

Comparing Walt Disney World and Disneyland Attractions - Part Two: A Disney Parks Planning Article

by Walter Haight, PassPorter Guest Contributor

In a [previous article](#) I discussed the differences between identically named and themed attractions at Walt Disney World and Disneyland. In today's article we'll look at rides similar in concept but with different names and themes.

For these attractions it's clear that the Imagineers who designed them had similar ideas in mind but the results turned out differently based upon the theme of the attraction. There's no real criteria for this other than the obvious similarities between the attractions in California and Florida. For each the Disneyland attraction is listed first followed by its Walt Disney World counterpart. So let's get started:

Grizzly River Run/Kali River Rapids: As the chief point of these rides is getting wet or soaked, crowds are determined less by overall crowds in the theme park than by the season and weather. In winter or on rainy days both rides are usually walk on, while the heat of summer can bring waits of well over an hour making FastPass a very good idea. Both of these raft rides consist of eight riders seated in a large inner tube. The difference is that Grizzly River Run is a longer ride with two big drops and many rapids, and therefore lots of pure wet fun. If you weren't friends with your fellow riders when you got on, you will be when you get off! Kali River Rapids is based on a theme of man-caused deforestation of the jungle, with one drop and a few rapids. More than one rider has said "that's all?" when coming to the exit. The theme is well executed but who gets on a water ride for the theme? If you really want to get wet at Walt Disney World carve out a day or so for one of The World's two awesome water parks: Typhoon Lagoon or Blizzard Beach. Each is a fascinating near theme park experience in its own right.

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Indiana Jones Adventure/DINOSAUR: Both of these feature eight person ride vehicles whose chief feature is tossing you around - a lot. It's all in good fun but if you're subject to back pain or motion sickness it's best to heed Disney's posted warnings and pass them up. It's said that both of these rides follow the exact same track, but they offer very different experiences. Indiana Jones Adventure takes you along with the attraction's namesake on a rollicking adventure through the "Temple of Doom". It's a visual feast and the effects can be a bit frightening for children: a fire pit, a giant cobra and crawling beetles among them. DINOSAUR is in a whole other league. It's fun but it's very intense &

more than a little frightening for anyone. Much of the ride is close to pitch dark and the dinos are loud, life-size, hungry and almost right on top of you. I'd rank DINOSAUR as the scariest ride in all Walt Disney World. If you're into that great, but I've seen adults cry getting off of this attraction! Finally while Indiana Jones Adventure is mobbed all day long, DINOSAUR often has short waits, perhaps due to the fear factor & also to being located in a quiet area of Animal Kingdom Park.

□ California Screamin'/Rock n' Roller Coaster: Do you like your roller coasters inside or outside? The answer to this question probably determines where you will come down between these two. California Screamin' is themed to resemble an early 20th century wooden coaster, but it's actually steel construction. As the first "proper" roller coaster in a Disney Park, California Screamin' isn't a lunch liberator like the bad boys a few miles up Interstate 5 at Six Flags. It's plenty fast and exciting though with a fast launch, an inversion, two large drops and several smaller drops & hairpin turns, all delivered with a very smooth ride. There's a rather insipid musical soundtrack but I actually prefer it when the music is down because I love the 'coaster sound effects. Rock n' Roller coaster features the same effects, especially the fast launch, though the track is necessarily shorter because the coaster is inside. The attraction starts with the (very young looking) members of rock band Aerosmith inviting you to join them at their concert across town. About five minutes later you're seated in your roller coaster "limo" undertaking your very fast & topsy-turvy journey across Los Angeles to join the concert while listening to one of Aerosmith's greatest hits. The darkness adds to the fun as you can't see what's coming next. As a resident of SoCal I can say that Rock n' Roller Coaster is a lot faster and probably less scary than real Los Angeles Traffic. Oh and definitely smoother!

Matterhorn Bobsleds/Expedition Everest: Maybe it's stretching just a bit to compare these two even though they are both roller coasters featuring an encounter with the Yeti (aka Abominable Snowman). As their names suggest Matterhorn is themed to the Swiss Alps, Everest to the Himalayas. More importantly, Matterhorn Bobsleds opened in 1959 while Expedition Everest debuted in 2006. With the improved technology you would expect Everest to deliver the superior experience and it does. Expedition Everest in Animal Kingdom is one of Walt Disney World's most immersive attractions. The Himalayan Expedition theme extends from the queue, actually a mini-museum, through the ride itself and the better-than-average gift shop at the exit. The super-smooth ride is actually three in one. A gentle train carries you to the top of "Everest". Then the track switches and you hurtle backwards in the dark. There's no inversion but it feels like one! The final section is a twisty coaster ride that brings you up close and personal with Everest's

resident bad boy, The Yeti. You'll want to experience it again-as I have 131 times. Matterhorn by contrast is a simple track roller coaster but still great fun. It dates from when Disneyland was still Walt Disney's park & you can still see the care he and the Imagineers of the day put into this attraction. Matterhorn uses one of Walt's favorite methods, "forced perspective", to make the ride seem quite faster than it actually is. You'll want to hang on though because the ride is bumpy and you can exit with a small bruise or two if you don't. Matterhorn does win the comparison in one area: its Yeti is actually working, while Expedition Everest's has been plagued with "technical difficulties" since it opened.

☐ Radiator Springs Racers/Test Track: I saved the best comparison for last because these are two of the most outstanding attractions offered in any Disney Park. In each you ride in six-person vehicles at varying speeds through several immersive environments. Both tell a rather detailed and complex story. Due to their complexity and Disney's emphasis on absolute safety both tend to go down quite often. However the problems are usually resolved quickly so if you're already in line I suggest to just wait it out. Lines tend to be long with an hour or more quite common. Use FastPass or the Single Rider Line, the latter of which can reduce your wait time an average of 2/3. Test Track gives you the opportunity to "design" your ride on a computer screen using several different attributes of a test car. It's fun for kids & exotic car buffs but doesn't affect the ride experience in any appreciable way. The first part of the Test Track ride which involves hill, braking & corrosion tests is rather mundane. But things pick up with some hairpin turns. Then the last 30 seconds or so, a high-speed loop around Backstage Epcot, is probably the best 30 seconds in all of Walt Disney World! Radiator Springs Racers, though, is just on a different level. It takes the technology first used at Test Track and improves upon it. Based on the first "Cars" film, it starts you out with a ride through the film's Ornament Valley setting. Then you go tractor tipping with Mater before heading into Radiator Springs to get freshened up for the big race. The "race" itself takes about 30 seconds and, while it's not nearly as flat-out fast as the test track finale, it's a more immersive experience because you're "competing" with a vehicle in the other lane. Before or after riding the racers, take some time just to stroll through wonderful Cars Land. This Land is proof that, recent criticisms aside, there is a reason people still pony up the big bucks to come to Disney.

☐ No matter which resort you visit, Walt Disney World or Disneyland, you're sure to have an amazing time. Even if you're not a Disney person when you arrive, I'll give odds you will be one before you leave. Even better, go bicoastal and visit both! The Disney Premiere Annual Passport isn't cheap at \$1,439 per year with no discount for kids. However it includes admission to all six US Theme Parks and even adds

Walt Disney World's Water Parks plus resort, food & merchandise discounts. Happy travels!

About The Author: Walter retired last year after working for the IRS for 31 years. After retirement he moved to Anaheim, about 5 miles from Disneyland, and right on the ART shuttle line. He visits is an Annual Passholder at Disneyland and visits twice a month. He visits Walt Disney World at least once a year; usually in January/February.

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