

# Why Epcot Is My Favorite Walt Disney World Theme Park: A Walt Disney World Park Review

by Cheryl Pendry, *PassPorter Featured Columnist*

Of all the theme parks at Walt Disney World, Epcot is for me, the absolute best — but WHY?

My love affair with Epcot started back in October 1987, when I visited Walt Disney World with my parents. It was something of a flying visit, as we spent just three days there, but of course back then, there were only two parks. This was also part of a much bigger vacation, which saw us pack in visits to New York City, Washington DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and national parks such as Death Valley, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon into three weeks.

□ The second I stepped into what was then Disney's newest theme park, I was captivated, and I think my heart was stolen. The big golf ball, as I clearly remember thinking of it when I first saw it, seemed a true wonder to me, especially as there was actually a ride inside it. Of course, once I got on board that ride, it seemed even more wondrous.

□ I guess, looking back now, I must have wandered around the park with my parents with my eyes getting bigger with every attraction we visited. The Living Seas, as it was known back then, was one of my favorites. I wasn't sure whether my dad was making it up when he said the Hydrolators didn't really take you anywhere. After all, it was all so well done, how could it be illusion?

Back then, Test Track and Soarin' were over a decade (and more) away from becoming a reality, and the attractions then could all be enjoyed together as a family -- with one exception. I still remember riding Body Wars, and all of us coming off not feeling as good as when we boarded!

□ The biggest treat was still to come though, as we made our way into World Showcase. Now, I know that many people still ask whether there's enough for the younger members of the family, and perhaps this is a surprising revelation, but as a then 14-year-old, I absolutely adored this concept of being able to walk from one country to another without taking any flights between them. It was a novel idea to me, and although I was fortunate to be well traveled around Europe by that stage in my life, seeing exotic countries such as China and Japan felt so exhilarating. After all, I'd never be able to travel to such wonderful places, would I? How little I knew at that stage of my life that I'd be

bitten by the travel bug when I became an adult! I'd never seen a concept like World Showcase before, and let's be honest, even today it's a novel one, and I was well and truly hooked.

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□By the time we had to leave Disney, I clearly remember walking towards the monorail with my parents, and turning round to get one final glimpse of Epcot, the park that had stolen my heart. I uttered a silent promise in my head "I'll be back," and of course, since then I have been, on many occasions.

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□I still have a huge smile on my face whenever we enter Epcot, be it walking through International Gateway from our beloved Beach Club, or through the main entrance. I still adore the concept of World Showcase, being able to move easily from one country to another, but now I appreciate each of those countries even more, having been fortunate enough to have visited all but one (Mexico) in my life.

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□There is nothing more special to me than being able to wander through the pavilions, exploring every little nook and cranny, and finding something new that I hadn't appreciated before. It's somewhere you can take things a little easier, and slow down and "smell the roses," something we all talk about doing whenever we go to Disney (but may not do).

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□Now there's even more than ever for me to love at Epcot. The thrill rides have arrived, and fortunately, as I'm no fan of coasters, they're all things I can actually enjoy. I love the adrenalin rush I get from the speed of Test Track, feeling the wind in my hair as we whip around the outside track. I adore smelling those familiar orange groves and pine trees at Soarin', and mentally screaming "Been there," when we see parts of California we've been lucky enough to visit over the years.

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□And of course there are the festivals that add so much to Epcot. Spring brings the Flower and Garden Festival, with topiaries everywhere that I just stand by and wonder. The talent that goes into creating those things! The stunning flowerbeds in between Future World and World Showcase are so vivid with color that throughout the rest of the year the landscaping looks drab by comparison. As a keen gardener, I love seeing what they come up with every year, and I can't wait to go back now that food's been added into recent Flower and Garden Festivals.

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□Of course, food features heavily in the autumn Food and Wine Festival. We easily make meals out of the offerings from the various booths around World Showcase, and it's lovely to be able to sample so many different styles of food. With only small portions, it doesn't matter much if you don't like something, and it's certainly opened our eyes to various

new flavors and foods. Admittedly, Friday and Saturday nights are not the best times to visit, as the park is so crowded and things can get rowdy, but once you know that, it's easy enough to avoid those issues.

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□ Perhaps most importantly for me and my love affair with Epcot, every night is capped off by my all-time favorite show at Disney, the wonderful IllumiNations. There is just something about the combination of wonderful music, amazing fireworks, and the images on the giant globe that surveys the history of mankind that gets me every time. Maybe one day I'll be able to watch it all the way through without crying, but trust me, each time these are tears of joy at being able to stand there and appreciate the most beautiful night-time show, at the park that really feels like home to me.

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□ Every time we leave Walt Disney World, I still say a silent farewell to Epcot and promise that I'll be back again. Much as I love the other parks, it's Epcot that has the most special place in my heart.

*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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