

The same could be said of seeing the Disney characters. Any character will do, but a member of the "Fab Five" (Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Goofy, and Pluto) REALLY does the trick. These sights, as well as seeing the monorail and the fireworks displays (Wishes or IllumiNations) are basic. They are almost primal and a given on any trip to Walt Disney World.

Other sights you want to be aware of include; seeing World Showcase at Epcot lit up at night (truly amazing and if you stare at it long enough you can almost hear "It's a Small World"); seeing the Contemporary Resort both up close and at a distance (it's an interesting oxymoron of a hotel ... yesterday's look at tomorrow and still one of my favorites); people inexplicably smiling ALL THE TIME (and that includes the people who work there); and finally the "Hidden Mickeys." Initially, I didn't quite understand the concept that "Hidden Mickeys" book author Steven Barrett helped to popularize, but once you get the hang of playing Disney's version of "Where's Waldo?" it's a lot of fun and it

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"SOUND" ADVICE

No matter where you are within Walt Disney World...the parks, the resorts, the restaurants, even the transportation ... LISTEN CAREFULLY. Almost everywhere, there is a "soundtrack" for your location and it fits perfectly. Mike Scopa wrote a [great article on MousePlanet.com](http://www.MousePlanet.com) a couple of years ago talking about the "Disney Zone." I highly recommend you read it because this is what I'm talking about. Most of the time you won't even notice the music, but 9 times out of 10, it's there.

Another sound that is pure Disney is the "Monorail spiel." If you've ridden it once or one-hundred times then you know what I'm talking about, so say it with me, "Please stand clear of the doors...Por favor mantengase alejado de las puertas." This line is so memorable that you

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can find it on t-shirts. If you've never ridden on the monorail, make a plan to enjoy the ride and do as you're told.

Some more sounds to listen for include: the Walt Disney World Railroad's steam whistle (which can be heard from as far away as the Polynesian Resort); the Haunted Mansion's "howling wolf" (particularly effective at night); and the song that will bore its way into your brain and never let go, "It's a Small World."

THE SWEET "SMELLS" OF SUCCESS

Now before I scare you off, I'm only going to focus on the pleasant smells around the "World." I'm sure you might run into the occasional negative odor, but I can assure you they won't be nearly as memorable as, say, the popcorn on Main Street USA. This one is courtesy of old Uncle Walt himself. He wanted this for his guests from the start of Disneyland and it has become a mainstay. In fact, one of the best "sight/smell" combinations in all of the parks is when you step past the turnstiles at the Magic Kingdom and through the tunnel under the railroad. There you will smell the popcorn and see Cinderella Castle, and if that isn't one of the all-time greatest "sense combos," please e-mail me another.

Some lesser known yet very potent and pleasing aromas include: the pastries and cakes from The Boardwalk Bakery at the Boardwalk Villas (in a word, "Wow!"), the smoky fire pit at the Animal Kingdom Lodge (a great place to meet people and hear some African folklore), the orange groves viewed when riding Soarin', the baked goods shown during Mickey's PhilharMagic, the succulent skewered meats grilling over an open-flame at 'Ohana in the Polynesian Resort (sorry vegans, this just smells wonderful), and finally, if you're at Epcot for the Flower and Garden Festival held every spring, the millions of flowers provide an extra special scent that adds to the park.

MMMM ..."TASTY" MORSELS

Walt Disney World is LOADED with things that will send your taste-buds into orbit. You can find healthy foods and low-calorie foods and even sugar-free foods all over the resort, but unless you are diabetic...why bother? This is Disney World and you are only visiting for a short while so enjoy yourself and save the calorie-counting for your return home. Besides, you are going to walk A LOT, so reward yourself with some of the following goodies: Adventureland's Dole Whip (fan clubs have started for this tasty treat); Mickey Mouse waffles, which are served in Chef Mickey's at the Contemporary Resort and numerous other restaurants (for some reason they just taste better in the shape of

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Mickey); the pulled-pork sandwich at Flame Tree BBQ in Animal Kingdom (I've been to the park about 10 times and probably had this 9 of those times ... yum!); smoked turkey legs, which are available at many places including Toluca Legs Turkey Company at Disney's Hollywood Studios; and creme brulee (whether it's double vanilla bean, milk chocolate, maple, key lime or pistachio, this custard dish is pure heaven), available at a variety of restaurants.

The absolute best way to send your taste-buds on a "thrill ride around the world" is to get to Epcot during the International Food and Wine Festival, which is held from late September into mid November. The Festival is a cost-efficient way to find out what's good and what might not be for you. Bon Appetit!

A "TOUCHING" TRIBUTE

As most of you already know, Walt Disney created Disneyland as a place he could spend time with his daughters. Fittingly, Walt Disney World is first and foremost a place for families. It's a place where couples hold hands, where sons and daughters hug their moms and dads (and Disney characters), where newlyweds kiss, and where some pretty great emotions run wild.

There are some obvious "touch" sensations throughout the resorts and parks like the exiting creepy crawlies at "It's Tough to be a Bug," the wind blowing in your face at just about any "Mountain" ride, or the splash of water from numerous 4-D movies and water rides, but the "touching" sensation that is the most important is the one you have after a long day at the parks just before your head touches the pillow. When that special someone (girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, wife, son, daughter, mom, dad, grandma or grandpa) says, "That was a fun day!"

It's the "sense" memories that will mean the most as time goes by and you will have plenty of them after a visit to Walt Disney World. I've shared some of mine...what are yours?

About The Author: Mike Geoghan is a television producer, currently between jobs in New York. He has worked in the past for FX, PAX, "LIVE With Regis and Kathie Lee" and was most recently the Executive Producer of the talk show, "God Squad." He and his wife Susan have been DVC Members since 2005 and are the proud parents of Sarah Helen, their little Disney princess, born in June 2008. He soon expects to be a volunteer with the Make-A-Wish Foundation and someday hopes to be employed by "The Mouse." His favorite Disney character is Peter Pan, which explains his insistence on "never growing up."

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