

Exploring the 2017 Epcot International Flower and Garden Festival: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Epcot's Flower and Garden Festival is one of my favourite times to visit the park, and this year we were there for its opening.

So what can this year's Flower & Garden Festival visitors expect?

As in previous years, there are a myriad of topiaries to enjoy, flowerbeds galore, along with the Outdoor Kitchens in World Showcase. If you're there on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday (we weren't sadly), then you can add in the Festival Center with its selection of workshops and seminars. On those days of the week, and Mondays, the Garden Rocks concerts return, and again sadly our plans weren't able to incorporate those. Don't get me started, as I cannot begin to tell you how frustrating it was to discover the Pointer Sisters would start playing on the night we flew home. I'd have loved to have seen them…

□ Anyway, that aside, there's still a lot to enjoy even if your visits don't fall on one of the days where there are extra activities planned. One of the things I love is exploring the park to find your favourite topiaries, and seeking out new ones. Figment is a new addition this year, although the poor dragon didn't seem to be attracting much attention every time we passed him by. Perhaps it's the fact that he's hidden behind Spaceship Earth? Talking of hidden away, even on days when the Festival Center is closed, still make a point to head there. We nearly missed Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Goofy and Pluto located there.

□ Speaking of some of those characters, they're also to be found at the park entrance, as Mickey, Minnie, Daisy and Pluto dance their way around the maypole. It's a beautiful topiary, and perhaps one of my favourites from the festivals we've been to. Donald and his three mischievous nephews, along with a separate setting of Chip and Dale, can be found on the way from Future World to World Showcase, and every time we walked past, they both had PhotoPass photographers with them.

Interestingly, nearby there were only photographers on our second visit to the festival, just over a week after it opened. We both commented that we felt the flowerbeds in this area, which are usually stunning, weren't at their greatest just a day after the festival officially opened, and were a bit disappointed. We noticed a lot of work still going on with

them, and a week later when we returned, the benefits of that could be seen, as they were definitely much more in bloom than previously, with PhotoPass photographers now in place with them. While it won't make any difference for visitors to this year's festival, it's something worth bearing in mind if you plan on visiting in future years, that you may not see the park at its very best in the first day or two.

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□ Equally, there was a brand new butterfly mosaic on the ground outside Club Cool, creating a very cool and unique photo opportunity that hadn't been there a week earlier.

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□ Speaking of photo opportunities, be prepared for long waits to get your photo taken in France with Belle and the Beast, given the cinema release of *Beauty and the Beast*. However, no matter how long the wait is, do get shots taken with Anna and Elsa in Norway. Why? Well, the PhotoPass comes with some lovely additions from Sven, which made us laugh out loud!

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□ Other topiaries we enjoyed that remained the same from previous years included Peter Pan (eyes up!) in the United Kingdom, the Lion King (between China and Germany), the seven dwarfs (Germany), and the the pandas (China).

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□ Another thing that many people come to the Festival for is the Outdoor Kitchens. I won't claim to have tried everything (I think it would take a week of constant dining to even get close to that!), and sadly the new additions of the Northern Bloom and Berry Basket didn't do much for us. Trust me, I would have loved to have tried the scallops from the former, but sadly they came with bacon.

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□ There were many changes to items from previous years at the other Outdoor Kitchens however, and of the new items, I will thoroughly recommend the strawberry tiramisu in Italy, which was amazing. The Caribbean conch salad with avocado, mango and onions from La Isla Fresca was very tasty, but it came with too many onions for my liking. The sugar cane shrimp skewer with steamed rice and coconut-rice sauce went down well with my husband, but even he said it was a bit on the spicy side. I avoided the sauce, and enjoyed the bite I had.

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□ It's hard to say whether the festival makes Epcot busier, as each day we visited (three in total), it was either morning or evening Extra Magic Hours, which always tend to attract more people to the park. However, the predictions beforehand were for relatively low crowd levels, but that didn't seem to correspond to the waits we saw for various attractions - 35 minutes for Spaceship Earth for example. If you do plan on heading to the festival, do make the best use of Fastpasses, as the chances are

you'll need them.

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 Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

Article last updated: 03-24-2017

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