

The Family Magic Tour at the Magic Kingdom: A Walt Disney World Backstage Tour Review

by Jocelyn Tavares, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Walt Disney World is probably the only place you will get a shy girl like me to bark like a dog in public.

I mean that in the nicest possible, PG-rated way. But that is exactly what you may do, or see, on The Family Magic Tour at the Magic Kingdom. This is also one of the few tours at Walt Disney World that younger children can take part in. It is a reasonably priced tour (especially by Disney standards), at \$39 per person (tax not included), a ticket for ages 3 and up. The tour does require valid park admission, and it meets every morning at 10:00 am.

We met our small group and tour guide at the Chamber of Commerce, but currently tours are meeting at the Town Square Theater. With name tag and a bottle of water, we were appropriately marked and started on our way. Our guide informed us that Mickey was throwing a party the night before, and Donald "borrowed" Mickey's Sorcerer hat. Donald couldn't handle the magic of the hat, of course, chaos ensued, and before Mickey knew it, all kinds of important things were hidden all over the Magic Kingdom. If our group couldn't find all of these items, Captain Hook would be able to take over the park. We had to find them before Captain Hook did, so we could save the Magic Kingdom.

□ To get warmed up, the kids tried their aim at a bean bag toss. It served as an icebreaker, getting the kids more comfortable with each other and becoming at ease with the interactivity of the scavenger hunt. At the end of the bean toss, we all found the first clue, with a little rhyme to lead us to the next location. At each location, we found another clue and one of the lost items that we needed to collect before Captain Hook found them.

□ The clues brought us all over the park: the barbershop, locations in trees outside the Jungle Cruise, through Frontierland, the Main Street Confectionery, bushes in Liberty Square and a little bit of running through the Tomorrowland Terrace (among more!). Some of the clues were trickier than others and required a whole lot of searching. Some of the clues were more easily seen. With a break at the Cheshire Cafe, the whole scavenger hunt took approximately two hours.

It was a great way to see the park and to see those well-known details

that are easy to overlook while at the World. Our group also took many paths that we may not normally take on the usual rush-around-the-Magic Kingdom day. There was also the added benefit of seeing the clues and the park through the help of younger eyes. It wasn't all hard work, though. There were also a few surprises. A ride was thrown in for good measure. When I was researching this tour for my family's trip, the Peter Pan ride was the usual ride included for the tour, but at the time of our visit, the queue was being reimagined. We were honored to ride Winnie the Pooh in its place. It was a nice perk of the tour to get an extra ride in our Magic Kingdom Day.

□ Another wonderful surprise was meeting Peter Pan and having him all to ourselves. He was the best face character I have ever seen at Walt Disney World. This Pan was the embodiment of the boy who never grew up. He had the cocky assuredness and swagger that we see in the Disney film, and he looked just like Peter. Meeting Peter Pan alone, watching the kids play with him and posing for photos was one of the big highlights for my family.

□ There is another wonderful surprise -- which I will leave as a surprise. I'm sure you can figure it out if you google enough about the Family Magic Tour. But I don't want to be the one to spoil it all. However, we did get to meet another character and posed for pictures. And it was wonderful.

□ The Family Magic Tour is a great tour if you are a family that goes to Walt Disney World often, and you are looking for a different twist for your vacation. If you only visit once every few years, or this is your only trip in the near future, it may not be the best use of your time. It was a great way to see the park in a different perspective, and slow down and enjoy some of the individual elements of the Magic Kingdom. That may be appealing to families in itself at whatever place they are in their Disney World. And it was a lot of fun.

□ I also can't emphasize this fact enough: the price for each member of the family is amazing, considering you are enjoying a tour at Walt Disney World. The children and parents in our group enjoyed it so much, moms were raving and glowing by the end of the tour. It was so gratifying to see the kids work together, and to see the parents act like goofs. Our tour guide was very warm, friendly and inclusive and tried to get all of the kids involved in finding clues. As well as nudging parents to gallop like horses, bark like dogs, or whatever silly thing we had to do to have a laugh in the August heat. Lastly, Disney never fails at making you feel special when you take part in these events. They didn't fail here, either.

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□Our tour guide told me that the clues don't vary, but each tour guide comes up with their own story on how those clues and items get strewn around the park. In a typical twist of Disney magic, our tour guide grew up a few towns over from the town where our daughter was born. (I should mention that she was 10 at the time of the tour. The age in ranges in our tour was 3 through 11/12.) It's these little sprinkles of pixie dust that make our Disney weeks magical, preserve our memories, and keep us coming back.

About The Author: Jocelyn Tavares is a Disney obsessed mom, wife and public librarian from Massachusetts who wants to be a writer when she grows up.

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