

Disneyland: Hong Kong

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

If you're a Disney fan and the place you're visiting just happens to have a Disney park on its outskirts, it would be rude not to pop in and visit, wouldn't it?

That's exactly how we felt when planning our trip to Hong Kong. We knew we would have plenty of time to visit Hong Kong Disneyland, as we would be there for a total of seven nights. After a bit of research, we settled on the Monday of our trip, as that seemed to be a quiet day. It's easy to work out which days will be busier at this park, as the one day tickets are valid for either regular, peak or special days. Aim for a regular day and you should be guaranteed the lowest crowds. That certainly worked for us.

Our first surprise was on the train heading to the park. It's the only Disney park in the world that is part of a city's main transport system. The MTR runs throughout Hong Kong and the Disneyland Resort route takes you straight from the Sunny Bay station to the park itself. As soon as I saw the train pull into Sunny Bay Station, I knew we were in for a treat, with the familiar sight of Mickey ears greeting us in the shape of the windows. Inside were plush blue seats and models of the main Disney characters, all helping to transition you from the real world into a world of magic and imagination.

That continued when we arrived at the Disneyland Resort station, which reminded me of a grand Victorian station, with steps and escalators leading up to the ticket barriers to outside. From there, it's a short walk and you're greeted by a superb water feature, with Mickey surfing the fountain waves, surrounded by his closest friends, including Goofy, Minnie, and Donald. Your attention is first drawn to that and then, as you wander around, taking it all in, you realize that the real attraction is to your right, with the park awaiting you down another short avenue.

We found out quite late on during our day in the park that it's the only other park in the world to be based so closely on the original Disneyland in California. As soon as we realized that, it made so much sense. There are touches of California everywhere you look, from the Mickey topiary that greets you as you enter the gates, which is almost exactly the same as the one from Disneyland, to the castle, which has some similarities to the original Sleeping Beauty Castle and is nowhere near as dominating over the park as the ones in Florida and Paris.

It's important to know that this is the newest addition to the Disney

theme park family, having opened to visitors in 2005. That means that it has fewer attractions than the more established parks. Notable omissions include Big Thunder Mountain Railroad, the Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean and Splash Mountain. Even It's a Small World isn't here... yet! It's due to open later this spring, but it's interesting how many Disney classics that we take for granted at the other parks aren't in existence here two and-a-half years in.

Despite that, this park has charms of its own and, like every other theme park; it also has unique attractions and familiar rides that are superior to those found anywhere else. The Imagineers had a tremendous challenge here with the language issue. It's the only Disney park in the world to be based in a place that has two official languages -- English and Cantonese -- and it's a challenge that they managed to respond to, ensuring that no-one is left out.

The park has four lands, going clockwise: Main Street USA, Adventureland, Fantasyland and Tomorrowland. That's exactly the way we explored it, heading to Adventureland first. The first attraction we came across was one much beloved by many Disney fans for its corny jokes -- the Jungle River Cruise. Here's where they came up with a brilliant way to tackle the language issue, with two separate waiting areas, depending on your language. You'll then be taken around with a skipper who's fluent in your language - and yes, they do still crack exactly the same corny jokes as you'd find in the American parks! The piranhas added into California put in an appearance here and, as you'd expect, the animatronics all just look so much fresher and smoother. The stunning finale sees you facing fire and water, and is a great touch.

Adventureland is also home to the Liki Tikis, an interactive water play area for youngsters that looked like a lot of fun, Festival of the Lion King, and Tarzan's Treehouse, which is set on an island in the middle of the Jungle River Cruise and is reached by rafts. Sadly, our day didn't leave enough time for exploring any of these attractions.

Without a doubt, Fantasyland is where most of the action takes place, as it's home to the majority of the park's rides. It's not necessarily the line-up you'd expect, although you will find the familiar Dumbo flying over the roofs of this land, Cinderella's Carousel and the Mad Hatter Tea Cups. Other attractions include Mickey's PhilharMagic and the Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh, both of which pretty much appeared to be carbon copies of their cousins in Orlando. Interestingly, they have added ride photos to Winnie the Pooh, but we couldn't see any other differences. The Snow White Grotto by the castle will be familiar to anyone who's been to Disneyland, but sadly there's not much

.....

to the castle itself. It's little more than a walk through attraction and it's a shame not to see something more exciting in there, as you find in Disneyland Paris. You can also hop on the railroad around the park at the Fantasyland Train Station, but sadly we felt this left a lot to be desired, with very few views into the parks, thanks to some rather enthusiastic tree planting alongside the tracks!

Perhaps the biggest surprise here is the Golden Mickey's, the stage show that anyone who's been on board a Disney cruise will be familiar with. This started off the same as the version we've seen on board both the Magic and the Wonder, but then changed halfway through, adding in various new scenes and bringing in different movies. The songs are all performed in English, although the interaction between scenes is in Cantonese, although you'll find English translations on big screens next to the stage. Another great example of how the Imagineers dealt with the language issue.

Finally, it's into Tomorrowland, where there are more familiar favorites, such as Space Mountain, the Orbitron, Autopia, and Buzz Lightyear, which has fully removable guns and targets that explode when they're hit - great improvements, both of which helped to build a score I could never have dreamt of otherwise! The UFO Zone is another interactive water play area for kids, but my favorite attraction falls into the unique category and it's one that I would dearly love to see exported to other parks around the world - Stitch Encounter.

Using similar technology to Turtle Talk with Crush and Monsters Inc. Laugh Floor, Stitch interacts with you, and even got himself a girlfriend in the show we saw! And of course, he gets himself into trouble. There are shows in both Cantonese and English and the one we saw was a lot of fun. You instantly warm to the little blue troublesome alien and that makes the interaction so much more fun. It looks like Disneyland Paris will be opening a version of this shortly and hopefully one day it will make an appearance on American soil. [Editor: Before Turtle Talk debuted, Disney tried out this technology with a "Talk to Stitch" attraction at Disneyland in California. Up to five guests at a time could have a "picturephone" conversation with Experiment 626. The attraction, at Innoventions in Tomorrowland, is still open occasionally.]

Although there's not comparatively that much to see at Hong Kong Disneyland yet, it's a very pleasant addition to the Disney park line-up around the world and it's the little touches, such as the beautiful theming, the additions to popular attractions like the Jungle River Cruise and fun and unique attractions that make it so special. A day wasn't long enough here and I hope one day we can return to finish our tour properly of the newest addition to Disney's wonderful world of

.....

theme parks.

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: 3/6/2008

View the latest version online at:

<http://www.passporter.com/articles/hong-kong-disneyland-park.html>

Copyright by Cheryl Pendry. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act. Resale of this guide is strictly prohibited without the copyright holder's permission. If you purchased this publication from someone other than PassPorter Travel Press, please call 877-929-3273.

View more PassPorter Articles online at <http://www.passporter.com/articles/>