

## Soarin' Around the World: A Walt Disney Attraction Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

For many, change at Disney can be tough, especially when it relates to a much loved classic attraction. However, there was relatively little uproar when it was announced that Soarin', an E-ticket ride at both Walt Disney World and Disneyland that takes you, as the name suggests, soaring over California, would be undergoing a complete overhaul, to be replaced by a brand new film.

If I'm being honest, I suspect part of that is because the quality of Soarin's old film was getting well, old really. I'd lost track of how many times in recent years we'd been on it and commented that they needed a new film, as the experience of being on a hand glider high above so many wonderful sights had been marred by the annoyance of damage to the film. I clearly remember big black dots on the film in one part, and thinking "why doesn't Disney do something about this?"

Well, I guess they listened to me, and probably a lot of other people, as earlier this year, Soarin' Around the World arrived. In Florida, they also took the opportunity to add a third theater, although frankly on our recent visit, we didn't notice much difference in the wait times. You were still looking at 40 -- 50 minutes not long after park opening, which is what I remembered from our previous trip before the expansion was undertaken.

I was also disappointed not to see a whole new look to everything, as the queue felt very similar to what came before, certainly the Fastpass+ version that we took each time we boarded our flight. And one thing I was hoping to see updated was that pre-show. I have nothing against our flight attendant Patrick, but considering it's been around for so long, I'd just like to have seen an update.

One thing I will say is pay attention as soon as you're lined up at Soarin'. Before the pre-show starts, you can watch the various ports of call you'll be making on your flight. We didn't realise that the first time, so the second time around, we watched, eager to find out exactly where some of those amazing spots were that we'd already witnessed on our previous flight.

I will say one thing here -- I hadn't watched any videos of this before we boarded Soarin' Around the World, so I only had a limited idea of where we'd be going, and I'm glad I did that, as it meant there were a

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number of surprises for both of us, which was nice. As a result, I don't want to spoil it for others, so I won't give away details of the whole ride. What I will say is that the film quality is excellent, and it really does take you around the world, to places both familiar that you'll have heard of, or perhaps seen, before, and to places completely unknown. It's a wonderful combination.

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□ However, if you do look at the Disney website, it does give the game away on a few things. I think most people know you get a bird's eye view of Sydney Harbour, not somewhere on my bucket list, but the Great Wall of China is, and seeing it from above really brings it home to you about how long this is. They also mention Iguaza Falls in South America, and when we first saw this, we both immediately thought of Niagara Falls, which we'd had the privilege to see just for ourselves just a few days earlier. This is truly spectacular, and I was expecting to get a few splashes of water at this point, you feel that close to the falls.

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□ Do keep your eyes peeled for a couple of hidden Mickeys along the way, and I hope I'm not giving too much away by saying that the film finishes back in a very familiar spot, considering where you are.

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□ After we'd finished, we both came out, wondering if there'd been just a little bit of work done on the footage, shall we say? How on earth did they get some of those places quite that empty, or with just one or two people? We haven't (yet!) visited the Great Wall of China, but I'm betting it's tough to find a stretch of it that empty&hellip;

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□ It may sound as if we had a few gripes with Soarin' Around the World, but these didn't detract in any way from our enjoyment of it. We absolutely loved it, don't get me wrong, and it's such a huge step forward from the previous film. It's just a shame those tiny things I've mentioned couldn't have been addressed by Disney's Imagineers.

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□ Soarin' Around the World definitely has a huge "repeat-ability" factor, as you really can't take everything on the first viewing, or even the second. Perhaps that's the reason the lines haven't really diminished? Some of you may have been lucky enough to have already seen it, and I'm guessing if so, you'll be like us, and want to return again and again. If you haven't, then make sure you do the next time you're in Walt Disney World or Disneyland. It really is not to be missed.

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo*

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