

Comparing Cars Land and New Fantasyland: A Disney Parks Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

It's rare for us to plan a visit to both American Disney Resorts in one trip.

Usually we stick with one coast or the other, but it's even rarer to be visiting two parks that have recently had massive additions to them. I'm talking about the Fantasyland expansion at the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World and the addition of Cars Land to Disney's California Adventure.

The first one we visited was the Fantasyland expansion, and if I'm honest, it is hard to compare this to Cars Land, as this isn't a finished product. That was something I had a real issue with, as the building work is right in the middle, which completely detracts for me, from the enjoyment of this addition to the park. Putting that to one side, the theming here is exquisite, as you'd expect from Disney. I absolutely adored the exterior of Ariel's Undersea Adventure, which reminded us of the Mysterious Island area in Tokyo DisneySea, our all-time favorite Disney theme park. There's certainly plenty to see, if you have a long wait ahead of you, although luckily we were able to snag FASTPASSES and avoid it.

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□ I have to say that, when Disney originally announced this, I was excited about this ride, until I learned it would be a clone of the one going into Disney California Adventure, which opened about a year earlier. While it's very cute, and don't get me wrong, I like it; to me, I'd have preferred something different in each park.

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□ Now my problem with the Fantasyland expansion continues with the other additions. Enchanted Tales with Belle is obviously far more popular than Disney envisaged. That's the only reason I can think of for such long waits (75 minutes on the morning we tried to do it, just 15 minutes after park opening, and that was supposedly a quiet time of the year). The second problem is that one of the big attractions, Be Our Guest restaurant, is only open for those lucky enough to snag reservations for dinner (and thank goodness we've managed to get one on our upcoming trip!), or those prepared to stand in line and wait for lunch. We weren't prepared to do that, although I do understand that the lines look worse than they are, and seem to move quite quickly. As such, these are two attractions we never got near.

The Storybook Circus side of Fantasyland is very much aimed at the

youngest members of the family, and sure, so was Mickey's Toontown, but there was something whimsical that appealed to me about that. This? Not so much. I felt out of place there, although I'm sure if we had kids, we'd love going there. Dumbo, recently doubled in size, certainly looked stunning, and almost as good as new. Who would know that one of these two rides is now over 40 years old? Not me!

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□ While I've been on the Barnstormer before, it's never been a favorite of mine, as it feels as if it's over before it even starts, so Disney's re-theming of it to the Great Goofini didn't do much for me.

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□ So there's a quick run through of my feelings on the Fantasyland expansion. Let's move across to look at the latest addition to Disney's California Adventure, Cars Land. It's fair to say that this park has had its detractors from day one, and we were pleasantly surprised on our first visit in 2006, thinking it was nowhere near as poor as others had led us to believe. We've always liked it, and when we heard Cars Land was coming, we were enthused by the prospect, especially as the concept drawings were pretty impressive. Would reality be as good or would it disappoint in the same way the Fantasyland expansion did? In reality it was better than we could've ever dreamed!

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□ The first thing is it's finished, so you can get drawn into the theming of it the second you enter. Everywhere you look, there are lovely little touches from Cars, and we were lucky enough to be there for Christmas, and the trees were really fun to look at, and spot all the little things on them.

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□ But what of the new attractions? Well, we already knew that Radiator Springs Racers was the new "must-do" here, and we knew it would be crowded, but crucially, those all-important FASTPASSES are available, and it's such a hit that even the lines for the FASTPASSES (I kid you not) are carefully controlled by Disney cast members. This means, if you're in the park at opening, you've got a really good chance of snagging one, and being able to ride later, something sadly lacking for Enchanted Tales with Belle.

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□ I will also admit that Radiator Springs Racers has a few technical issues. It's much the same story as when Test Track first opened in Epcot, with the ride down almost as much as it's functioning, adding to those long lines even more. However, if you can get on it, then whatever wait you've had disappears as you just sit back and enjoy the ride. First, it's sedate, and like a typical Disney ride, taking you through the story of Cars, before you put the throttle to the floor, and take off for a high speed ride around the countryside of Ornament Valley. This really is like Test Track on steroids, and it's definitely an E-ticket addition to the

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park, in a way that the new Fantasyland just can't compete with. I guess when the new Seven Dwarfs coaster arrives next year, we'll get that.

☐ While Radiator Springs Racers has taken all the headlines, the ride I loved the most here was actually Luigi's Flying Tires. Italian, like the car it's named after, the theming of this ride is superb, but the ride itself is the real attraction, and it's totally different to anything in Disney on either coast of the States. The closest we've come to something like this was Aquatopia at Tokyo DisneySea, one of the most fun attractions there. Here, you take to your tire, and then you're blasted around by air from underneath, with you leaning to whichever direction you want to go in. It's a long time since I've laughed so much on a Disney attraction.

☐ The third attraction, Mater's Junkyard Jamboree, is a slow loader, and at first if you don't look too closely, you might think it's a bit of a dull ride, but it's got a real sting in its tail -- literally! Mater whips around the tractors that you sit in, and you're bowled from side to side, giving this much more kick than you'd at first expect. The only ride of any similarity, again, can't be found in the States, with Cars Quatre Roues Rallye in the Walt Disney Studios Park of Disneyland Paris.

☐ It's perhaps this level of uniqueness, along with the fact it's complete and so beautifully themed that sets Cars Land apart from the new Fantasyland. Walking into Cars Land really is like stepping into Radiator Springs, whereas sadly the same can't be said for the latest addition to the Magic Kingdom.

☐ If I had to pick between visiting the two, Cars Land would win hands down for me every time. It'll be interesting to see if my opinions change in 2014, when the new Fantasyland is finally complete.

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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