

# A Walk In Walt's Footsteps: A Disneyland Behind The Scenes Tour Review

by Bernie Edwards, PassPorter Guest Contributor

If you have time when visiting the Disneyland Resort, a great tour to take is, "A Walk in Walt's Footsteps." It's a guided tour where you learn some of the history and trivia behind the development of Disneyland Park. Each guest wears a headset to clearly hear the Cast Member giving the tour and various recordings; you actually listen to Walt Disney talk about Disneyland Park in his own words at several locations on the tour. The tour lasts about 3.5 hours and is usually offered a couple of times each day. I think it is an especially nice tour for those guests who call the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World Resort in Florida their "home park," since Walt Disney did not live to see that park open. I've been on the tour twice myself over the past couple of years and enjoyed it both times. In this article, I'll describe my most recent tour.

Our tour started off in Town Square near the Disneyland dedication plaque with a short history of Walt Disney and his vision for Disneyland Park. Our tour guide talked about opening day and the challenges that had to be overcome that day, including the fact that approximately 28,000 guests showed up even though only 11,000 were officially invited. We also listened to Walt Disney giving the park's dedication speech.

We then stopped at several locations on Main Street to listen to the history behind several dedication windows and to learn how Disney blows smells, such as popcorn and bakery scents, onto Main Street to help enhance the atmosphere. At the Hub, we stopped at the Partners statue and learned what Walt Disney had to go through to get the funds to build the park. Our tour guide's talk was enhanced by playing various audio clips of Walt Disney talking; some were from opening day but others were from television programs, interviews, etc.

Afterwards we headed to Adventureland to visit the Enchanted Tiki Room. As a Disney fan, I found it very refreshing that the attraction was absolutely packed with guests! After enjoying the show, the guests on the tour were invited to stay in the room before the next show to get up close and personal with an audio-animatronic from the show. Our tour guide spent some time discussing the difference in technology between the original audio-animatronics for the show vs. the new President Lincoln audio-animatronic in the Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln show

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on Main Street; the new President Lincoln is arguably the most sophisticated one in the entire Disneyland Resort.

Then our tour group was led on to the Jungle Cruise where we had our own private excursion, followed by a visit to the Golden Horseshoe Saloon. I never realized until my first tour that the boxes near the front of the stage on the first floor of the Golden Horseshoe were originally reserved for Walt Disney and Roy Disney; today any guest can sit there for the outstanding live entertainment offered several times each day. I personally really enjoy watching Billy Hill and the Hillbillies perform there, though I've never actually sat in one of the boxes.

Next on our tour was a peek inside the lobby of the exclusive, members-only Club 33. For those of you not familiar with this club, it is a private club with very limited membership that sits discreetly above the Blue Bayou restaurant and nearby shops in New Orleans Square. Years ago, Walt Disney felt that he needed a special place to entertain visiting dignitaries and celebrities in a quiet corner of Disneyland, away from other guests. Club 33 was that place, though Walt Disney passed away a few months before its opening. Today the club provides its guests an incredible meal accompanied by outstanding service. For those of you now thinking about joining, our tour guide said that the club is no longer accepting names on its waiting list and that the current list is about 15 years long. Our guide also discussed some of the history of the club and allowed us to examine the magnificent antique French lift that takes guests to the second floor, but we were not allowed to go to the second floor ourselves.

Our next stop was the New Orleans Square train station where we boarded a train for Mickey's Toontown. There we disembarked and met in front of *it's a small world*. Our tour guide talked about the history of that attraction and the other attractions Walt Disney created for the 1964 World Fair. We also listened to Walt Disney's dedication speech for *it's a small world*. This was followed by a talk on the Matterhorn, Monorail, and the original Submarine Voyage attractions.

We were then led to Snow White's Grotto, where our tour guide gave a quick history of Disney animated films and discussed the impact of Snow White on the company. Our final stop was in the lobby for the Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln attraction, where our tour guide went over the various items on display regarding the development and opening day for Disneyland. I really enjoyed viewing the model of what the park looked like on opening day.

All of these tours include a meal at the end. Since I was on the 2:00 pm tour, which ended at around 5:15 pm, this was my dinner for the night.

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Menu items include salads and sandwiches, along with a bottled beverage (soda or water) and a dessert. Each guest made a choice when originally checking in for the tour. We ate at tables next to the guided tour check-in area, near City Hall in Town Square. Our tour guide continued to talk to us while we ate and answered any remaining questions!

I started off this article by saying "if" you have time, but I suggest you make the time. "A Walk in Walt's Footsteps" is a great tour and you won't regret taking it. As I wrote earlier, I think veterans of Walt Disney World Resort in Florida who have only limited experience with visiting Disneyland will especially enjoy this tour. However, I don't recommend it for young children, because they may not appreciate all of the history and trivia covered in the tour. It currently costs \$64.00 per guest, not including your ticket to enter Disneyland Park. That price includes the meal mentioned earlier. Tours are limited to 15 guests per tour, so I suggest making a reservation before arriving at 714-781-4400. Reservations can be made up to 30 days in advance. When you call, be sure to ask about discounts. Generally, there are discounts available for Deluxe / Premium Annual Pass Holders, American Automobile Association members, and Disney Visa Cardholders.

*About The Author: Bernie Edwards lives in Maryland with his wife and two children. He is an engineer for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and a member of the Walt Disney World Moms Panel. He enjoys visiting both Walt Disney World and Disneyland.*

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