

Tower of Terror 10 Miler: runDisney Event Review

by *Bernie Edwards, PassPorter Guest Contributor*

The 2013 Twilight Zone Tower of Terror 10 Miler Weekend took place in Walt Disney World from Friday, October 4th to the early "morning" hours of Sunday, October 6th.

This was a runDisney event with five major components: a race expo, a 5K morning trail run, kids' races late in the morning, a 10 mile late night run, and a post-race party inside Disney's Hollywood Studios.

This was my first runDisney event. In fact, it was my first race, period. There were several reasons why I selected it for my first race:

- ☐1) I wanted my first race to be a Disney-themed race
- ☐2) I have always enjoyed visiting Walt Disney World in the fall; the weather is usually less hot and humid than the summer months and if the timing is right, one can visit both the Epcot International Food and Wine Festival and Mickey's Not So Scary Halloween Party.
- ☐3) The 10 mile distance was "long enough" to make a trip centered around the race to be worthwhile but still three miles less than a half-marathon. At the time that I made my decision, Disney did not offer any 10K races.

☐ I started training a year before this race and followed Jeff Galloway's "run-walk-run" method; Jeff is the official training consultant for runDisney. I downloaded one of his training schedules from the runDisney website, purchased one of his books, visited his website, and purchased one of his iPhone applications. My first training "run" was literally on a tennis court, and I maxed out after less than a mile; I definitely had a long way to go to get ready in a year. I told everybody that I had signed up for the 2013 Tower of Terror 10 Miler, because I knew I needed the peer pressure to help me do the necessary training. My training plan was to run two or three short runs during the week and one long run on the weekend. To be honest, I really didn't enjoy any of the running for the first four months, but starting in the fifth month I found myself actually enjoying my short runs; in the summer of 2013, I started enjoying my long runs as well.

☐ I signed up for the 10 mile race when registration opened in February, and later signed up both of my boys, ages 9 and 14, for the 5K race. I decided that I really needed to run with my 9-year-old son and so signed up for the 5K as well. My training proceeded fairly well and soon it was time for our trip to Walt Disney World. We decided to fly down from

Maryland on Thursday and to return Sunday evening.

On Friday, I attended the Health and Fitness Expo which took place at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex. That is where the runners had to go to pick up their official race number and packet. There was an official runDisney merchandise area and a lot of outside vendors selling fitness apparel and equipment; several of those vendors were offering discounts on their products. There was also a shirt exchange where runners could exchange their 10 Miler Tech shirt for a different size if it was available; I had to use it myself and the exchange was very easy.

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□The Happy Haunted 5K Trail Run started at 7:30 am Saturday at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex. This was definitely a family event and many runners wore costumes. Most of the course consisted of running in sand and the course was populated with Disney villains; Disney also provided water along the way. Participants who finished the race got a Finisher medal and some post-race refreshments to go along with the t-shirt that they picked up with their race packet.

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□The nighttime Twilight Zone Tower of Terror 10 Miler race started from the parking lot at Disney's Hollywood Studios at 10:00 pm Saturday night. It was still fairly warm and humid at the start of the race, with the temperature just under 80 degrees Fahrenheit. About 9,500 runners participated in the race, and each group of runners was sent off with a few fireworks. The race went from the parking lot, down a parkway to just inside the parking lot for Disney's Animal Kingdom, then back down the parkway to the ESPN Wide World of Sports, and then finally back to Disney's Hollywood Studios. Most of the course took place on solid pavement, but there were a couple of places along the route where runners had to run on sand or gravel.

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□Along the way, there were great special effects and Disney villains for runners to look at. I remember seeing a mock-up of the Nautilus at mile 4, and Scar and his hyena friends near mile 5. I also enjoyed seeing the Queen from Alice and Wonderland, and the grave diggers that can also be seen in the parade for Mickey's Not So Scary Halloween Party. My favorite special effects were a giant fireball that was released at regular intervals just outside Disney's Hollywood Studios and a laser "screen" created over the runner's heads just before entering the park near the end of the race. Runners could stop and get their pictures taken with the characters, but since it was my first race, I decided to just keep on running. Disney also provided water and Powerade at regular intervals throughout the race. Inside the park, runners got to run past the Lights, Motors, Action Extreme Stunt Show, through New York Street, past the Sorcerer's Hat on Hollywood Boulevard, and then through some backstage areas before getting to the finish line near the Tower of

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Terror. Participants who finished the race got a fabulous Finisher medal to go along with their Champion Tech shirt that they picked up with their race packet; they also received some post-race refreshments.

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□After running the 10 miler, runners could enjoy the Disney Villains Holiday Bash, a party held inside Disney's Hollywood Studios from 10:00 pm to 4:00 am Sunday morning. Entrance to the bash was included in the 10 miler race registration; guests not running could also just purchase a party ticket. There was food and drinks available at various locations throughout the park and some of the attractions were also open, including the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror, Rock 'n' Roller Coaster Starring Aerosmith, and Toy Story Mania! The party was a blast for those participants who still had energy after the race!

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□The 2013 Twilight Zone Tower of Terror 10 Miler Weekend was a great runDisney event for my entire family. My two boys loved running in the Happy Haunted 5K Trail Run and I enjoyed the nighttime 10 miler race. I highly recommend both races for anybody looking for a fun and exciting runDisney event. There are usually also room and theme park ticket discounts for guests participating in an event. If you are interested, be sure to keep an eye out for when registration opens; a lot of runDisney events sell out very early. Training for an endurance race has been a life-changing experience for me, and I'm already looking forward to next year's Tower of Terror 10 Miler Weekend.

About The Author: Bernie Edwards lives in Maryland with his wife and two children. He is an engineer for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and was a member of the Walt Disney World Moms Panel in 2010, 2011, and 2012, and a member of the Disney Parks Moms Panel in 2013. He enjoys visiting Disney parks around the world, and sailing on the Disney Cruise Line.

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