

The Epcot Explorer's Encyclopedia by R.A. Pedersen: Disney Book Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

I'll admit it upfront -- I am a fully certified Epcot nerd.

Epcot has been my favorite park ever since my first visit there with my parents in 1987. So the second I discovered the *Epcot Explorer's Encyclopedia* by R.A. Pedersen, I knew this was a book that I just had to read. The fact that the sub-title of the book is "A Guide to Walt Disney World's Greatest Theme Park" just had me nodding away, as that's something I already knew.

Turning to the first chapter, I have to confess to a twinge of disappointment, as we explored the Epcot parking lot. No this isn't what I expected this book to be about, and fortunately, after that, it moves quickly on to much more important things, covering the attractions of Future World, and the countries of World Showcase, so do stick with it beyond that.

□ With every attraction and country, each chapter has the same format. Chapters start with how it was when it opened, then documenting, in chronological order, any changes that have taken place since then, and how the attraction or country changed as a result. It's easy on the mind, as it breaks up information that could otherwise become almost unmanageable, there's so much that can be written about each subject.

□ Of course, my fascination lay with the attractions that are no more at Epcot, particularly Horizons, and World of Motion. I have some memory of both attractions, and like many memories, they're rose tinted ones. In my mind, I have no idea why either closed, as they certainly impressed me as a teenager.

Recognizing that readers will probably feel the same way that I do, Pedersen gives generous page counts to Horizons, with the chapter focusing on that running to more than 30 pages, although World of Motion comes out with a considerably lower page count than that. Having said that, ironically I actually felt that World of Motion was a more complete chapter, as it charts the huge success the ride had when it first opened (eight million visitors in its first year of operation), and how that success waned, leading to GM pulling its sponsorship, and eventually the ride closing. The story of the final ride through by GM executives was certainly ironic. I won't say anymore than that, as I wouldn't want to spoil the surprise.

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□ With the Horizons chapter, as you go through, you don't get the story of what led to the closure of this attraction, but what you do get is a walk through every scene, transporting you back in time, and really making you feel as if you were on one of those ride vehicles. I found it such an in depth description that it brought back some of my memories of that 1987 visit, with me sitting there reading, thinking "I remember that scene!" and I was so caught up in the descriptions of every scene that I headed for YouTube to have a look at the ride for myself, which was a wonderful journey down memory lane.

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□ Another part of the book I really enjoyed was the nostalgic glimpse back to the original Seas pavilion, complete with the hydrolators. I must admit that, until I read this chapter, I'd forgotten just how much changed when they revamped this to introduce Nemo and his friends.

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□ Once you get into the World Showcase section of the book, understandably the chapters are a lot shorter, as many of the countries simply don't have the history of their Future World cousins. However, there are still plenty of glorious little nuggets, waiting to be discovered. For example, did you know that there's a part of Denmark in the Norway pavilion? I didn't. I also had no idea just how many concepts have been put forward for the Japan pavilion over the years either.

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□ These chapters also give you the chance to learn more about the aborted River Rhine Cruise ride, originally planned for the Germany pavilion, how the park's most popular dining location ended up being ousted from Epcot -- trust me, it's a good story, and one I hadn't heard before.

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□ One thing I will warn you about is that if you're expecting to find a good deal of information, or perhaps even a whole chapter on the countries that never made it as World Showcase pavilions, you will be disappointed. There's a short paragraph on that, and no more, which I felt was a shame, as I would've loved to have read more on this subject, but then again, I guess that's not what an encyclopaedia is really there to do. It's more about focusing on facts, so perhaps it was the right approach after all.

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□ I always find the sign of a good book is if, as I'm getting towards the end, I start to slow down my reading, as I don't want it to finish. That was certainly the case with this book, and I was genuinely sad when my tour around my favorite Walt Disney World park came to an end, as I made it to the final page. If, like me, you love Epcot, you'll really enjoy this book, and if you don't love Epcot, then maybe this book will help you to appreciate it more in the future.

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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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