

Visiting Walt Disney World During Refurbishments: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Walt Disney World is constantly evolving, changing and improving itself, so it's almost guaranteed that whenever you visit, there will be some form of work going on somewhere on property.

However, over the last couple of years, that work has stepped up a notch, with some major projects underway. I'm sure many of us got used to seeing Fantasyland in the Magic Kingdom with construction walls around, as it was doubled in size, and new attractions were added. Now that work is complete, but head elsewhere on Disney property, and there's plenty more evidence of work underway. What's the best way to deal with that?

□ Well, the first thing for me is having a good idea what to expect before you go. That way, you can adjust your expectations. There's nothing worse than walking into a park, expecting everything to be open, and then discovering one of your favorite attractions is closed. It can really put a damper on your whole vacation, especially if it affects one of the younger members of the family. The [Walt Disney World website](#) will always detail if anything will be closed at the park you're visiting on the day you intend to head there. Another really useful resource is the [refurbishments/closures page on AllEars.Net](#), which lists everything they're aware of.

□ It's also a good idea, if you can, to keep up to date with any major plans Disney have. Right now, Disney is busy working on a [new AVATAR themed land at Animal Kingdom](#), which is affecting large swaths of the park, while over at Downtown Disney, work is underway to [convert it to Disney Springs](#). Both projects are multi-year, with construction walls all over the place until work is completed in 2017 (Animal Kingdom) and 2016 (Downtown Disney). Because we knew about this work before our most recent visit, we were already aware that both areas would have serious disruption. All I can say is thank goodness we at least had that expectation, as the reality was even worse than we expected.

As we made our way through Animal Kingdom, it felt as if there were construction walls everywhere we went. If you were a first-time visitor, you'd struggle to enjoy the usual relaxed environment you find here of lush, green foliage, with animals all around. Although Disney obviously always do their best to minimize the impact on guests, with the scale of

work taking place at Animal Kingdom right now, it's pretty much impossible to disguise the construction work. When we were there in March, it also didn't just pervade one area of the park, but sadly most of them, with construction obvious in Africa, Asia, and Discovery Island -- three massive chunks of Animal Kingdom. Did it impact on our enjoyment of the park? To a certain extent yes, but if we hadn't have been expecting it, the impact would have been a lot worse. I can't even begin to imagine the horror I'd have experienced walking into the park, had I not been aware of the work beforehand.

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□It would have probably been the same reaction over at Downtown Disney. By the time we visited, much of the work in the Marketplace had been completed, including a new pedestrian bridge from the Rainforest Cafe over to the walkway by Fulton's Crab House. However, work was still continuing on what we currently know as Pleasure Island, and the West Side. Once again, construction walls were in evidence everywhere we went, and at some points, there were so many of them, it almost felt claustrophobic. I could imagine that on a busy night, the crowds being channelled into such narrow areas could be quite unpleasant. What was nice here was that there were artists' images everywhere that showed guests what would eventually be coming. Somehow, that made the construction much more palatable, as I could see what they were looking to create, and knowing that it would be here by the time we next visited helped to make the work feel worthwhile.

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□There was one park where there was a lot of work going on, but ironically, it wasn't that noticeable, and that was at Disney's Hollywood Studios. If we'd been first time visitors, we would never have had a clue that so much there was closed, as much of it just looked like it had never existed in the first place. We sadly walked past the entrance to the Backlot Tour, for example, and all you now see is the building facade with the shutters down on where the entrance used to be. Other examples during our visit of closed attractions included the Legend of Jack Sparrow and the American Idol Experience. Despite all of this, nowhere did we see any construction work going on, and we were left wandering around the park, intensely curious as to what would be going into their place eventually.

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□Outside of the parks, Disney is exceptionally good at warning guests if there will be any work going on at the resort you'll be staying at. At one point, we were warned that part of Stormalong Bay at the Yacht and Beach Club would be closed during our stay at the Beach Club Villas, although the work was concluded before our arrival. The biggest impact right now is over at the Polynesian, where Disney Vacation Club accommodations are being added. We knew about the scale of the work before our trip, but even so, we were still staggered at the level of

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disruption. While at 'Ohana, we were able to see the work, that has since been completed, on the main pool there, for example. Of course, that can count in people's favor, as Disney may well offer discounted stays to make up for any disruption.

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□ Did we still have a good vacation despite all the work we encountered during our stay? Of course we did. There's so much to Walt Disney World these days that, even if there's major construction in a couple of places, there will always be so much more still to enjoy, completely free from any work. And, the way we look at, all this work just gives us another reason to go back, so that we can see the improvements for ourselves, once they're completed.

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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