

The 2009 Holiday Season at Walt Disney World: The Good and the Bad

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

The holiday season is one of our favorite times of the year to visit the Walt Disney World Resort, and we always look forward to our Christmas visits eagerly.

This visit is now our fifth, and I think it's important to say that, as I think it's perhaps colored our views of this trip. As far as our experiences this Christmas go, I'd describe them so far as good and bad.

The bad? The decorations don't seem to be as prominent as they have been in recent years. Pull up to some resorts -- the Beach Club springs to mind -- and you'd struggle to know that it's even the holiday season, as there are just no decorations to be seen outside. However, step inside and it's a different story. We've tended to find that outside resorts, the decorations, perhaps with the exception of the Grand Floridian, are pretty understated, whereas inside, they're exactly what you'd expect and maybe more.

This year, the Beach Club has added its own gingerbread house, just like the Grand Floridian, and it's also being used as a shop to sell gingerbread. It's presumably part of their 10th anniversary celebrations, as the signs told us that it's been 10 years since their carousel first appeared in their lobby. Go into the Grand Floridian this year and, if you're lucky as we were, you may find a chef demonstrating how to make your own gingerbread house, which was neat to watch. I'm not sure, having seen the demonstration, that I could honestly do it myself though!

Over at the BoardWalk, the display is much the same as previous years, with Donald and Daisy in their own house, but this year Donald's got himself into trouble, which will surprise no-one, with his back end suspended above the fireplace and Stitch making more trouble as the cook in the house. It's a nice twist on an old favorite.

In the parks, most of the decorations you'd expect to see are still there, including the wreathes across Main Street, but the one main difference from years gone by is the conspicuous absence of any poinsettia plants. For a while, I couldn't work out what was missing, but once I did put two and two together, I was really disappointed. It was only on our last visit two years ago that Disney were talking about how many extra poinsettia they'd added that year, as guest feedback told them that people loved them. I struggle to see how that view has changed in the past two years,

so I can only assume that the plants are gone as a result of cutbacks. Whatever the reason, it's a great shame and I hope it's something that Disney quickly reinstates, as I for one, really missed them.

The trees at each of the parks are exactly what you'd expect if you've visited in the holiday season before. If you haven't, then be prepared for towering trees that are impossible to miss and are beautifully decorated in keeping with the theme of the park they're in.

As far as holiday events go, we were lucky enough to attend a couple, including Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party. I couldn't see anything that had been removed, compared to previous years, and if anything, I thought that perhaps they had added more in this year. There certainly seemed to be more characters around. For the first time in ages, we saw both Tweedledum and Tweedledee and the Queen of Hearts. The Cast Member with them told us that they were making a conscious effort to bring in characters for the party that weren't usually seen during daytime hours, which is a nice perk. That trend continued in Toontown, with Prince Philip appearing with Princess Aurora, and Prince Charming with Cinderella, while Minnie was to be seen in all her Christmas finery.

The Holiday Wishes fireworks were just as spectacular as in previous years, although having seen it both from our room at Bay Lake Tower and in the park itself, we suspected, but weren't sure, that perhaps the final set of periphery fireworks that appear to surround you had been scaled back a little bit, but otherwise, it was as stunning as previously. The same goes for the holiday version of IllumiNations and I'm pleased to report that I was not the only one of our group moved to tears by the whole thing. This addition to the usual version of IllumiNations is something we love and I'd personally be delighted to see something similar, obviously to a different theme, all year round.

We took in the Osborne Lights twice and found them to perhaps be more popular than ever. You need to choose the time of your visit carefully for these. Go when they open and there's every chance that they'll be packed, with it impossible to move. We were literally shoulder to shoulder with people all the way round on the first night we went, yet the next night during evening Extra Magic Hours, it was much more pleasant and a lot quieter. Do keep in mind though that more people appear to have discovered PhotoPass this year. We've never seen the lines as long for the photographers at the Lights as they were this year. If you want some PhotoPass pictures then, prepare yourself for a lengthy wait, but the results are worth it.

Generally, Christmas at Disney this year was very similar to previous

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years, although sadly it did feel that Disney had tried to scale it back where they could -- and for regular visitors, the results do show. Despite that, we still loved our visit and the holiday season at Walt Disney World still remains one of our favorite times to head to the World.

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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