

Tom Sawyer Island: An Unexplored Attraction at the Magic Kingdom

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

There are many, many attractions at Walt Disney World that both first-timers and regular visitors will want to head straight for in each park. The mountains in the Magic Kingdom - Splash, Big Thunder, and Space -- are huge draws, as is Soarin', and Test Track in Epcot, while at the Studios the crowds head to Toy Story Midway Mania, Rock 'n' Roller Coaster, and the Tower of Terror. In Animal Kingdom, it's Expedition Everest and Kilimanjaro Safaris which draw everyone. However, as we all know, every park has so much more to offer than just what are often termed the E-ticket attractions.

Perhaps one of the most easy to miss at the Magic Kingdom is Tom Sawyer Island, located in Frontierland. For starters, to actually visit the island, you have to take a raft over there, probably something that many people pass by without even realizing it. That helps to keep crowds down a nice, manageable level, even on the busiest days.

The motorized raft journey over is a lot of fun, and doesn't take nearly as long as you think it will, and then it's up to you where you head for. There are very few places that you can say that about in Walt Disney World. All too often, you enter the line, and then you board your attraction. Here, it's up to you to make your own explorations and make the most of the island. You can spend as little time here or as long as you like, but there's certainly plenty to see for all age groups.

Children will love being able to just run around and have fun, while adults will appreciate the peace and quiet, where you can just sit and watch the world go by. There are even rocking chairs to enjoy by the dock, where the rafts drop you off.

Inspired by the works of the famous author Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer Island is packed full of fun attractions. We really enjoyed exploring the caves on the island, complete with some dark passages, and some fun and unusual lighting, although for younger members of the family, this may prove to be too frightening, as in some places, it is very dark. Having said that, you can also have a lot of fun, by scaring older members of the family. It's very easy to get ahead of people and then hide in wait for them, jumping out at the last moment.

Perhaps the one part that's guaranteed to make most adults feel sick is the area with the rope bridge, and the barrel bridge. These really can be made to bounce up and down underneath you, and it can be a

disconcerting experience. I have to be honest, I was very glad to get off those things, as we had some very enthusiastic teenagers following us, who were enjoying the bouncing sensation far too much for my liking!

The family favorite here will be Fort Langhorn, where there's so much to explore, with air rifles, and cannons for younger cowboys to try out. We particularly enjoyed seeing the various displays of how life would have been in those days. Somehow, it feels much authentic here than in the rest of Frontierland, perhaps because it's usually quieter over here.

One thing that's worth knowing before you embark on a journey over here is that you do need to be able to walk around a fair bit. It's not a wheelchair friendly place, and although there are places to stop and sit around the island, part of the aim is exploring, and that does mean a fair bit of walking.

Tom Sawyer Island is a great place to head to, if the weather's not cooperating. On our last visit there, we were enduring some fairly heavy rain, but we found that the island has a lot of shelter, so we were still able to explore without getting drowned.

It really is a bit of an oddity, as there are no shops here, which is unusual in any area of any Disney park, and there's only one place to stop to eat, Aunt Polly's Dockside Inn, which serves up snacks, but only on a seasonal basis, so don't bank on it always being open, particularly at quieter times of the year.

You'll find that Tom Sawyer Island often opens later than the rest of the park, and it will close earlier, with the usual closing time being dusk. That's fully understandable, as of course, to fit in with the theming, there's no real lighting over here, so after dark, it would be an accident waiting to happen. You do need to keep an eye on the time while you're here, as it's very easy to spend longer than you had originally anticipated, as there's more to see and do here than you first imagine.

It's a great place to head to for all ages, and as a couple without kids, we still found plenty to enjoy here. If you've never visited Tom Sawyer Island, or if it's been some time since you were last there, it's well worth boarding a raft, and heading over there.

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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