

Epcot's 30th Anniversary: Why I Still Love Epcot

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Although I was too young to know it at the time, October 1, 1982 was to be an important date for me.

It was the day the theme park that I would come to know and love as Epcot threw open its gates to the public for the first time.

It would be another five years before my first visit to Epcot, and even all these years later, I still have fond memories of it. As a teenager, World Showcase didn't hold much appeal for me, but Future World was a different matter. This was the world I wanted to live in one day, with upside down water fountains, sea bases deep beneath the ocean, and best of all, a gigantic golf ball that you could go inside to explore the history of our wonderful planet. Yes, I was completely enchanted by Epcot, but would that love affair last?

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□ Well, it's almost 25 years since that first visit, and I can honestly say that my feelings have never changed. Epcot may be about to hit 30, but it's turning into a well-matured adult now, with more than enough to keep visitors occupied for at least a couple of days. To this day, it's still my favorite park at Walt Disney World. But why?

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□ First, I can now appreciate World Showcase so much more than I did back in 1987. It's a place to wander and be transported to far away lands, some of which we've now been lucky enough to visit, while others still remain a dream. With each and every pavilion, you literally step into another world, with many quiet spots to discover.

That's one of the things I love most about this park -- there's just so much to explore in each country, and in many cases, without the draw of a major attraction. What could be better than spending time lingering in the gardens of Japan, exploring the hidden courtyards of Morocco, or viewing the displays on offer inside the China pavilion.

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□ And who needs attractions or rides, when you can literally stroll from one country to the next, enjoying the entertainers that are scattered throughout this half of the park? Some of our favorites include the Jeweled Dragon Acrobats in China, Miyuki with her amazing candy creations in Japan, the World Showcase Players, and of course, you have to give Off Kilter, the Celtic rockers popular with so many, a mention here too!

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□ Despite the impending 30th birthday celebrations, it's amazing to look back at how little has changed in World Showcase during those last three decades. Morocco and Norway were added into the mix in 1984 and 1988 respectively, but every other country has been there since Day One. Of course, the entertainers have changed over the years, with one notable example being the British Invasion, who played their last Beatles concert in 2011.

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□ Another reason I love Epcot so much is the night-time entertainment in World Showcase Lagoon. IllumiNations gives visitors a reason to stay beyond closing time -- and what a reason! It is, by far and away, my favorite show, at any Disney park around the world. Every time I see it, it makes me grin insanely and sob my eyes out, such is the intensity of emotions it evokes. A lot of credit goes to the amazing musical score, but it's also the assault on your senses, using fireworks and lasers to their full extent. Like any good Disney attraction, every time I see IllumiNations, I see something new, particularly on the centerpiece globe.

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□ The changes over the years are more evident when you get to Future World, with Spaceship Earth only recently having undergone a major refurbishment to bring it more up to date, even if it still tells the same familiar story. Innoventions, by its nature, constantly changes, while elsewhere there have been more major alterations. World of Motion gave way to Test Track, and while the loss of former attraction is much lamented, no-one can deny that its replacement is certainly something quite special. Another much-missed attraction is Horizons, which was where Mission: Space is today. Here, I can honestly say I'd probably rather have the previous incarnation, but then again, we're not thrill riders, and I can appreciate that Mission: Space probably helps to draw in a younger audience, which does Epcot no harm at all.

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□ Perhaps my favorite attraction through the years has been what's now called the Seas with Nemo and Friends. When it opened, it was known as the Living Seas, and I fondly remember falling in love with this attraction when I first visited. I was enchanted by being able to head beneath the waves to a new world, and could have lingered forever, watching everything swim in front of me. Over the years, it became a less popular and neglected attraction, before finally gaining a new lease of life with new Disney characters helping to achieve that. That's something else I adore about this park. Perhaps more than any other, because of the fact it celebrates the future, it can undergo radical changes and survive and thrive as a result.

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□ Something else that makes me love Epcot are the festivals that take place throughout the year. It's no coincidence that our favorite times to

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visit are the spring, when the Flower and Garden Festival is in full bloom; the fall, when we can sample the offerings from the Food and Wine Festival booths; and Christmas, when we can enjoy the holiday activities and decorations that make this park even more beautiful. It says something that Epcot has so many special celebrations throughout the year. Maybe Disney loves the place as much as I do?

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□Perhaps most importantly, the second I walk into Epcot, I immediately feel as if I'm at home. What more could you want from a theme park? Happy 30th anniversary to Epcot, and here's to many more celebrations over the years to come. May the years be good to my favorite Walt Disney World theme park

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!](#)

Article last updated: 09-27-2012

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