

# Pandora - World of Avatar Passholder Preview: A Walt Disney World Park Review

by Carol Irvine, PassPorter Guest Contributor

We were fortunate enough to secure a place at the soft opening last Monday to Pandora.

I am an annual pass holder, having signed up wayyyy in advance for these tickets at just the right few minutes they were available - Kismet as it were. Don't hate us, but we were able to walk onto the rides and had no lines anywhere. My kids (girls age 6 and 14) did the Flight of Passage ride four times in a row with no wait. Yes, I told them how incredibly spoiled they were and NEVER to EVER expect this at Pandora again! On opening day, there were waits all the way back to the entry turnstiles of the park itself by 9:00 am, of folks queuing up JUST to get INTO Pandora.

Let me start by saying that I am not fan of the Avatar movie at all, but to say the job Disney did an amazing job on this new land is an understatement. Pandora is detailed and themed beyond anything I have ever seen Disney do before. It is elegantly, tastefully done, and one feels totally immersed in Pandora.

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□ There are two rides: **Flight of Passage** and the **Na'vi River Journey**.

I'll start with the River Journey first. It was very nice, and it was a cool dark ride on a hot day. The theming was amazing, but it reminded me of a Pandora Small World. We enjoyed it, but would not have gone back a second time, and would NEVER wait in line 3 &frac12; hours for it, as folks had to wait on opening day.

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□ Now, for the good stuff. Flight of Passage. The theming starts the second one gets in queue. The details of the labs one walks through are nothing short of brilliant with LOTS to look at while one waits. We practically flew through the labs but tried to look at the details on the way to the ride. One goes through two separate preshow rooms (which actually varied depending on which pod one was directed to! One version was short and one was long) and then they pop you in for your flight. Let me start by saying that I get VERY motion sick, and was nervous my first time through (but knew I could close my eyes in a pinch), but other than the start of the ride, which is strobed for three seconds, I had my eyes open the entire flight. The second time through was even better for me because I knew I would be ok in terms of the motion. You mount the "banshee" on this machine which kind of looks

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like a motorcycle without wheels. They put a bar up at the back of your legs and another behind your back and off you go to experience a Banshee-eye view of Pandora. It is the most breathtaking, most immersive ride that I have ever experienced. Be sure to notice the breathing of your Banshee that you can feel between your legs. I can't say enough about the details.

Around the land itself, in addition the stunning, how-did-they-do-that floating rocks, be sure not to miss the squirting water fauna (way up on a platform). They squirt as one talks to them. There is also an interactive drum set opposite one set of restrooms, where the natives will drum back in response as you drum on the large drums. Just walking around and admiring the architecture and phenomenal theming could take hours.

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□The food at quick service was tasty, healthy, fast and really different. Satu&#39;li Canteen offers "bowls" where a guest picks the meats and veggies and sauce. For kids there are also bowls or a truly amazing hot dog wrapped in a pastry dough. (And I am not a hot dog fan.) Root vegetable chips that come as a side are homemade as well.) For dessert, the three of split the multi layered blueberry mousse with passionfruit curd topped with tiny meringues - TOTALLY worth it.

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□For drinks, skip the specialty drink at Satu&#39;li Canteen (the Pandora sunrise which is made with PowerAde Melon and juice and really misses the mark ). Send someone instead over to the drink place that is adjacent - Pongu Pongu- for a nonalcoholic Night Blossom which is a mixture of Limeade with Apple and Desert Pear flavors topped with Passion Fruit Boba Balls. Later in your visit to Pandora , get an order of Pongu Lumpia, the dessert option at the Canteen, which is a pineapple and cream cheese stuffed ooey gooey pastry confection. As a matter of fact, my little one just popped out of her room and said, "Can we go to Animal Kingdom today?" I reported that the lines are now unreal, and last week was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and she said, "I know the lines are too long for the ride- I mean , no, not the ride, I want to go have lunch there!"

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□The whole experience made the family want to come back home and watch the movie (which was helpfully on AMC Friday night- got to love that Disney marketing machine). My youngest said several times how watching the movie, post Animal Kingdom Pandora visit, really helped make the rides make more sense. However, having said that, even with no knowledge of the movie before our visit , every time she would get off of the Flights ride, she would squeal, "Again, again, please?"

*About The Author: Carol Irvine is a frequent Walt Disney World and*

Disneyland visitor and a first-time contributor to PassPorter News.

Article last updated: 06-02-2017

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