

Walt Disney World Transportation: The Monorail

by Dianne Cook, PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)

How many times have we heard or said this to ourselves: "Por favor mantenganse alejado de las puertas?" I even have it on my iPod! It was the first thing my son's first-year Spanish teacher said to him when we told her we had been to Walt Disney World. This has to be the most quoted foreign-language phrase related to Walt Disney World.

Just imagine ... since the monorail at Walt Disney World opened, it has carried over a billion passengers, averages over 150,000 passengers every day and carries over 50 million people every year. If you add all the miles traveled over the system's track since the beginning, it would total over 25 round trips to the moon! No other monorail system in the world transports this amount of passengers.

We all know about Walt Disney's love for the railroad. However, it was not Walt Disney who invented the monorail. The monorail had its beginning over 181 years ago! The first passenger monorail began June 25th, 1825. This was the Chestnut Railway built by Henry Robinson Palmer. This monorail was pulled by a horse. Then in 1876, General LeRoy demonstrated a steam powered monorail at the United States Centennial Exposition.

In 1957, the ALWEG Company of Cologne, Germany introduced the most successful monorail system to date, which is still the most widely used in the world today. This monorail caught the attention of Walt Disney in that very same year. It was then that Walt Disney's love of railroads and steam engines culminated in a fascination with the monorail. He wanted one for Disneyland and in 1959, the Alweg monorail opened there.

When the Walt Disney Company opened Walt Disney World in 1971, they used a fleet of five MARK IV monorail trains built by the Alweg Company and later added an additional fleet of five. The first rail loop went from the Contemporary Resort to the Ticket and Transportation Center (TTC) and then to the Polynesian Resort and on to the Magic Kingdom. Later the Grand Floridian Resort was added to the loop. Then a counter clockwise track was added which ran from the Magic Kingdom to the TTC and was known as the "Express" track. In 1982, an extension between Epcot and the TTC added an additional 4 miles to the existing track.

The current model of monorail car went into service in 1990, with the full fleet of 12, six-car trains operating by 1991. The exteriors are

painted white with a colored stripe around the whole body below the windows. It is this stripe that identifies the train for communication purposes. The colors of the stripes are black, red, yellow, coral, green, blue, silver, gold, orange, green, lime, and purple. The cars are permanently coupled using articulated joints.

Each train has a single lever controller with five points for accelerating and five points for braking. The first point will bring the train to 15 MPH, the second to 20, and so on until the fifth and final, which will have the train reach its maximum speed of 40 MPH.

The track consists of 26-inch wide, pre-cast concrete beams with a Styrofoam core, supported by concrete columns which are approximately 50 feet apart. They were originally built in Oregon and shipped, ironically, by rail to Florida. The trains are electric, with the power coming from metal bars running alongside the beam. Each monorail travels on rubber tires and is powered by a 600 volt DC propulsion system which included eight DC motors rated at 112 HP each, with the power coming from each side of the beam.

The entire current monorail system is 14.7 miles in length. Will we ever see an extension of the monorail system? That is the question asked by many Walt Disney World visitors. The answer is, "Doubtful." It is just not cost effective for Walt Disney World to do so. The beams that the monorails ride on cost about a million dollars a mile!

One of our favorite things to do to get out of the intense Florida heat is to take a ride on the monorail. We have spent many an afternoon just relaxing and enjoying the scenery around the Seven Seas Lagoon. It is also a wonderful way to see the resorts, in an air conditioned environment. Or just enjoy the view from the ride to Epcot and back from the TTC, just for a change of pace from the parks.

If you get the chance, ask to ride up front with the driver. You may have to wait a little while in a designated area, but it is well worth the trip. We especially enjoy the ride from the TTC to Epcot. The drivers are very helpful in sharing their knowledge of the monorail and showing you the controls. What great pictures you can get from there! The Monorail system at Walt Disney World has a wonderful history. Think of it the next time you hear "Por favor mantenganse..."

About The Author: Dianne has taken over 25 trips to Walt Disney World and is taking her first Disney cruise in April 2008 for her 25th wedding anniversary. She has two sons who she "raised on Disney" and a husband she "converted." Dianne is a Registered Nurse and Certified Diabetes Educator.

.....

Article last updated: 2/15/2007

View the latest version online at:

<http://www.passporter.com/articles/walt-disney-world-transportation-the-monorail.html>

Copyright by Dianne Cook. 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/>