

# Kings Dominion : A Disney Fan's Visit

by Angela Jenkins, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Kings Dominion is a 400-acre amusement park operated by [Cedar Fair](#), the company that also runs Ohio's famed Cedar Point and equally famous Knott's Berry Farm in California.

Kings Dominion is located 20 miles north of Richmond, Virginia on Interstate 95.

Our family visited Kings Dominion this past Memorial Day weekend. We went on Sunday to try to avoid the Monday holiday crowds, and arrived around 4:00 pm to take advantage of the "Twilight Ticket." This is a discounted ticket providing admission for all ages after 4:00 pm for \$34.99, and it includes access to "Waterworks," the in-park water ride area. A 2011 regular full-day ticket costs \$47.99, with the Junior ticket (under 48 inches or over age 62) costing \$36.99. Parking was \$12.00. In comparison, at Walt Disney World, a one day base ticket is \$87.00, and parking costs \$14.00.

□ The parking lot is located outside the park's gates, and is marked with numbers and letters. I didn't notice either a tram or shuttle to the main entrance. There were families out having picnics at the tables along the wide median of the parking lot. The day was warm and humid, the temperature about 88 degrees.

□ We walked right up to the cashier window, were given a waterproof receipt, and headed to the gates. Our receipts were scanned and I was directed towards bag check. According to the [Kings Dominion's website](#), no food, drinks, or coolers are allowed in the park. I wished we had brought our Camelbak water bottles (there are water fountains near the bathrooms), as we got thirsty later and drinks, including water, were \$4 a bottle. You can purchase a special refill cup for \$13. We ended up sharing one. The food offerings are mostly standard amusement park fare, and expensive. In comparison, Walt Disney World allows you to bring drinks and snacks inside their parks.

I had read some reviews of Kings Dominion at various theme park blogs. Most people thought the park needed some work on theming, landscaping, and cleanliness. Before leaving home, I promised myself to not think of Walt Disney World. I already knew nothing comes close to the magic there, so I would just be setting myself up for disappointment. I had been to Kings Dominion many years before and I remembered that it had an "amusement park" theme with plenty of concrete. When we entered, I was pleasantly surprised to see lovely

---

fountains greeting us, and lots of flowers and trees. International Street is a large boulevard with a long, rectangular pool down the center. Along each side of the boulevard there are shops and restaurants, including a big Starbucks. There is a place to rent strollers and manual or electric wheelchairs. At the end of International Street stands the Eiffel Tower, where you can take an elevator ride to the top and gaze out over the park. The "hub" around the tower takes you different directions into the park. I was looking for "dirt," but the park was cleaner than I expected it would be. In fact, the one time I used the restroom, I braced myself for anything, but the toilets and restroom were clean, and featured modern "air blade" hand dryers.

□

□We took a left turn before reaching the Eiffel Tower, which led us to the rides on the left side of the park. There, park staff measure children against a colorful board, and give them a wristband with a color code that indicates their height. I would love it if Walt Disney World did the same thing. We immediately headed for our first ride of the day, The Berserker, a swinging boat-type ride that stops upside-down for a few exciting moments. My sons, 6 and 9 years old, could not wait to ride. I was concerned for my youngest one; even though he met the 48-inch height requirement, he is skinny. I made sure the restraints were super tight and off we went. They screamed with excitement and loved it, and of course, wanted to do it again. The boys had had a great time at Walt Disney World, but were either too short or too nervous to go on rides like Rock & n' Roller Coaster and Tower of Terror. This day, however, they were wild about the rides and couldn't wait to try them all, except for the more extreme rides like Intimidator 305, Anaconda, and Drop Zone. My 9-year-old went on Dominator next, and despite being nervous while on it, totally raved about it when the ride was over.

□

□The Walt Disney World Resort can be considered a true theme park. Kings Dominion, however, is like an amusement park/carnival. It seems like half the park is devoted to midway-type games, which are not included in the price of admission. There are "lands" like at Disney parks, but not nearly as well-themed, and the themes mostly have nothing to do with the rides. Some areas, especially the older ones, really could use a coat of paint and some tender loving care. The newer areas have had some thought put into them, and it really shows. One of my favorite rides of the day was Backlot Stunt Coaster. The theme was "Los Angeles" and the movie set of the Mark Wahlberg film, The Italian Job. You board a Mini Cooper-type car and off you go at high speed through a movie set, complete with six different scenes. There are helicopters "firing" at you, fiery explosions, a chase through a darkened sewer, a plunge into the L.A. aqueduct, and more. Another ride, which we did not get on, is called The Crypt. This wild-looking ride is themed like a jungle, including "artifacts" a la Raiders of the Lost Ark. We joined

.....

a crowd of people watching the riders being flipped and turned over and over, even backwards at times, to the sound of tribal drums. The riders encountered shooting water and flames during the ride, rising from the water below -- at a safe distance, of course.

□

□ In the five-and-a-half hours we were at Kings Dominion we were able to enjoy nine rides and roller coasters. The lines weren't long at all, and for some of the rides, we walked right up to the ride with only a few people ahead of us. I had searched the Internet for information on some kind of FASTPASS system like Walt Disney World has, but there is no such thing. There are some early entry-type benefits and "Walk-on Wednesdays" for VIP Season Pass holders. Kings Dominion does not have parades like Walt Disney World, but they do have some shows. Unfortunately, we weren't able to see any this time. There is a meet and greet area called Planet Snoopy, where you can meet the Peanuts gang; Snoopy, Charlie Brown, Linus and Lucy. We also really enjoyed the fireworks at the end of the evening.

□

□ Our family had a great time at Kings Dominion. This park specializes in thrill rides and carnival games. The rides were scream-inducing and body-jarring, but absolutely fun. The rides at Walt Disney World seem to be focused on experiencing a story through theming and environment, where your imagination comes into play more than fear or thrill seeking. Will we go back to Kings Dominion? Probably, if we're in the mood, the weather is right, and if we go after 4:00 pm. But we plan, dream about, and wait for the world of Walt Disney all the time.

*About The Author: Angela is a homeschooling mom of two boys. She is married to her husband of 11 years, whom she successfully turned into a Disney fan on their first trip together in 2009. They are looking forward to another trip to Disney this year! She is known on the PassPorter Boards as "goofyboysmama."*

Article last updated: 06-09-2011

View the latest version online at: <http://www.passporter.com/articles/kings-dominion.html>

Copyright by Angela Jenkins. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act. Resale of this guide is strictly prohibited without the copyright holder's permission. If you purchased this publication from someone other than PassPorter Travel Press, please call 877-929-3273.

.....

View more PassPorter Articles online at <http://www.passporter.com/articles/>

PassPorter Deluxe: Cut, punch holes, and insert in binder.  
PassPorter Spiral: Cut, print at dotted line, and insert in PassPorter.

