

The Osborne Spectacle of Lights: Disney's Hollywood Studios

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Most of us put up Christmas lights to help celebrate the holiday season and usually it might take us a few hours - perhaps even a couple of days if we're really keen on putting on a show. Imagine then the work that goes into creating the Osborne Spectacle of Lights at Disney's Hollywood Studios every year.

Work to put the lights up usually gets underway at Disney's Hollywood Studios in July, when most of us would be enjoying (or should that be suffering?) the high temperatures of a Florida summer. Then they're usually ready for a grand switch-on in November, remaining on until just after the arrival of the New Year.

Why so long? Well, it might have something to do with the fact that there are five million lights to put up each year... a little bigger than the average household celebration, but amazingly, that's exactly how this spectacle started. It's a story well known to anyone who's been to Disney during the holidays. Jennings Osborne, a businessman from Little Rock, Arkansas, promised a Christmas display of lights to his daughter and each year he just added a few more, until it got a bit out of hand. After he ran out of space at his home, he purchased the houses on either side of his property, so he could continue expanding the display.

Unfortunately, this wasn't met by great approval from his neighbors, who complained about the disruption to their lives from so many visitors coming to see the lights. The case ended up at the Arkansas Supreme Court in 1994 and it was ruled that the three million lights - for that was what he was up to by then - were a public nuisance and he was barred from lighting them up. Despite that, he did still carry on and ended up in contempt of court. A year later, Disney came to the rescue and the lights moved to their new home at the Hollywood Studios and they've been setting the park ablaze ever since with a stunning display that differs each year.

No-one knows what 2009 will have in store for us, but if it's anything like the previous years it will be a sight to behold. Last year saw the lights dance for the first time and it certainly was a breathtaking spectacle, perhaps highlighted by the fact that we kept returning time and time again during our stay to see them dance. In previous years, 3D glasses have enhanced the lights, producing various effects including snowflakes. And, speaking of snow, there's usually some of that white stuff to be magically found as you make your way around the lights.

So what can you expect if you've never been to Disney before during the holidays? You need to know that the Osborne Lights are always bewildering in their splendor the first time you see them. I still clearly recall rounding a corner and just literally standing there with my jaw dropping open and my eyes almost popping out, trying to take in the sheer scale of what lay in front of us. It's no exaggeration to say that everywhere you looked, there were just millions of lights. The impact on your senses is something you can't quite appreciate it until you see it for yourself. Yes, there are photographs, but they can only show you a small part of the display and to suddenly see everything lit up is quite something.

Be sure to allow plenty of time at the Osborne Lights. If you're anything like us, you'll want to linger as you wander through them. Although you usually do have to follow a set pattern through the lights, with Cast Members directing you and ensuring that you head the right way, you can take as long as you like -- and most people take a long time. At times, you'll find you can only move slowly, shuffling forward step by step, because of the huge amount of people around you. That's usually as you enter the lights and, the further you go in, the more space you'll find to admire them.

The only time you'll be hurried through is if the park is actually closing, so be sure to allow yourself enough time before that happens. We find we usually need at least 30-40 minutes to fully appreciate the lights and, if they're dancing again as they have done during the last couple of years, you might want to allow an hour, so you can see a couple of those dances, as they're well worth catching.

Something else to allow time for is to get photos done with the PhotoPass photographers that you'll find there. Last year, we found about three or four in different locations throughout the lights and got some superb images from them. It's very difficult to photograph the lights with people in front of them and we found this to be a perfect way to get souvenir shots with one of our favorite holiday events at Walt Disney World.

The Osborne Spectacle of Lights will be lighting up the Streets of America area of Disney's Hollywood Studios from November 30, 2009 through January 3, 2010, although in previous years, there have been special previews of the lights from as early as mid November. They will be lit every night and there's no additional cost, apart from park admission, to see them.

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

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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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