

Backstage Magic Tour: Adventures By Disney

by Rebecca Oberg, PassPorter Guest Contributor

"Is it worth the money?" That was a question I asked myself when booking my first (and only, thus far) Adventures by Disney vacation. In fact, the cost of the trip made it difficult to justify including my family. After all, it was just a trip to Disneyland -- the Disney park in Southern California. The one with which we live within driving distance. The one that we find a reason to visit at least a couple of times a year. The one that we know like the backs of our hands. Right?

Yes and no. The itinerary also had us in Hollywood for a few days as well. Hollywood? Now, I grew up in Southern California, and Hollywood was certainly not a place I wanted to vacation. I could only conjure up images of litter-filled streets and that grimy downtown feel many big cities have. Then I read that magical word -- "Imagineering." The place where Disney magic begins. The place where the people who create that magic work. The idea capital of the Universe. I knew at that moment that whatever the cost, I was going to find a way to get inside that building (or group of buildings, I know now).

It appeared we would also be visiting Jim Henson's Muppet Studios, Disney Studios (the real working film studio, not the park!), and a couple of historic theaters in Hollywood. It also appeared that nearly everything was included. All admission fees, all lodging, most tips, and many meals. So, I was able to justify most of the expense. I spent the next ten months drooling over the very few trip reports, the promotional materials, and the nice little "get excited" package of trip documents and goodies that Adventures by Disney sent us.

The time seemed to fly by and it wasn't long before the town car service (also included in the price!) was whisking me away to the Renaissance Hollywood Hotel. We were greeted and checked in by our Adventures By Disney Guides while our luggage was shuttled off to our room. This is where one of the primary values of an Adventures by Disney vacation became very apparent. The service. It's hands-down the best service I've ever had the privilege of receiving anywhere. Our talented and gracious guides attended to our every need while remaining light and fun and an integral part of the travel group. I kid you not, these two gentlemen not only took care of all of our mundane travel arrangements (like luggage and check ins), but also provided us with little extras such as, snacks and water bottles popping up as needed and enlightening bits of Disney trivia and history (enough to delight even our group of seasoned Disney

travelers).

They even helped me shop, searching through oodles of pin racks for just the right souvenir for my husband, and pointing out special discounts in more than one gift shop. One of my guides heard me say I collect paper napkins when on a Disney vacation so that I can have a little Pixie Dust in my lunch every day at work, and from then on he presented me with a stack of napkins from each venue we visited.

The other key value of this particular Adventures by Disney vacation is the access to locations, areas, and activities that are not available to the general public. For example, this is the only way to visit the Jim Henson Muppet Studios as a tourist. We were also granted that coveted backstage access at Walt Disney Studios, Walt Disney Imagineering, and the Disneyland Resort. I'd love to go over everything we saw and did there, but I'd hate to spoil the surprise should you take this trip yourself! Also, guests on this Adventure are required to sign a release, so it's all top secret. We were also treated to many back entrances and line-free rides! Everywhere we went our glorious guides (or one of the guests) carried a paddle that identified us as a special group of people. I swear people at Disneyland Park were trying to figure out just who exactly we were. We felt like rock stars! It'll be hard going back to regular guest status on my next trip. Wait in line? No extra Fastpasses? No guide to attend to my every need? The horror!

Another aspect of the trip I didn't factor into my value equation, was the delight of traveling with a group of Disney enthusiasts, such as myself. I made some lifelong friends and connected with people I'd previously only "met" online. We had so much fun together! I'd never before encountered a grown woman who squealed with delight at the mention of riding Haunted Mansion Holiday or watched Fantasmic! with folks eager to discuss the mechanics of the new dragon.

To sum it all up, Adventures by Disney Backstage Magic is most certainly worth the cost of the tour and then some. Every detail is taken care of and included in the package, the hotels were top-notch, and the food was delicious and plentiful. There's one thing of value that's really difficult to put a price tag on, that patented Disney feel. The quality of experiences that the Disney provides ring wholeheartedly through every aspect of this Adventures by Disney vacation.

About The Author: Rebecca has been an avid Disneyland fan as long as she can remember. She's recently added Disney Cruise Line and Walt Disney World to her list of favorite places on the planet. When not traveling, planning to travel, or visiting Disney, she is mother of three, wife of one, and teacher of 23 third graders.

Article last updated: 11/12/2009

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