

Lessons Learned Part 3: Disneyland

Lessons Learned

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

In this final part of a series of articles looking at what we learned on our most recent Disney trip, it's over to the west coast of America for our visit to Disneyland.

(Check out [Part 1](#) and [Part 2!](#))

We've been to Disneyland in California a number of times now, but never in the holiday season, so this really was going to be new to us. Having been to Walt Disney World over Christmas a number of times before, we were ready for crowds, but this was the first thing we learned, that the crowds here form a very different pattern to Florida's. A lot of that is down to the main audience here, who are locals, rather than out-of-state visitors, as happens with Walt Disney World.

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□The first thing that means, if it's raining when you wake up (as it was the first day we headed into the parks); the crowds will be lighter. Equally, if you're local, you obviously don't need to be up at the crack of dawn to get to the parks--we found early mornings to be much quieter than we'd expected. The flip side of that was that the evenings were a lot busier than we thought they would be.

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□Speaking of crowds, I never thought for one moment that walking through the public entrance at the end of Downtown Disney would be quicker than the hotel-guests-only entrance into Disney's California Adventure from the Grand Californian, but that's exactly what happened to us a couple of days after Christmas. We heard people saying that the wait for the hotel's private entrance was around an hour, and that the line snaked around the building, so we decided to try the other way, and we were in after about a five minute wait. That was definitely the way to go, so that's something to keep in mind during the busiest times.

And, speaking of the busiest times, don't think that the monorail will be a quicker route into the park either, as the lines we saw at the monorail's Downtown Disney station late one morning were pretty long. We were very glad that we opted to take the monorail out of the Disneyland Park, rather than into it.

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□The next thing we quickly learned was just how hot a ticket Radiator Springs Racers is. Of course, we knew it was popular, but it was a revelation on our first morning to see a huge line snaking its way

around Carthay Circle. At first, I rather stupidly thought that people were lining up for World of Color meal packages at the restaurant there, as that's where the line seemed to start, but no, that's where non-resort guests started to line up for the FASTPASS line for Radiator Springs Racers! Thankfully we were staying at Disney's Grand Californian, so we were resort guests, and we were able to get in line easily enough to grab our FASTPASSES.

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□ We also learned how quickly those FASTPASSES disappear -- it's a bit like Toy Story Midway Mania at Disney's Hollywood Studios. Snooze, and wait until the park's been open for a couple of hours, and that's it -- you're out of luck. We went back for another FASTPASS at around 9:30am, and already they were gone for that evening.

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□ We already knew how popular World of Color is, so we knew to get a dining package for it, but what I didn't realise, and we completely lucked out with this, is that if you eat at the Carthay Circle restaurant, you end up with some of the best seating for this show. It was a superb meal, and this was a nice, additional bonus.

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□ Turning to the Disneyland Park itself, on a couple of occasions, we nearly missed attractions because we thought the waits were too long. One prime example of this is the Jungle Cruise, which when we first rounded the corner into Adventureland looked absolutely mobbed. Thank goodness we did a double check, as it turned out the line was actually for the Indiana Jones Adventure a little way away. That's the problem with having quite a small park, so do check whether the attraction you want to see is as busy as it first looks.

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□ Something that we didn't think about before this visit was that Mickey's Toontown opens later than the rest of the park. We headed there one morning, only to discover it cordoned off, so all we managed this trip was a quick visit there at night. That was a shame, and it's certainly something I'll be keeping in mind for future visits.

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□ After regularly visiting Walt Disney World, something else that you may forget about, but very much applies at Disneyland, are parking charges. Sure, you have to pay for valet parking in Orlando, but as an on-property guest, I'm not used to paying to self-park as well. That was a bit of a shock to the system, especially as the charges aren't cheap. When we were there in December 2012, self parking was \$15, while valet was \$22, and the rates have gone up since. It's certainly something worth adding into your budget, if you'll be staying for a few days.

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□ The final lesson we learned this trip was perhaps an obvious one, but then again, when you've never visited California before in December,

maybe not. Our previous visits have been in April, August, and October, and obviously the weather is pretty hot in those months. This time was very different, and just like Orlando in December, we had some mornings that were a shock to the system with the cold. I was so glad we were well stocked with long-sleeved tops and sweatshirts, and could layer up appropriately.

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□So those were the lessons we learned on our most recent Disney trip. You definitely always learn something, no matter how many visits you've had in your life. It'll be interesting to see what we learn on our next trip, which will include our first ever visit to Aulani in Hawaii, so I'm sure there'll be plenty to learn from that.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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