

5 Things I Wish I Had Known About Sorcerers of the Magic Kingdom: A Walt Disney World Park Review

by Matthew Tidman, PassPorter Guest Contributor

The Magic Kingdom is in peril! Hades, Lord of the Underworld, has decided that he wants to turn the park into his summer home (don't we all?), and Merlin has recruited you to help him stop Hades by unleashing spells across the park at special portal locations. If you're like me, this sounds like an awesome way to spend a couple of hours. I eagerly enlisted and started my first ever play through. Unfortunately, even though I've played various trading card games such as Pokemon, Yu-Gi-Oh!, Magic: The Gathering, and Hearthstone; I found the amount of info on Sorcerers of the Magic Kingdom lackluster. Apparently Disney designed the game as such intentionally to encourage guests to interact with each other and share what they've learned. That said, here are five of the things I wish I'd know before I started playing the game.

1. Timing Troubles: I did not complete a full game in the time I set aside. Thanks to the fact that I had other family duties and plans (another article for another time), I only managed to play through two of the story arcs (Pocahontas and The Little Mermaid for those who are curious). Having now read everything I can on the Internet about the game, I've found out that even if you are commando-ing through the game, it takes several hours for your first play through. If you really plan on playing the game during your visit and making it all the way through the story, you'll need to set aside ample time and choose not to ride some rides.

2. Portal Perils: There are portals scattered throughout every land except Tomorrowland. When you sign up at the firehouse (or behind the Christmas shop), you'll be given a stylized map that shows the different portal locations. The problem is that these maps are zoomed in to the specific area where the game is played. The map expects you to intuit where the portals -- which are designed to be unobtrusive -- are located. Thankfully, you can ask any cast member, and he or she will point you in the right direction. Once you find your first portal, it makes it easier to find the rest. However, the game uses a series of symbols to show you where you need to go. These symbols are shown on the portal when you finish a battle, and they're how the map marks the locations. That said, there are no identifying marks at any of the physical location as to which symbol you've made it to. Additionally, the game uses an algorithm to send you to the portal that

is most likely to be unoccupied. This means you will likely end up doing a lot of backtracking as you play the game. Expect to check in at the wrong portal at least once when you play, especially in Fantasyland where there are three portals almost on top of each other. The good news is that there is no penalty for checking into the wrong portal. The game just reminds you of the correct symbols and lightly chides you for going to the wrong one.

3. Pack Peculiarities: Hear me when I say this. Every ticketed guest visiting The Magic Kingdom gets a free pack of five cards to play with. That's FREE. Whether you choose to play the game or not, you can still get cards that feature some fun Disney artwork without paying a dime. Also, if you manage to complete all nine rounds in one day, you can return to the recruitment center and get another free pack of cards. Unfortunately I was unable to test this, but I asked the cast member who signed me up about how to get more free cards. She confirmed that this bonus pack was available for completing a game. In the free packs you receive one rare card (numbered 1-22) and a combination of four uncommon and common cards (23-60).

□ There is one other way to expand your collection, but it's not cheap. The first hit is free, but when you're hooked you're going to end up spending \$15 a pop for each additional booster pack. The booster packs also include an at-home version of the game, but it's a flimsy recreation of a fun experience in the park. Booster packs do have one thing going for them. They include the ultra-rare lightning cards (61-70) which can no longer be obtained through free packs. Note that you don't need "rare" cards to play the game. Some of the common cards are just as powerful as the rarer ones. The rarities mainly exist because people like to collect.

□ Also, if you're a collector like me, you may be slightly dismayed to learn that there are special promotional cards that are released during the Mickey's Not So Scary Halloween and the Mickey's Very Merry Christmas parties. These cards now command a premium price on sites like eBay. Thankfully they are numbered as a separate set and are not required to complete the normal collection of 70 cards. You can also purchase an official Sorcerers of the Magic Kingdom binder for \$35. It a neat binder, but it's not on par with similar premium binders by companies like UltraPro and is definitely not a necessary purchase for any but the most diehard collector.

□ 4. Party Preferences: When you go to sign up for Sorcerers of the Magic Kingdom, be sure to bring every ticketed member of your party with you. Even parents and grandparents who are not planning to play

can still scan their ticket or magic band and get an extra pack of cards for the player. The cast member who signs up sorcerers can set your entire group up as one party or break you into individual groups. I have read online that the more members you have in your party, the more spells you can cast at once (more on that in a moment), but there is no penalty for people signing up and then choosing not to play. It literally takes five minutes to sign up and run through the demo at the firehouse unless they're backed up. I don't know if they'll let a single person bring all the tickets, but I do know that they require each guest to show and scan his or her ticket or Magic Band in order to get the free pack of cards.

□ 5. Making Magic: One of the most appalling overlooks when the game was explained was the fact that cards may be played together for greater effect. I found that I could hold up two cards and get a boost from using two spells at once. I've also read conflicting reports that some spell combinations are more effective than others and play special animations when you do them correctly, but I was unable to confirm this in my short amount of playtime. I also watched another player hold up her entire binder to cast spells. I am unsure of what the limit is to cards being able to be played together, but I would not be surprised to hear that it's connected to how many party members you have playing (as one article I read online suggested). These spell combinations are unnecessary for the easy mode that you play through your first time, but they are important when it comes to playing the game in normal or hard mode (something I have yet to try).

□ I'm sure that there is much more to be said about the Sorcerers of the Magic Kingdom game. It's incredibly fun to play, and it makes you feel like you're a part of the magic in the Magic Kingdom. Even if you don't plan on playing the game, you will still get some cool memorabilia from your time in the park. I have no idea how long they will continue to support the game in the park. It's been around for four years now with no major expansion and no one is talking about plans to expand it. Regardless, Sorcerers of the Magic Kingdom is fun and worth a play for anyone visiting the Magic Kingdom.

About The Author: Matthew Tidman and his wife are pastors in northern Virginia. They both grew up watching Disney movies and hope to some day pass on their love of Disney to children of their own.

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