

# A Disneyland Veteran's First Trip: Walt Disney World

by Kath and Randy Davis, PassPorter Featured Columnist

My husband Randy and I have had annual passes to Disneyland longer than we have been married. It's about 60 minutes from our front door to getting into line for our first ride. We have done Disneyland as locals (hop in the car and run over some summer evening just to watch the fireworks), and as "tourists" (book two or three nights in one of the Disneyland Resort hotels and use the guest-only entrances). It's incredibly special both ways.

But this past February, we had the "newbie" experience in full -- we made the trip to Walt Disney World for the first time. Inspired by Richard Mercer's recent PassPorter News article on how a Walt Disney World veteran enjoyed "my" park, I give our impressions of a first visit to "the World," as seen through our Anaheim-tinted sunglasses. With Mr. Mercer's permission, I am following the question-and-answer format of his article.

## **Q: Is February a good time to go?**

A: Yes. We had rain only twice (one time it was barely drizzling, the other, it was pouring). Temperatures were surprisingly variable. We had a couple 70ish days, and the other days were cooler. There was often a big difference between day and evening. We often left warmer jackets in a locker, because it was downright cold most nights.

## **Q: What's the best attraction that isn't at Disneyland?**

A: Rock 'n' Roller Coaster!! In seven days, we rode Rock 'n' Roller Coaster six or seven times. Other favorites were Mickey's PhilharMagic in the Magic Kingdom, and The Great Movie Ride and the stunt shows at Disney-MGM Studios.

## **Q: Is there any compelling reason for those living far away to visit Walt Disney World rather than Disneyland?**

A: Well, the answer to this is obvious! We made the trek, even though we have Disneyland practically in our backyard, and even though our annual passports are reasonably priced. I think that Walt Disney World is Disneyland "plussed," as Walt would have said. There is more choice of parks, more space, and more attractions. But remember that it takes that much longer to see it. You can certainly experience Disneyland in a much shorter length of time. If you live equidistant from both parks and

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have a limited amount of time, Disneyland might be the better choice.

**Q: What was better, what was worse, what was a surprise or disappointment?**

Better: Dining! Walt Disney World is a way of eating! We made good use of the Disney Dining Plan; our "best" dining experiences were the Hollywood Brown Derby, 'Ohana, and Le Cellier. Our most fun dining experience was the Sci-Fi Dine-In Theater.

Options for fun --There is definitely more to do in each park, and there are far more extensive options for recreation at the hotels and water parks. The Jungle Cruise and Big Thunder Mountain Railroad are better at Walt Disney World.

Worse: Ease of movement between the parks. There was nothing wrong with the buses and boats in themselves, but utilizing them efficiently took some planning. In Anaheim, we are spoiled by being able to hop over to another park to dodge crowds -- they're just a short walk away. "Park Hopper" is a bit of a misnomer at Walt Disney World.

Rides -- In Space Mountain we missed the side-by-side seating and thought the track was not as exciting as at Disneyland. Dinosaur was not nearly as thrilling as the Indiana Jones Adventure, which uses the same ride platform; we dubbed it "Indy Lite."

Fantasmic! -- Yes, the seating is wonderful in the stadium, but it is off to the side, not so much "in" the park. It's an integral part of Disneyland Park. (To be fair, we do hate the pedestrian congestion when the Anaheim show lets out.) Also, more is not necessarily better; it felt like the Imagineers simply threw in all the villains they could think of. It slowed the pace of the show too much.

Surprises: Size! It may be impossible to be prepared for the sheer size of the Walt Disney World Resort!

The murals in Cinderella's castle -- we discovered these by accident. The murals, which tell Cinderella's story, are ornate and incredibly detailed, using small pieces of glass with sterling silver and real gold.

Our Favorite Park: I fell in love with the nostalgic reproduction of Hollywood at Disney-MGM Studios. Once you add Rock 'n' Roller Coaster, the stunt shows, and all the other Hollywood-inspired attractions, this was the park we came back to the most, and where we spent our last half-day of fun.

Disappointments: The "Disney Two-Step:" Twice we went to another resort for dinner, and could only get back to our hotel by taking a bus to Downtown Disney and a connection to our hotel. Both times it took a solid hour to get to our hotel.

Disney's Animal Kingdom -- I felt there was not a clear vision: Is it an animal park? Is it a theme park? Both concepts suffered in my opinion.

Extra Magic Hours (evening) at Epcot - By the time IllumiNations was over, Future World was finished with its Extra Hours, and a majority of the pavilions in World Showcase closed. Only Norway, America, United Kingdom, and Canada stayed open until the park closed. We had planned those two hours as intensive shopping experiences, and had to work in the time on another day.

**Q: What was the most unique thing you found at Walt Disney World?**

A: A FASTPASS for Peter Pan. We have often wished for a FASTPASS for Peter at Disneyland, because the line is long at almost any time of the day. We got our wish! We loved having a FASTPASS and avoiding the 60-minute wait in the Magic Kingdom.

**Q: Does Walt Disney World "feel" the same as Disneyland? Does it have the same "magic?"**

A: My answer is only a qualified, "Yes." With one or two notable exceptions, we think that the cast members are more "magical" in Anaheim. For one thing, we didn't see many cast members that we felt we could approach to take a photo for us, something we do all the time at Disneyland.

When you are inside one of the resort parks, the magic is there. But a bus is just a bus, even if it is taking you to the Magic Kingdom. The boats and the monorail preserve the feeling that you are someplace special. When you're out on the road in a bus, you definitely lose that feeling of immersion that is one of the appeals of Disneyland. Anaheim has all the magic available without having to leave the resort. Yes, your options are more limited, but you don't have to go outside the park until you are ready to leave. If you are staying in one of the Disneyland Resort hotels, you never even see the city of Anaheim. It's a trade off: larger space vs. better immersion.

**Q: Are you going back?**

A: I say "Absolutely!" Randy says "Probably." There was plenty we missed in each park, and we did not take time for the water parks, the BoardWalk, or the recreational activities -- even at our own resort. For our first trip, I'm satisfied with the way we used our time, but I know

how much more there is to do.

*About The Author: Kath Davis is the executive director for a non-profit youth orchestra in Orange County. 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 Disney yet, but there is still hope!*

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