

10 Things I Am Looking Forward to at Disneyland: A Disneyland Planning Article

by Amy Wear, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Those of us who've visited Walt Disney World a few times may have some preconceived notions about Disneyland, California.

We've heard that it's much smaller than the World. It "only" has two parks and three Disney-owned hotels, after all. Sleeping Beauty's castle is also significantly smaller than Cinderella's (apologies to the West Coasters who are tired of hearing this).

We've also heard that Disneyland doesn't have that same "bubble effect" that we enjoy about the World. A city of non-Disney-owned hotels pretty much surrounds the two parks and Downtown Disney. You aren't far from Los Angeles, famous beaches, and other major attractions. Wait a second -- aren't those good things?

☐ Here are just 10 things we are looking forward to for our upcoming trip that are unique (or newly unique) to Disneyland:

☐1. Paper FastPasses! Do you miss the days when you didn't have to decide your park touring schedule at least 60 days in advance and could get FastPasses as you saw fit from day to day at the parks? I sure do! I loved being the "runner" at Walt Disney World and I loved knowing the secrets to getting far more FastPasses than you can get today -- at more than one park in the same day!

Back in the "good old days" (pre-2013), you could get a new FastPass every two hours. Get one for each family member and ride more than once if some of your family prefer not to ride. And everyone's favourite way to spread Pixie dust: pass along unused FastPasses to random strangers who can use a break from the regular line.

☐ Don't despair! Just head out west to Disneyland and go back in time, where they are still using paper FastPasses (at least for now). You can even get one first thing in the morning for World of Color. This one is "unattached" and doesn't require you to wait two hours to get another pass.

☐2. No 180 day dining reservations! What? You didn't plan your trip at least six months in advance and book all your dining reservations at 6:00 am eastern, exactly 180 days in advance of your arrival? No

problem! Disneyland doesn't even take dining reservations more than 60 in advance. Most Disneyland experts will tell you that you don't need to make many dining reservations. It's wise to reserve your must-do restaurants, especially character meals and other specialty dining, once you know where you want to eat. But there is little pressure to reserve far in advance. Sweet!

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□3. It "feels like the first time." There's something extra magical about a first visit to any Disney destination. I still get sentimental when I look back at photos of our first trip to the World with our girls. Now that I plan Disney vacations for a living (Ok, it's more of a guilty pleasure), I get giddy every time I get to plan a family's first trip. Soon we'll get to be that family again!

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□4. What's old is new again. Of course, I've done my homework. I know that even though we will be experiencing many of the same top attractions that you can find at the World, there are differences.

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□it's a small world in Florida isn't too popular in my family, but in California they've added Disney characters to the set and there's an outdoor component you won't find at the World. There's a treehouse in Adventureland, but it belongs to Tarzan, not Swiss family Robinson. There's no Rock 'n Roller Coaster, but I hear the outdoor California Screamin' is stiff West Coast competition.

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□The California parks have even retained some attractions you can no longer find at Magic Kingdom, such as Mickey's Toontown and Snow White's Scary Adventures (but what were they thinking when they made that one?). Our girls never got to experience Toontown at the World before they started building the New Fantasyland, so they will finally get to see Mickey and Minnie's houses, among others.

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□5. Disney's hotels are "right there". Yes, you can walk out of either park and back to your Disney hotel room at leisure. Disney's Grand Californian Resort even has its own entrance into California Adventure for Disney resort guests. Some of the furthest Disney hotel rooms away are about a 15-minute walk. There's even a monorail to the Disneyland Hotel for tired feet. No waiting for buses. Can I get an amen?

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□6. Disneyland Hotel. What's not to love about the Disneyland Hotel? We loved the light-up headboards in the Royal rooms at Port Orleans Riverside, so we can't wait for the Sleeping Beauty ones here! Then there's the added bonus of the pool area with monorail water slides and character dining on site. Need I say more?

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□7. Park hopping is actually park hopping. Unlike Walt Disney World, at

Disneyland you can walk right out of one park and into the other -- and back. At the World, park hopping is really a misnomer. It's more like transitioning. Expect at least 45-60 minutes of transit time between parks.

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□8. Cars Land! That's right. Only Disneyland has an entire land themed after the wildly popular Cars movies. Very fitting, of course, with the movie taking place in Southern California. Being stuck in the dark ages, my family only recently watched the original Cars movie for the first time. Our girls had no idea just how delightful that movie is. Now we can't wait to ride Radiator Springs and dine at Flo's V8 Cafe.

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□9. World of Color! Just when we thought we'd seen all of Disney's spectacular nighttime entertainment offerings, we heard about World of Color at Disney's California Adventure. Given its rave reviews, we fully expect to be blown away and plan on seeing it more than once.

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□10. It's "Walt's park". Now that we've seen the mouse several times in Orlando (and even at sea), my family is thrilled to have the opportunity to experience "the other Disney," as my youngest daughter used to call it. Disney veterans will tell you there's nothing quite like visiting "Walt's park." We can't wait!

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