

There is More to Disney Than Rides: Enjoying Disney Without the Attractions

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Whenever you go to Disney, you go for the rides, right?

Well, not necessarily. It may sound like an alien idea to you, but it's perfectly do-able to go to Disney and not ride an attraction!

We ended up doing exactly that by pure accident on one of our trips. The first couple of days we didn't get as far as any attractions because we spent all our time just exploring the parks and spending time with our friends. It was about day three before we even realized that we hadn't been near any of Disney's many amazing rides. Since then, it's happened to us a number of times like that, and actually it's no bad thing. So how on earth do you manage to avoid almost everything a Disney park has to offer?

□ First off, let's just step back a moment, and look at that statement. "Almost everything a Disney park has to offer," is one way of describing the rides that make up the park, but is it fair? I'd personally argue not. Of course, Soarin', Splash Mountain, Expedition Everest, and the Tower of Terror are major pulls whenever you head to Walt Disney World, but in all honesty, they're no longer the main reasons we head to Orlando.

□ If you're a first-time visitor, then they will doubtless be one of your first ports of call of the day, but by the time you've been to Disney a few times, we find that the need to jump on every ride lessens. Sure, there are the old favorites that you just have to go, and see, like the Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean, and It's A Small World. Otherwise, it wouldn't really be a Disney trip, would it?!

However, outside of those, we're now in the fortunate position of being able to take things a little easier. So what else is there to do? A simple answer is, lots! In fact, to quote a certain Disney movie, there's a "whole new world" to discover out there.

□ First, have you ever taken the time, and be honest here, just to stop and people-watch in the parks? It's an absolutely fascinating thing to do. It's also really heart-warming to see the faces of children, and sometimes adults, as their eyes light up with wonder at their surroundings. There are lots of places to just sit and take in the atmosphere, and particularly if you visit during the cooler months, this

is a very pleasant thing to do. Since I've had chronic fatigue, I've become very good at spotting seats, and you'll find there are more than you first think.

□ So where are some of our favorite places to just sit and watch the world go by? Top of our list is Epcot's World Showcase. There are just so many wonderful details to take in in any of the countries around the lagoon. It's always fun to sit out at the back of the United Kingdom, or in the peace and tranquility of Japan. Another place I personally like to sit is on the edges of the raised flowerbeds just in front of the entrance to Impressions de France.

□ In Magic Kingdom, one of my favorite "sports" is anywhere along Main Street, although on a hotter day, it's just as pleasant to find a spot near Aloha Isle in Adventureland, and enjoy a Dole Whip to help cool you down.

□ Over at Disney's Hollywood Studios, Hollywood Boulevard and Sunset Boulevard are both great spots to just sit and enjoy the sights. While at Animal Kingdom, where better to kick back and relax than in one of the animal exhibits? On many occasions, I've settled down to just watch the animals (and sometimes people!) along the Pangani Forest Exploration Trail, or the Maharajah Jungle Trek.

□ It's not just all about sitting it down and taking it easy. Outside of the attractions, there are parades and shows to enjoy at each of the parks, and I'm not necessarily talking about the Studios' Beauty and the Beast, or Animal Kingdom's Finding Nemo shows, as these are attractions in their own right. What I mean are the afternoon parades, night-time entertainment, such as Wishes and IllumiNations, and the shows and roving entertainers that take place during the day. To me, there's nothing better than stumbling across DiVine in Animal Kingdom, seeing some of the World Showcase performers, or perhaps catching a show on the stage in front of Cinderella Castle. They're all extra elements that just add to your day at Disney.

□ Another major draw of Disney for us is the dining. There are just so many wonderful places to head for to enjoy a good meal, with all of them having wonderful theming as well. Of course, you can also argue that some of the meals at Disney are attractions in their own right, particularly if they boast characters, although some are so good on the food front, I'd say that they're just as good as any attraction in the parks.

□ Something else that we love to do outside of the attractions is just to wander through the shops. As well as offering you the chance to empty

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your purse, sometimes there are wonderful little details to find. We've learned to explore, and to look around. The best bits can even be on the ceilings, as some of the shops at Disney's Hollywood Studios prove. Be sure to take those extra few seconds to look around whenever you're shopping.

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□ And then, of course, there's a multitude of things to see and do outside of Disney's four main theme parks. Just think of Downtown Disney and all the various resorts, and how much they have to offer. But that's probably another article (if not more than one!) all on its own.

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□ Of course, the traditional Disney attractions are always going to be a huge draw for most visitors to the parks, but the next time you're in Disney, think about it, and perhaps you'll find that you have a morning, afternoon, or evening when you don't actually hit any. If that's the case, I'm willing to bet that you'll still have a great time at Disney, regardless of whether you're actually riding something.

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: 11-22-2012

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