

Holiday Highlights at Walt Disney World: What to See and Do at Walt Disney World During the Holiday Season

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

It's nearly that time of the year again.

The song says it's "The most wonderful time of the year," and our thoughts turning to the holidays and Christmas ... and Disney!

If, like us, you're planning a Disney trip to coincide with the festive season, you may be starting to wonder what you can expect, if it's your first time visiting at this time of year. Or maybe you've been before, but didn't see all the festive celebrations that Disney offers. What are the must-sees of the holiday season at Walt Disney World?

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□The first one for us is the Osborne Lights at Disney's Hollywood Studios. It may sound odd to start with that, but it's something that we've dearly loved ever since we first saw it. It's not just the Spectacle of the Lights that we enjoy, but also the story behind them. It all started so simply, with a father wanting to do something special for his daughter, and wow what an amazing result he ended up with! If you do want to see the lights, it's worth avoiding them on a Friday or a Saturday night. We've been before on those nights, and have found the park to be a lot more crowded. Interestingly, we've been there during evening Extra Magic Hours, and we've found that we've almost had the lights to ourselves, as guests head for the major attractions instead.

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□The next must-do for us is the Candlelight Processional. It's this, more than any other holiday event that reminds you of the real message behind Christmas, featuring a re-telling of the Christmas story. We've found that the quality of the narrator does make a difference as to how involved you get with the show. We struggle more when it's someone we don't know, whereas when we saw both Whoopi Goldberg and Gary Sinise, we were completely absorbed. The choir is amazing, and I never cease to be amazed by the fact that it's made up of Cast Members. It's a real tribute to their talents.

□Following on from that, you'd be mad to miss IllumiNations, complete with the amazing holiday finale that's become a staple in recent years. If you think that the fireworks on a normal night are something to behold, you really haven't seen anything yet! Every time we watch it, we're astounded at how much literally goes up in smoke. It's a pyromaniac's

paradise, and as we both adore fireworks, it's something we'll try to see as many times as we can during our Christmas visit.

□ There is much debate over whether the next item is a must-do or not, and that's Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party. We're very much on the side of the argument that says, "See this." Why? For us, the price is worth it just for two things alone. First, it may be the only chance you'll get to see the Magic Kingdom Christmas parade, which isn't seen during regular park hours until the last Christmas Party is held in mid-December. The parade seems to go on forever, with more and more floats, one after the other, all packed with your favorite Disney characters and Christmas additions, such as elves, gingerbread men, and reindeer. It has to be seen to be believed!

□ Second, as with any special event, the fireworks are breathtaking. It seems that wherever we look in the sky, they're all around us. It's quite a scene. Add to that special holiday shows, the chance to meet the characters in their Christmas finery, snow on Main Street, and of course, all the attractions you know and love, and what more could you want?!

□ The next must-do is also in the Magic Kingdom, although this one is for no extra charge. It's a recent innovation at Walt Disney World, and has become so popular that it's now become an annual event. It's the lighting up of Cinderella Castle in stunning ice effects. It's absolutely mesmerizing to see, and I don't think I'll ever be able to take enough photos of the "ice castle."

□ Christmas isn't just confined to the theme parks, and if you confine yourself to them, you'll be missing a lot. Every resort has varying degrees of decoration, but if you want to see the most impressive, then there are a few well worth a special visit. The first is the Grand Floridian, with a towering Christmas tree in the lobby and a huge gingerbread house that doubles as a holiday gift shop, which sells, of course, miniature versions of itself. The Yacht and Beach Club are also well worth seeing, with the Beach Club usually home to a life-size candy carousel, while the Yacht Club hosts a miniature railway, packed with details. Every time we see it we find more wonderful details. The final stop for anyone wanting to see resort Christmas decorations should be the fun chocolate offerings at the BoardWalk, offering featuring mischievous characters such as Stitch and Donald. Although not one of the best decorated, a visit to the Wilderness Lodge is always rewarding, with its roaring fireplace. One of my fondest memories is warming up in front of the fire on a particularly chilly Floridian night.

□ The truth is, everyone who visits Walt Disney World at Christmas time

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will find their own list of must-dos, and here I've only touched on a few of ours. Add in hundreds of stunning poinsettia trees everywhere, the Christmas music, some of which we now associate with Disney whenever we hear it, and the decorations on sale in the shops... There's so much to enjoy at holiday time, is it any wonder we keep returning for as many December trips as we can?!

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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