

The 'Welcome to Disneyland' Tour: A Disneyland VIP Tour Review

by Suzanne Lyle, PassPorter Guest Contributor

My group of five adult women consider ourselves "Disney World People."

Therefore, we didn't know what to expect on our first trip to Disneyland. In fact, we really didn't know where to start. We decided it would be a good idea to start our trip with the "Welcome to Disneyland Tour." The price was \$25 per person. There is also a discount available for Disney Visa cardholders and Annual Passholders. Since the tour included both Disneyland Resort and Disney's California Adventure Park, the tour requires guests to have park-hopper admission.

Our tour began at the Magic Kingdom where we met our tour guide, Carrie. She was just inside the gates and to the left. It was super easy to locate the sign booth; there was a large sign at the top that clearly indicated, "Guided Tours." This area offered tables and chairs for us to wait for the entire tour group to arrive. Within minutes our group of approximately 12 people set off on the tour. Because this is a walking tour, it's a good idea to wear comfortable shoes and sunscreen. In addition, you might want to carry a backpack with a camera, umbrella, and anything else you might desire. We moved along at a steady pace, so I was glad I thought to bring a bottle of water with me too (hint hint). There were times during the tour when we encountered a crowd. Our guide carried a rider's crop to keep our group close and in her view. I could go on and on with nice things to say about Carrie. She was friendly and knowledgeable. Along the tour, Carrie informed us about the FastPass system, single rider lines, and PhotoPass.

First, Carrie led us across the plaza where we began our tour at California Adventure. We walked clockwise from Main Street to Hollywoodland, A Bug's Land, Pacific Wharf, Paradise Pier, and Grizzly Park. The first ride of our tour was a backdoor entrance to "Journey of the Little Mermaid." We felt like VIP guests enjoying the sights and sounds of Ariel's underwater world. We stopped at the FastPass distribution kiosks for the World of Color show, for any that were interested in attending that evening's show. This brought us to a comfort break at Mortimer's Market, which is located near the gate. Mortimer's offered bottled beverages, juices, and fresh fruits to purchase. Restrooms and drinking fountains were also available.

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□Next we strolled back across the plaza to Disneyland. We walked under the train station, stopping to notice the Fire House. The second story window is home to Walt's office. When Walt was actually in the park, there was a lamp lit in the window. Now a perpetual lamp shines in his honor. Carrie shared some history on the design elements as we walked along Main Street. Again we toured clockwise, beginning in New Orleans Square. Our second ride of the tour was a backdoor entrance onto Pirates of the Caribbean. The evening glow and fireflies set the mood. Our boat ride began overlooking the dining area of Blue Bayou restaurant. The ride then turned into a very enjoyable pirate adventure. Our guide sat back and allowed us to enjoy both rides without commentary.

We continued through Frontierland. We boarded the train for a ride through Fantasyland and exited at ToonTown. My personal group of women enjoyed this stop very much as it fulfilled our desire for ToonTown since it is not at Disney World anymore. Our last land was Tomorrowland. Because this happened to be the day before the opening of the Star Wars Launch Bay, none of the rides or character meet and greets were open. Carrie mentioned that the park sometimes offered soft openings and we should check back later. We found this was correct! When we returned to Tomorrowland that night at about 8 pm, we had a fantastic preview ride on HyperSpace Mountain!

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□After two and a half hours, we returned to the guided tours booth feeling familiar with the parks, locations of the lands, and attractions. Carrie asked if we would like her to arrange an Advanced Dining Reservation for that day, however we declined because we already had one for that evening. She easily set us up for Goofy's Kitchen the following morning. She also gave us FastPasses to be used anytime later that day for Star Tours and Indiana Jones Adventure.

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□In addition, Carrie took a moment to find an answer to a question I asked along our walk. I was interested in finding "Walt's Bench," the actual bench from Griffin Park where Walt sat when he dreamed of making Disneyland. After asking the other guides, she informed us that Walt's bench is located in the "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln" building. I encourage everyone to take a moment and notice this bench. I might be overly sentimental, but it brought tears to my eyes.

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□The tour ended with a personal certificate of completion as well as a commemorative collector pin. We highly recommend this tour, especially if this is your first trip to Disneyland. It was a good value for our group and we feel enjoyed our stay more because of this tour. We hope you give it a try.

About The Author: Suzanne is a Walt Disney World veteran who fell in love with Disneyland on her last trip, and hopes to return again one day.

Article last updated: 03-03-2016

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