

Boats at Walt Disney World: Watercraft in the Theme Parks

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

If, like us, you're frequent visitors to Walt Disney World, there comes a time when you want to do more than just explore the parks and rides on offer there. When that time comes, there are plenty of things to see and do.

A vast sprawling resort, **Walt Disney World is home to a large number of lakes and waterways**, some of which offer their own activities, attractions, and transportation. Boating can be a fun means of getting from one place to another at Walt Disney World, or it can be a fun way of spending a couple of hours. It can even be a Disney attraction in its own right, using boats as the means of transportation!

Having looked at the [various ways to travel around Walt Disney World in a previous article](#), here we'll concentrate on the other two ways boats are used at the Walt Disney World Resort, starting with a look in this article at the various water-based attractions that use boats.

Let's start, as many people do, at the Magic Kingdom. Perhaps the most obvious attraction here is the one that takes you on a slow moving cruise around the Rivers of America. That honour goes to the **beautiful Liberty Belle steamboat**, which is a delight to explore, as you sail around the Rivers, taking in views of Frontierland and Liberty Square. It's one of those attractions that it's all too easy to miss, but every time we go on it, we remember how much fun it is, and how much detail there is on board. Because it's not one of the more popular attractions, it's the perfect place to head to for a break from the crowds when it's busy.

Another place to get a break from the crowds is [Tom Sawyer Island](#), and getting there is a unique experience, using motorized rafts. I had always been fascinated by these things, and my fascination continues having been on them. They're a very unusual mode of boating transportation, and definitely worth trying out. I must admit that part of me is disappointed that the Davy Crockett Explorer Canoes no longer operate at Walt Disney World, having seen people having great fun on them at Tokyo Disneyland.

Overlooking the Rivers of America, and offering a great view of that, and much of the rest of the park, is Splash Mountain, taking you

climbing up and around in your very own log boat. Of course, the added bonus with these is that, by the very nature of the journey they take every day, they can be nice and wet when you get into them!

There's one other outdoor boating experience at the Magic Kingdom, and that one is a great favourite of many Disney fans. The **Jungle Cruise** is a must-do for us every time we visit, even if we can now almost recite word for word the scripts that our skippers recite, and finish the jokes just after they start them. Despite that, there's still a real attraction there. I will admit that it waned for us a little after Disney's Animal Kingdom opened, and we were able to see real-life animals there, but there will always be a place in my heart for this Disney classic.

For the other attractions using boats, you have to head indoors at the Magic Kingdom to attractions such as **Pirates of the Caribbean and It's A Small World**. I have to admit that I've always found indoor boat rides to have a special appeal. I think it's something to do with the slightly more unpredictable nature of the ride vehicle you're in, and let's be honest, there's nothing like feeling canons explode near to you in Pirates of the Caribbean!

Another place when you get that feeling is in **Maelstrom** in Epcot's Norway. There's nothing more fun to me than watching unsuspecting fellow passengers' faces, as our boat hurtles backwards! I have to admit that I had exactly the same expression on our honeymoon, much to my husband's delight! The other two boat rides at Epcot are much more tame, the Gran Fiesta Tour in neighbouring Mexico, and Living With The Land in Futureworld. The former has never been one of my favourites, although the introduction of Donald and his nephews has livened it up somewhat. The latter always interests me, as a keen gardener, and I can't help but marvel every time at the size of some of the produce in those greenhouses!

Disney's Hollywood Studios is very much a **landlubber's paradise**, with perhaps the exception of Fantasmic!, with the starring appearance of the Disney characters on a massive steamer at the end of the show, and the high-speed jetskis in Lights, Motors, Action!

In Disney's Animal Kingdom, it's when you head into the jungles of Asia that you find their boat-based ride, the **Kali River Rapids**, although this has to be one of the most unusual boats I've ever seen! Always much shorter than I expect it to be, there's nothing like the fear you feel as you head towards the climax of the ride and try to work out who's sitting in *that* seat in your boat. Whoever it is, you just know they're in for a soaking... and why does it always seem that I'm that person?

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In a future article, we'll take a look at some of the more relaxing, and **fun boating activities around Walt Disney World**, away from means of transportation and actual rides and attractions.

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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