

Holidays Around the (Disney) World: The Candlelight Processional Dinner Package

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

There are so many wonderful events to enjoy during the festive season at Walt Disney World that sometimes it's hard to fit them all in -- or indeed to know where to start. One of our favorites is, and always has been, the Candlelight Processional, the wonderful re-telling of the Christmas Nativity story, complete with a guest celebrity narrator, massed choirs, and 50-piece orchestra. It's something that everyone will be moved by and helps to remind all those who see it of the real reason that we celebrate Christmas each year.

Held in the America Gardens Theater in Epcot's World Showcase each night during the holiday season, there are typically three different performances during the course of the evening, at 5:00 pm, 6:45 pm, and 8:00 pm. This last performance is one reason why IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth is pushed back to a slightly later start time of 9:30pm for the duration of the Candlelight Processional season.

In 2010, the Candlelight Processional enters its 40th year. It's become a real Disney tradition over the years since its beginnings at Disneyland in California. It's also become more and more popular with every passing year. Whereas, going back a decade, you could fairly easily get a seat at a performance by getting in a line a couple of hours beforehand, those days are now gone. In 2009, we saw people lining up for the first performance at around 1:00 pm!

There are two ways you can see the Candlelight Processional. One is to take your chance in the stand-by line, but you will need to be early to have the best opportunity. Bearing in mind where the show takes place and where the line starts, it's not unusual to see that stand-by line snaking its way back to Germany! One advantage of choosing this option is that there's no additional charge for the show, on top of your admission into Epcot for the day, but of course, there's equally no guarantee that you'll even be able to get into the show. Seating is only opened up to those in this line 15 minutes before the show begins.

The only way to guarantee your seat is to use the other route to see the show and that's the Candlelight Processional Dining Package. As the popularity of the show has increased, so have the numbers of people using this package. Again, if you go back a few years, it was relatively easy to call up and get yourself a dining package up to a few weeks

beforehand, but now a lot of restaurants sell out on specific dates and there's a mad rush the day they go on sale.

If you want to take advantage of the dining package, the advice is definitely to book sooner, rather than later, for the best choice, especially on nights when there's a popular narrator. We wanted to see Whoopi Goldberg narrating the Processional in 2009 and, although we managed it and at the restaurant we wanted, which was Teppan Edo, the choice of times we were left with was less than desirable.

So what is the dining package? Essentially it gives you a ticket to the reserved seating area, which is seated prior to the stand-by line for each show. Seating is allocated on a first come, first served basis and, with the stand-by line, people do queue up ridiculously early. When we came out of our meal at Teppan Edo, with about 50 minutes to go to the next show, the line was already into Japan.

A recent innovation is that those on the dining package also enjoy a reserved viewing area for that night's showing of IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth, which is a nice additional bonus. In 2009, this area was right at the entrance to World Showcase, with the American Adventure opposite on the other side of World Showcase Lagoon, and it was a superb viewing location.

The dining package, as you'd imagine, also allows you to enjoy dinner at a table service restaurant in Epcot. It includes a non-alcoholic beverage, although tax and gratuity is not included in the quoted price. There may be some restrictions in what you can order from the menu. For example, when we went to Teppan Edo, we couldn't get sushi for appetizer on the package offered on the Dining Plan.

If you're on one of Disney's Dining Plans, then this will cost you two table service credits. For those paying out of pocket, there are different prices, depending on which restaurant you choose and whether you go for lunch or dinner. Lunch is obviously cheaper, with packages ranging from \$32.99 - \$51.99/adult and \$12.99 - \$17.99/child, while dinner will set you back between \$46.99 and \$51.99/adult and between \$15.99 and \$23.99/child, depending on which restaurant you choose. The packages are available at most table service restaurants in Epcot.

This may sound like a lot of money -- and yes, it is more than you'd usually pay to eat at one of these restaurants, but is it worth it? To us, the answer is absolutely yes. It guarantees you a seat at the wonderful Candlelight Processional and, without the package, you're looking at hours of waiting in line and still no guarantee of seeing the show. The addition of the special viewing area for IllumiNations has added even

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more value to this package, allowing you to enjoy a special evening of festive entertainment from Disney and you still get to enjoy a wonderful meal at some of Disney's best theme park dining.

Obviously the answer as to whether the package is worth it to you will depend on your personal circumstances, as it can add a lot to the budget, especially if you're a big group. But for us, the unequivocal answer is that we would never consider going to see the show without using the dining package. It makes for a wonderful night out with very little waiting around and allows us to enjoy three distinct treats -- a great meal at a Epcot restaurant, an emotional re-telling of the Christmas Nativity story, and the spectacle that is IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth from a great viewing location.

To book a Candlelight Processional dining package, call 407-WDW-DINE.

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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