

Disneyland Paris for the Holidays: Joyeux Noel!

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Christmas is a magical time anywhere in the world, but even more so when you're at a Disney park. With that in mind, and having enjoyed four Christmases at Walt Disney World in the last decade, we decided it was about time to enjoy a Disney Christmas a little closer to home, at Disneyland Paris.

It's a pretty well documented fact that Disneyland Paris, although still exceptionally popular, has perhaps failed to meet the expectations that were set for it when it first opened in 1992. Despite the fact that the parks attracted more than 15 million people in 2008 and is, by far, the most visited theme park anywhere in Europe, it struggled for many years when it first opened and this perhaps helps to explain why it places so much importance on additional events throughout the year.

Brochures for Disneyland Paris are filled with details of their extra activities during the school summer holidays, Halloween and Christmas and, realizing the British tourism market is one of their major draws, they even celebrate the British tradition of Bonfire Night in early November.

Christmas at Disneyland Paris runs from early November to early January, just like at Walt Disney World, with its dates for this year's Disneyland Fairytale Christmas set for Sunday, November 8, 2009 through Wednesday, January 6, 2010. So what can you expect to find at Disneyland Paris during that time?

The celebrations are really centered around the Disneyland Park, which is the Parisian version of the Magic Kingdom. Having said that, it's still worth heading to the other park at Disneyland Paris, Walt Disney Studios, as that also has Christmas decorations throughout, which look particularly appealing at night. But if it's extra activities you're looking for, Disneyland park is the place to be.

This year, when you arrive, they're promising that you'll be welcomed by Goofy dressed as Santa, along with some of his famous friends. Along Main Street, you can also enjoy the guarantee that snow will be falling everyday, thanks to a bit of Disney magic. And, unlike the Disney parks in the States, there's even the distinct possibility that you could see snow for real during that time of the year -- certainly the temperatures can be cold enough! When we visited last year, it was a beautifully cold and crisp day, which made for some stunning photos, although we did

have to ensure that we were well wrapped up to enjoy our time outside.

Leaving Main Street, the place to head to enjoy the holiday fun is Frontierland. In the Chaparral Theatre there, you'll find Mickey's Winter Wonderland performing several times a day. A show set on ice, this features all of your favorite Disney characters, decked out in their festive finery. Minnie, in particular, looks absolutely stunning in her Christmas outfit! As we watched the show, we couldn't help but marvel at the skating abilities of the various characters. I won't spoil it, but there are some surprise guest appearances from Disney characters you perhaps may not expect to see -- of course, Goofy, Donald, Chip and Dale are all present, as you would expect. Do be warned that this is a very popular show. We got in line for it about 20 minutes before they opened the theatre up and already, the lines were huge. The theatre holds a massive amount of people, so don't be put off by the lines, but make sure you don't miss this.

Frontierland's also home to Santa Claus Village, where you can meet the main man himself in his workshop. There's also the opportunity to send Santa your letters. It's all beautifully laid out, just like a traditional Christmas market in any of the major European cities and the same can be said of Belle's village, which is set up for Christmas in Fantasyland. Snow-covered paths here are more than likely to lead to a wonderful encounter with Belle and the Beast.

As you'd expect from a Disney park, there's also a special Christmas parade during the day -- the Once Upon a Dream parade and anyone who's been to Walt Disney World will spot some similarities to their parade, with elves and toy soldiers and of course Santa amongst those putting in an appearance. At night, you can enjoy Disney's Fantillusion parade and the park's castle is also illuminated nightly, when it's transformed into a stunning palace of ice. Again, that's an effect that anyone who's been to Walt Disney World for Christmas in the last couple of years will be familiar with and it certainly makes the castle even more beautiful than it is during the day.

As night falls, you can also enjoy the Christmas tree lighting ceremony and if you're there on a Saturday night, an additional, extra-cost ticketed event is Mickey's Christmas Dinner, held in the Pavilion. It's a buffet with Disney characters that runs from 7pm to 9pm on Saturdays in December -- the 5th, 12th and 19th, 2009.

If you're there on New Year's Eve, then Disney will bring in 2010 with style, with fireworks planned and the parks will stay open until 1am.

One thing you do need to bear in mind is how popular Disneyland Paris

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is around Christmas time. We visited the weekend before Christmas and the parks were absolutely packed, with long lines for the most popular attractions. If you can visit during the week, you'll notice a huge difference, with crowd levels in the parks much lower. However, like all Disney parks, there are so many wonderful extra things to see and do during the festive season that you can easily visit at the busiest of times and still enjoy yourself by taking in the Christmas celebrations.

There is certainly a lot to discover at Disneyland Paris during the festive season and their [web site](#) is evidence of that -- you can step inside a snow globe that shakes every time you visit a new page to learn more about the celebrations.

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!](#)

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