

Lessons Learned at Disneyland: A Disneyland Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

I've been looking back and what I've learned from our recent Disney vacations, and this is part 3 in the series (check out [Lesson 1](#) and [Lesson 2](#) as well).

Now it's time to head to the West Coast, and Disneyland.

At Disneyland in California, the lessons started as soon as we touched down on the ground. We were flying in from the UK to the mammoth Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). This was the first time we'd experienced this place, although I'd heard lots about it. That last was part of the reason I'd avoided flying in or out of it for so long! The smaller Los Angeles area airports seem much more appealing, but sadly they don't have direct flights for London, so LAX it would be. Was it as bad as everyone says it is? Honestly, pretty much yes. Not only did it take us a long time to clear immigration, and customs, which is a problem at any big airport in the world, but the whole place seemed very unfriendly, with very little signposting. It was quite daunting to be arriving there, and unless it's going to save you a lot of money, I'd honestly spring for somewhere like John Wayne Airport (SNA), which is closest to Disneyland, or Long Beach Airport (LGB) instead.

It was also tough finding the Disneyland Resort Express bus, although once we did, I couldn't complain about the service. Sure, we'd just missed one bus, but isn't that always the way? For just the couple of nights we would be at Disneyland, we couldn't justify having a rental car, and for anyone in that position, the bus service is perfect. After all, who really wants to brave the freeways around Los Angeles if they don't have to?!

On that subject, if you're solely spending time at Disneyland, and not visiting any other attractions in the area, you don't need a rental car at all. Everything at Disneyland Resort is within walking distance, which is a very pleasant change from Walt Disney World! I will be honest though, sometimes that did make me feel a bit claustrophobic.

Something we had already learned on previous visits was that we would always stay at the Grand Californian Hotel, as it's so convenient. This time we discovered how spacious the hotel's one-bedroom Disney Vacation Club Villas are. Oh my goodness, it was amazing to have so much space, and we loved the time we spent there! I'd happily use our DVC points for another one-bedroom villa there in the future, we

enjoyed the experience that much.

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□ If you're staying at a Disneyland Resort Hotel, then make sure you take full advantage of Magic Mornings, which gives you an hour's head start on everyone else (on select days) at Disneyland Park. It was a wonderful perk to be able to walk in past people who were already waiting to get into the park, and to enjoy the attractions without the crowds. It was an absolute bonus to be able to hit the Finding Nemo Submarine Voyage before the crowds grew. We were able to polish-off so many activities in quick succession, and then we witnessed the charge as the gates opened up to the general public, and everything suddenly got a lot busier.

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□ At Disney California Adventure it was an education to see how the crowds have diminished for the Little Mermaid-Ariel's Undersea Adventure ride since the days when it was brand-new. I'd planned to ride that first thing in the morning, having heard how popular it was, but I learned from this experience that it's something you can enjoy at pretty much any point during the day. New to us this trip was World of Color, and I'd already read a fair bit about this show, and knew how popular it was. As a result, we reserved the World of Color Dining Package, which includes access to a reserved viewing area for the show. This was definitely the right call. I wouldn't want to be standing and waiting for hours before the show, and equally, I wouldn't want to miss it. World of Color is just too amazing to miss! What I wasn't prepared for was how packed the whole Paradise Pier area would be for the show. Literally everywhere you looked, there was a sea of people. Something I've learned for next time is to book that dining package again to see the show.

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□ I already knew how enjoyable the character meals were at Disneyland, so that came as no surprise, but something I had forgotten, and I do need to learn for future visits, is how long those character meals take. There are so many different characters to see that it quite often takes a lot longer than the hour or hour-and-a-half I'm used to allocating for these at Walt Disney World. The next time I'll also allocate more time to the parks, as this time we literally only had a day-and-a-half. Despite the fact that we'd visited Disneyland twice before, this still wasn't enough time to get through all the attractions we'd hoped to enjoy. You need a minimum of two full days here, and ideally a third day to allow you some time away from the parks... and that's if you've visited a number of times before. First-time visitors ought to allow even more time. Hopefully, if our plans pan out, I can apply some of these lessons to a return visit before the end of the year. Cars Land is open now!

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□ In the final part of this series, I'll be looking at the lessons we learned

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from our Alaskan cruise on the Disney Wonder.

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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