

Epcot - Not Just for Grown Ups: A Walt Disney World Review

by Kristen Bieber, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Many people say that Epcot is a great park for adults, and I won't argue with that, but it's a great park for kids as well.

When I talk to friends and acquaintances who come home from Walt Disney World, they often tell me that they skipped Epcot since it's mostly for grown-ups. If I could have only told them about all of the fun there is to be had there! Epcot has so many great rides to offer, but there is so much more fun to be had. I'd like to share some of it with you!

As a homeschool family, we look for learning opportunities everywhere we go. (I know most parents feel the same way, no matter what their school situation.) Last school year, we studied countries and cultures of the world. With students from all over the world working at many of the shops and restaurants around Epcot's World Showcase, there are many opportunities to interact with people from other countries. I knew it would provide educational moments for us that we couldn't have at home!

□ A great way to keep kids going as you tour World Showcase is the interactive "Agent P's World Showcase Adventure" game. Before you enter World Showcase from Future World, on your left will be an Agent P game kiosk. (There are also kiosks at the Norway and Italy pavilions, as well as the International Gateway between the U.K. and France pavilions.) You are handed a phone or "communicator" and a starting country, and a few quick instructions. Your job is to help Agent P stop an evil mastermind. You will be given clues as to where to go next. You can do one mission, about 20 minutes, or keep going as long as you'd like. This is definitely a great way to keep kids going and excited as you tour around World Showcase Lagoon.

□ In our opinion, Epcot is the place for food at Disney. When dining at restaurants with a unique type of food, our rule is that the kids have to try it for at least part of their meal. Over time, our kids have developed really unique tastes. Some of favorites include: sushi (vegetable sushi is a great way for kids to try sushi for the first time!) and shaved ice from the Katsura Grill in the Japan pavilion, baklava and crunchy falafel in the Morocco pavilion, and a bounty of delicious pastries in the France pavilion, which you won't have to beg anyone to try! Make trying new foods a fun family game by having everyone give it a rating and

compare how your tastes differ.

Technology-hungry kids have lots of options as well. Stop in Innoventions for the Sum of All Thrills attraction (note you must be 48 inches to participate in this). You use cool touch screen tools to create your own virtual roller coaster, then you get to "ride" it in a motion simulator that shows the roller coaster you designed on the screen. Stop by Test Track and design your own race car, then take it out on the track and see the statistics on how it performed. Mission:Space lets you simulate being an astronaut heading to Mars (little ones head to the Advanced Training Lab). The Seas with Nemo & Friends, Spaceship Earth, Test Track, and Journey to Imagination also have interactive exhibits after the ride for kids to explore.

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□Kidcot stops are fun art stations at 11 locations in the World Showcase. Each station is staffed by a cast member, and supplied with markers and sometimes other craft materials as well. You can begin at any of the stations, pick up a Duffy bear on a stick and let their creativity flow. The cast member at each station will be happy to write "hello" or your child's name in their native language. What a fun keepsake!

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□Epcot is actually a great place for your family to meet with characters. You can find Snow White in Germany, Belle and Beast as well as Sleeping Beauty (Aurora) in France, Jasmine and Aladdin in Morocco, Donald with his Three Caballeros outfit in Mexico, Mulan in China, as well as Mickey, Minnie, Donald and Goofy at The Character Spot located behind the Fountain View Starbucks.

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□For an extra special (and free) treat, head to Club Cool to the right of the big fountain facing World Showcase Lagoon. Imagine your child's surprise when you hand them a small cup and tell them they can try any soda they'd like to! Try a sample of each of the flavors offered, and check out which country they are from. This is a great cool spot to take a break and rest for a few minutes.

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□Lastly, something that costs a bit extra, but is so much fun for kids is the Behind the Seeds tour at The Land pavilion. Go for a ride on Living With the Land, and then head backstage for a tour. See how they grow and maintain all of that beautiful food you saw on the ride, feed the fish in the tanks. You may even get a sample! You can make reservations in advance, 407-WDW-TOUR, and tickets are \$14 per adult and \$10 per child (ages 3-9). Epcot is a favorite park of ours. I hope that if you have avoided it in the past you will give it a second look!

About The Author: Kristen is wife to Jordan, and proud mom of Jack and Lucy. She loves to get to Walt Disney World as much as possible to escape

the cold Minnesota winters!

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