

Disney California Adventure Park - A New Family Favorite: A Disneyland Park Review

by Amy Wear, PassPorter Featured Columnist

When Disney park fans talk about the [Disneyland Resort](#), they often focus on the history of the original Disney park and the feeling of Walt's presence. Those with only one day to spend in Anaheim will overwhelmingly choose Disneyland park. This is quintessential "Disney", after all.

So it may surprise you to learn that the fond memories we brought home from our first visit to Southern California are largely centred around [Disney California Adventure](#). I will even admit that if a Walt Disney World regular is going to have the chance to visit Anaheim for only one day, I'm going to recommend Disney California Adventure. Why? Because so many of the attractions are unique to this park and unique to the experience of visiting California. Magic Kingdom and Disneyland park, on the other hand, have quite a bit of overlap. Sacrilege, I know!

Here are just 10 things we loved about Disney California Adventure (DCA), making it a new family favourite:

10. Extra Magic Hour. Extra magic hour at DCA is only available to guests of the three Disneyland hotels. This means much lower numbers than over at Disneyland park, where anyone with a 3-day or longer ticket is entitled to one early admission.

Since the [Radiator Springs Racers](#) attraction is still so wildly popular, the Extra Magic Hour gives you the chance to ride before the queue is a 75-minute or longer wait. We followed the masses and did not pass go or collect \$200 and power-walked as briskly as we could to Radiator Springs. We had less than a 5-minute wait, yet by the time we exited, the wait was already 45 minutes long.

9. Much smaller crowds. Over at DCA, "life is dee bubbles." Single day visitors overwhelmingly choose to spend their Disney time at Walt's park. The rule of thumb is to head to DCA whenever things get crazy at the Land.

After racing around Radiator Springs on two extra magic hour mornings, we wasted no time getting across the park to [Soarin' Over California](#). This was our last opportunity to experience the attraction before it changed to Soarin' Over the World. Since the rest of the early risers were awestruck back in Cars Land, we walked in alone both mornings.

8. Paradise Pier. The masses tend not to migrate over to the [Paradise Pier](#) area until late morning. The tried and true strategy of getting to a Disney park early to enjoy several rides before there is any line ACTUALLY WORKS here, when it did not work for us at Disneyland park.

☐ Being used to the long lines in Fantasyland at Magic Kingdom, it was shocking to us to be able to walk right on [The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Undersea adventure](#). Equally shocking was the short line for [Toy Story Midway Mania](#).

☐ 7. [California Screamin'](#). The coaster lives up to its name. I wasn't leaving California without riding this one. It seems that most people aren't aware of the single rider line. I walked on right away, even when the standby line was 45 minutes long. I even rode it twice in a row so my peeps could take photos the second time.

☐ 6. [Mickey's Fun Wheel](#) (Non-swinging gondolas). This Ferris wheel is a sight to behold at 150 feet high. It offers breathtaking views from the top and a great chance to snap photos. I only wish we had a chance to ride at night when it is all lit up. The key here for all ages to enjoy is to get in the non-swinging gondola line. Otherwise, you will be in a nauseating gondola that swings back and forth as you ride.

☐ 5. [Grizzly River Run](#). The Grizzly River Run is Anaheim's answer to Kali River Rapids at Animal Kingdom. Some say it has more thrilling drops than Kali River Rapids. We timed it perfectly, riding on a warm day, just before our planned afternoon pool break back at the Disneyland Hotel. We enjoyed getting absolutely drenched under these circumstances, but would not opt to ride on a cooler day.

☐ 4. [Silly Symphony Swings](#). I've always been a big fan of swings and this attraction did not disappoint. The double swing option for children between 40 and 48 inches tall is perfect for parents and kids. Don't miss the chance to take a ride when it's all lit up at night.

☐ 3. [Cars Land](#). I could give you a separate top-10 list for the marvel (or should I say Pixar?) that is Cars Land, but Cheryl Pendry has already beat me to it:

<http://www.passporter.com/articles/10-reasons-to-love-cars-land.php>.

☐ There is just nothing like the backdrop of Radiator Springs Racers to enjoy while you eat at [Flo's V8 Cafe](#). No detail is spared in this 50's style diner. We enjoyed it so much that we ate there twice.

☐ Cars Land was the spot where we followed the PassPorter motto to "do less and enjoy more" one evening. We felt the magic when the music and lights came on at dusk, just like in the movie. Our girls wanted to know what all the fuss was about churros, so they shared one with caramel dipping sauce while we sat on a bench and soaked in the scenery.

☐ 2. [Radiator Springs Racers](#). This attraction is undeniably the most impressive of all six North American Disney parks. Comparing it to Test track at Epcot doesn't even begin to do it justice. Every last detail is

mind-boggling and the race with another car is truly thrill ride level without being too intense for most children.

¶1. World of Color. As I mentioned in a previous article, this night-time spectacular was the most impressive show we've ever seen at a Disney park. It is absolutely worth the effort to get reserved viewing area Fastpasses and to sit on the hard pavement for an hour with sleepy kids waiting for it to begin.

¶Other familiar sights at Disney California Adventure include [Tower of Terror](#), [Frozen Sing-a-long](#), [Animation Academy](#), Turtle Talk with Crush, It's Tough to Be a Bug, and [Disney Junior: Live on Stage](#). From the [trolley ride](#) on Buena Vista Street to photo-ops with the characters dressed in vintage wear, this park rivals its Orlando counterparts.

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Article last updated: 07-21-2016

View the latest version online at:

<http://www.passporter.com/articles/disneyland-resort-family-favorite.html>

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