

Bringing a New Look to the Disney Store: Disney Around the World

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

When you're not at Disney, where can you go to get your Disney fix?

Luckily, for us, we can head literally 20 minutes drive up the road, and visit our local Disney Store. I know for lots of people it may be a much longer trek, but is it worth it?

Well, having visited a number of different Disney Stores over the last year or so, ranging from as far as apart as Chicago, Antwerp, Belgium; Edinburgh, Scotland; and London, England, I can say that usually, yes it is. The first thing I would say is it's worth trying to find out whether the Disney Store you're heading for is one of the new look stores.

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□ Back in 2010, Disney announced a major revamp of its stores in America and Europe, with them all getting what they described as a "magical new store design." So what did this mean? After discovering that the Disney Store in La Vaguada, Madrid would be the first in Europe to undergo the makeover, and since one of our trips was taking us to Madrid, we would have to make a special visit there. I'll be honest, I wasn't overwhelmed with what I saw. I loved the new trees in there, and there was a cool video area for kids (and maybe adults) called the Disney Store Theater, showing classic Disney films and cartoons. Apart from that though, the merchandise didn't seem to be that much different than what we could get at home.

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□ Now here's the second thing that it's worth finding out about a Disney Store before you go there, particularly if it's a long journey. Do they have any local merchandise? In Chicago, we were delighted to find T-shirts and other merchandise, with "Chicago" all over them. It's been like for some time in London now, with cuddly toys, including Beefeater Mickey, Guardsman Donald, and Queen Minnie now added into the mix, along with items such as photo frames, stationery, and even a London-specific Vinylmation. Now I've got the collectors' attention! It's no doubt a tourist thing, with the Disney Stores that are likely to attract visitors boasting localized merchandise.

However, that doesn't always follow through. I was surprised to discover that Edinburgh had no merchandise representing the city. In fairness though, the Disney Store in that city is in a shopping center that's quite far out from the main tourist area, and that was exactly the case in Madrid as well. That certainly fits with my theory, although I would've expected Calais in France to therefore carry some French Disney items,

bearing in mind how many Brits make the crossing each year to the town either via ferry or on Eurotunnel. It doesn't. The merchandise is exactly what I can find in many other Disney Stores.

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□ Our recent visit to Antwerp, Belgium, on the other hand, turned up a gold mine. It's the only Disney Store in the whole country, so perhaps it's understandable that they have lots of great location-themed items, such as T-shirts, mugs, and cuddly toys. I was only too happy to take one of the T-shirts off their hands!

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□ So, merchandise apart, what are the new Disney Stores like? They do vary from one to another. I was enchanted by the characters they had appearing on the walls of the Antwerp store, with Bambi, Dumbo, Tigger and even my favorite donkey boy Eeyore making an appearance via the magic of Disney. It was fascinating to watch, and I'm sure it's something children of all ages will love.

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□ My favorite of all the Disney Stores we've visited to date is the huge, brand new shop on Oxford Street in the middle of London. This is just packed with Disney magic, and is definitely the best one to use as an example of the new-look stores. Every new store has a Disney princess castle, but here it's on a much larger scale, built over the stairs as you walk down to the lower level of the store. I particularly loved the little touches, like the portcullis gate above your head.

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□ Downstairs, there are more Princess touches, with child-size mannequins in princess dresses everywhere, and a plush pink seating area. There's even a fairy section, complete with models of Tinkerbell and her friends flying above your head, and giant leaves that make you feel as if you're fairy-sized yourself.

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□ Like all the other new-style Disney Stores, there are trees, with images projected on to them, and the traditional Disney Store Theater. In Oxford Street, the baby section is dedicated to Bambi, appropriately enough, with London landmarks including Tower Bridge and some lovely paintings of beloved Disney characters. It's beautifully done.

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□ Upstairs, you're greeted by a life-size Mickey and Donald, both dressed as guardsman, complete with their own guard tower. It's a lovely introduction to a great store.

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□ So, a visit to the new-style Disney Store can be a lot of fun, and certainly with the new features they've introduced, they all just ooze magic. However, for us, the real acid test is what's on sale in there, and that can vary from store to store. It's certainly a good way of getting a dose of Disney magic in between vacations, and you may just pick up

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something fun as well.

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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