

Disneyland: Fabulous at 50

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)

I doubt there are many 50 year olds who can party like Disneyland.

At the center of the worldwide Happiest Celebration on Earth, Walt's original park is enjoying a resurgence of interest across the globe, with many people thinking there's no better time to visit -- and I'm proud to say that I fall into that category.

My last visit to Disneyland was in 1987 with my parents - a fleeting one day visit and not one that I have particularly fond memories of. As someone who was brought up on a diet of Walt Disney World, with all its space, arriving in Disneyland was something of a shock. No build-up, no crossing a lake to get to the Magic Kingdom. You just arrived. The entrance was around the corner from motels, fast food places and the park was completely surrounded.

It's amazing how all that can change in 20 years. The arrival of a second park -- the California Adventure -- means that now there's some mystery as you approach the resort. It's finally hidden away and your anticipation can grow in the same way it does in Florida. Now with three onsite hotels, the Downtown Disney complex and two parks, it really is a resort and it's one that's popular with the locals. Be warned -- the parks are busy during the weekends! If you can time your trip for during the week, you'll be able to achieve more.

So what about the parks? Those of you reading this that have never been to Disneyland are probably wondering whether it's like the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World. Well, yes and no. The lands are laid out in a similar way, but things look very different as you walk up Main Street USA. Sleeping Beauty's Castle is beautiful, but very small. That's how Walt wanted it. He didn't want people to feel that the castle was towering over the masses, but it's clear that the Imagineers have learned, with future castles acting as more of a focal point in the park.

We all know that much was learned from the Disneyland Park. Walking around, you can understand why Walt wanted a much bigger site in Florida. The park is compact, almost to the point of being too small in places. Walk out towards the Rivers of America and you can see differently themed lands almost collide. At least it makes for less walking than you'd get in Orlando!

The focal point seen from much of the park is the Matterhorn -- a ride not re-created in any of Disney's other parks and it's not the only

unique Disney attraction. One that surely must be exported to other parks soon is the Indiana Jones Adventure. It's similar in style to Dinosaur in the Animal Kingdom, but is far superior both in theming and the overall ride effect and is something not to be missed on any Disneyland trip.

Other unique rides include Alice in Wonderland in Fantasyland, a fun filled ride through the classic movie, and the sailing ship Columbia which allows you to take a step back in time on a journey around the Rivers of America. And let's not forget Roger Rabbit's Car Toon Spin in the fun filled Toontown, an area you can believe was tailor made for cartoon characters.

There's a lot that's obviously the same, but even when the attraction names are familiar, there are still differences. Beehives, not honey pots, populate the Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh, with the scenes in a different order. Snow White remains very much the scary version that's now disappeared from Walt Disney World. From the new addition to the Jungle Cruise -- I won't spoil the surprise, as there's nothing better than watching people's reactions to it -- to the floating head of Madame Leota in the Haunted Mansion, there's a feeling everywhere that this is not a 50 year old park, but one that's recently been given a lot of love and care.

Yet, in spite of the recent renovations and rehabs, the history of Disneyland is everywhere. The Enchanted Tiki Room proudly displays Walt's name and his presence can be felt throughout the park, from the opening ceremony in which you hear his words from opening day to the candles still burning in the windows of one of the buildings along Main Street. If you love Disney, there's nothing like walking round the only park that Walt enjoyed after its opening.

The celebrations are also everywhere, from the golden ride vehicles, which make for some great photo opportunities, to the addition of new or improved attractions, such as Space Mountain and Disneyland -- the first 50 years, showing in the Main Street cinema. But perhaps the best tribute to 50 years of magic here has to be the nightly fireworks show, Remember, Dreams Come True.

We always say that fireworks never seem as good as they are in Walt Disney World. After all, how can you top Wishes or Illuminations? Well, Remember does. It brings in so many new effects not seen in either of the other two shows and tells the story of Disneyland throughout the years. Watching it from Main Street, we could hear people all around us, joining in with the most famous lines from familiar attractions like the Haunted Mansion, the Pirates of the Caribbean and the Disneyland

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Railroad. Everyone was enjoying the magic of today, while remembering the magic of years gone by.

It's clear that Disneyland has a special place in the heart of many of its visitors and it's also obvious that many of them return time and time again. Having seen the magic from Walt's original park, I can understand why.

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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