

Jedi Training Academy: Disney Hollywood Studios Show Review

by Melissa Solbach, PassPorter Guest Contributor

One of the coolest things our son got to do on our last trip to Walt Disney World was participate in the Jedi Training Academy at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

I'm not sure any of us understood exactly what we were signing up for, but now that we know, you can be sure it is something we will definitely do again!

First, this is an event that you will have to sign up for early each day. In fact, the one piece of advice we were given was to run, not walk when we got to the park, to sign up. So I stayed with the little one, and my son and husband took off at a brisk pace towards the sign-up at the American Idol building. We walked into the park right after rope drop, and it was off-season, so we had fairly high expectations of getting signed up. Boy, I am glad we made this the first stop of the day!

Even as early as I thought we were, the first available slot was for 2:00pm that day, and there was a large line behind us, still to go. Another tip I can share is that the child has to be present when enrolling. You can't just send one of the parents to sign up for them, which was actually our first thought. We were so glad we read the fine print on that one before we got there! Once you are signed up, they give you a ticket and a time, and then ask that you come back an hour before your allotted time.

At the predetermined time, my husband and son went to the location noted on the ticket and my son and the other children were fitted with brown, Padawan robes. There was a mix of both boys and girls, but mostly boys, and the official ages are from 4-12, according to the website. They then get to parade to the stage, right next to Star Tours, and wait in a special area. We were told there was a special viewing area for parents of the Younglings, but learned that there wasn't anything specific marked off. But since we were all there half an hour before the show, we managed to be in the front rows.

The Younglings then got to meet their Jedi Master, take the Jedi Oath, and were assigned their own training light sabers. As the show started, it was mostly just us parents, but as it went on, a crowd formed behind us. This was partly due to the quip-tastic Jedi Master we had--he was really great at making the crowd and children laugh during the instruction.

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□He and an assistant showed the kids how to "turn on" their sabers with a quick flick of the wrist, and took them through a series of training moves. As luck would have it, right as they finished up, there was a great disturbance in The Force, and a couple of Imperial Storm Troopers and the big guy himself, Darth Vader, appeared. Each of the children got a chance to fight Darth Vader using all the skills they had just been taught, and I don't want to spoil anything, but let's just say that the bad guys didn't stick around long.

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□After the show, the kids had to turn in their robes and light sabers, but they got a special certificate promoting them to the status of Padawan and stating they were then ready for official Jedi training. For us, the natural thing to do next was go to Tatooine Traders, the Star Tours gift shop, so my son could build his own customized light saber. It was actually something we had already planned on purchasing, and what better time than right after he defeated of the Dark Side of The Force?

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□As super fans of all the Star Wars movies, my husband and son were both excited beyond words that he got to participate in this event. I was just thrilled with the photos, because let's face it, how often can you get a video of your child in a light saber battle with Darth Vader? It was yet another impossible thing that Disney makes possible on a daily basis.

About The Author: Melissa lives in the Midwest with her patient and easy-going husband and their two children. After hours of exhausting and thorough research for a trip to Walt Disney World last year, she is looking forward to the thrill of planning another trip sometime soon. Yes, her family thinks she is a little crazy, but enjoy the fruits of her hard work too much to complain!

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