

## Unexpected Pleasures & Treasures: A Magic Review

by Kath Davis, PassPorter Guest Contributor

My husband Randy and I have only been home for one week from our first trip to Walt Disney World. We still haven't had a chance to organize the 900+ pictures that we took into a (much) smaller slide show to present to family and friends. But we are still talking about some of the unknown treasures that we discovered in Walt Disney World.

Don't get me wrong. We bought our first PassPorter about a year before our trip, and then bought the new edition when it was available. (Having two PassPorters made those long planning evenings much easier.) But even with our careful study of the PassPorter books and message boards, we "discovered" a few things that either were not uncovered in our research, or that we thought were undervalued. Read on to learn about some of the things we think you should be sure to seek out at Walt Disney World.

**Future World's "Inventor's Circle"** Why isn't this on any map? As you pass from Epcot's fountain plaza to Future World West and approach The Land, look down. Set into the pavement are concentric circles. Within these circles are round plaques celebrating great inventions, from the wheel all the way through the microcomputer. There is a central hub with four fascinating quotes from scientists, and the inventions radiate from there, like planets in a solar system. We spent quite a while wandering back and forth, with our gaze downward, exclaiming over dates we didn't know, or even disputing a few allegations. I am sure we looked crazy to the people who had to maneuver around us, but we were amazed that no one stopped to see what it was that had captured our attention so keenly. If you are at all interested in science, you need to go find this!

**The posters in the queue for Mickey's PhilharMagic at the Magic Kingdom** We had to let people in the queue pass us, because we were more interested in getting photos of these posters than in getting to the main event, and later we went back to get a few more! Mickey's PhilharMagic ended up being one of our favorite attractions at Walt Disney World, and these posters really "plussed" the package. Imagine old-style theater posters, with familiar Disney characters spotlighted for musical performances: "Genie Sings the Blues," "I Pagliacci" performed by Willy the Whale, and "Ariel's Coral Group." Classic Disney art with tongue placed firmly in cheek, and not to be missed.

**Canadians really are the friendliest people in the world ... or in the**

**World.** OK, we could be prejudiced on this one; Randy is from Canada. But one of the reasons I fell in love with him is that he is so darn nice! We found that the students who work at the Canadian pavilion and its Le Cellier restaurant were the friendliest group in any of the parks, and particularly in World Showcase. We actually had one negative encounter with a cast member in the World Showcase (I won't tell which country), but even in the upscale Le Cellier, where you might expect some reserve, I saw the wait staff interact in ways that went above and beyond the call of duty with all the tables around us. Our server directed us to excellent wine pairings, discussed his upcoming plans for a road trip to California, and cheerfully took our picture. Who cares if the Canada film is outdated when the people are so wonderful?

**Those fabulous cameos in the ride pre-shows** We were not surprised to find more of Hollywood signing on to add "plus" to the ride pre-shows (and sometimes into the rides themselves). Being Disneyland "natives," we already had enjoyed actor Patrick Warburton as the chief steward in Soarin' Over California, and we were pleased to see that he worked Epcot also. I can remember the days when Disney used mostly unknown voice-over actors for their feature animation; now, half the fun of the movie is figuring out who does that voice. With the ride pre-shows, at least you sometimes get to see the actors, but even then, it took us a few minutes to place them out of context. There's Ileanna Douglas as Aerosmith's manager at Rock 'n' Roller Coaster, and John Michael Higgins as the head test engineer in Test Track. But the most inspired cameo has to be Gary Sinise in Mission:Space. Who better to add credibility to your space mission, than the very man who talked Ron Howard's Apollo 13 astronauts through their dangerous re-entry procedure?

**Port Orleans horse-drawn carriages** Here is one delight that is mentioned in PassPorter, as well as in the resort literature that you receive upon checking in. But mere words can not describe the sound of the carriage wheels and the horse's hoofs clapping on the pavement within the buildings of the resort. We did not have the time to take a ride ourselves, but we were fortunate enough to be in our room, changing for dinner, when we heard the horse go right by our door! Our room in the French Quarter was at the corner of two small streets, streets just wide enough for the horse and carriage. I had imagined that the carriage ride would be along the riverbank, between the resorts, but it actually wends through the resort buildings, and in the French Quarter at least, it was unspeakably romantic. A carriage ride will go to the top of my list for our next trip!

**Mosaics inside Cinderella Castle** Although Cinderella Castle dominated our experience of the Magic Kingdom, we did not take the

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time to walk through it until we were leaving the park, technically after the park had closed. We were delighted and amazed at the gorgeous mosaics that tell Cinderella's story. Five large mosaics composed of small glass tiles, set in arches in the wall of the walkway, tell the story of Cinderella. The colors are breathtaking and the level of detail is astonishing. Many shades of blue are used to give the texture of running water to a stream; the ball gowns have intricate patterns "woven" into the fabric; the floor of the ballroom is multi-colored parquet. Some of the tiles are as small as a centimeter, and many fuse real gold and sterling silver with the glass to give Cinderella the "royal" treatment. Again, we spent many minutes here, drinking in the colors and artistry. We had to take pictures of the the whole mosaics and close-ups of the details. I look forward to seeing them by daylight next time.

One quality that keeps us constantly delighted at Disneyland and Walt Disney World is the detail that the company puts into the experience. When I was on Sunset Boulevard in Disney-MGM Studios, I knew that Hollywood in the 1930s looked just like this ... at least, I hope it did! Many of the treasures mentioned here aren't what we'd call attractions; we think of them as things that enhance the experience, which Walt always strove for. I think he would have enjoyed reading my list, and knowing how much we appreciate that extra effort.

*About The Author: Kath Davis is the executive director for a non-profit youth orchestra in Orange County California. Randy telecommutes as a global test analyst for a company based in New York, and spends a lot of time in Tokyo. They haven't wrangled at trip to Tokyo Disneyland yet, but there is still hope!*

Article last updated: 4/26/2007

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<http://www.passporter.com/articles/unexpected-pleasures-and-treasures-of-walt-disney-world.html>

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