

# Welcome to Disneyland Backstage Tour: A Disneyland Behind the Scenes Tour Review

by Jennifer Lambert, PassPorter Guest Contributor

My husband and I have been to Walt Disney World multiple times since we met in 2002.

Our first trip together was just prior to our engagement in the fall of 2002. In 2012 we did the trifecta: Walt Disney World, a cruise on the Disney Dream and our first trip to Disneyland and Disney California Adventure! Though we have both been to Walt Disney World several times, we had never been to Disneyland. Cars Land was calling us!

In doing our research I found out about the special tours and Disney tour guides that are offered. Since we were first-timers to Disneyland, we booked a guided tour called "Welcome to Disneyland." The price was very reasonable - \$25 per person, and because we are Disney Visa cardholders we received a discount, so the tour was only \$20 per person. What a deal! (Other discounts may also be available.) I marked the calendar for the exact date to book (30 days out) and called to make our reservation at (714) 781-TOUR (8687).

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□ Our trip to Disneyland was part of a larger cross-country road trip from Michigan; we drove in on our first day, checked in at Disney's Grand Californian for a one night stay, and then stayed off-property for two more. We spent the first of our two park days at Disney California Adventure (DCA), exploring Cars Land, World of Color, Carthay Circle, and the new Buena Vista Street. Our second park day was saved for the place that Walt built, Disneyland!

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□ We arrived at the park just after opening and checked in for our 10:00 am tour about 30 minutes prior, as directed. We explored Main Street, taking in the history of Disneyland past, not venturing too far away from our tour's starting point. Just prior to our tour, our VIP host (Disney "plaids") gave us a questionnaire to complete. The tour also included some perks, such as preferred dining reservations and seating for a show, if we wanted. The Disney tour guides would work hard to make such arrangements for us while we were on the tour, and provide us with reservation details upon completion. Once everyone was checked in, our tour guide gave each of us a special badge and we began our tour.

Going out the gates of Disneyland, through the esplanade and back to

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DCA (for us) was how the tour started. For my husband and I this was a bit of a disappointment, as we had just spent a whole day at DCA and were eager to see Disneyland, but we carried on. Disney tour guides are top notch, full of Disney information and magic; however on our tour we had what appeared to be a guide in training. Our guide was being shadowed by a mentor in the background, and this made the first half of the tour a bit disappointing. Our new guide didn't yet have the smooth cadence that we would have expected, and we could see that the mentor had to give more than a few tips and corrections while we were in DCA. Honestly, it was a bit frustrating.

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□ After entering DCA we saw a bit of Buena Vista Street, Carthay Circle, and then attended a showing of Muppet Vision. Our guide then took us to get FASTPASSES (if we wanted) for the Hollywood Tower of Terror; then on to quick views of Bugs Land and Cars Land. We then got a glimpse of Paradise Pier and a second FASTPASS stop for Grizzly River Run. (We did not choose to get any FASTPASSES, having been in DCA the day before.)

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□ I actually came to a point during the tour that I was ready to leave the group. Then, something happened. The guide in training was no longer with us and his mentor took over. For me, it was a complete game changer. She had the magic, the right presence, and I was back on board with the tour. We stopped briefly at Condor Flats, made a rest and snack stop back on Buena Vista Street, and then headed back through the esplanade to Disneyland. Finally!

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□ Once in Disneyland we headed down Main Street into the hub. Our guide was well versed in Disney history and able to answer all of the questions we had. We stopped for FASTPASSES to Indiana Jones (which we were delighted to get), and took a back door into Pirates of the Caribbean (no line)! We stopped in New Orleans Square, took a peek at the outside of Club 33 (sadly we did not get to go in!) and then boarded the Disneyland Railroad. Our group included a guest not able to take the railroad, so our guide personally escorted her to Tomorrowland to meet up with the rest of the group when we disembarked from the train. Magical!

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□ We finished up our tour back at the starting point in Town Square. Those who had requested show or dining reservations received their confirmations. All of us on the tour received a special lanyard and trading pin as well as additional FASTPASSES. Since we did not plan to return to DCA, we asked for FASTPASSES for only Disneyland attractions and our guide was able to oblige our request. (We used them later for Star Tours and Space Mountain.)

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□ Overall, the tour was a great experience, despite the rough start. (I am sure the new guide is doing just great now.) We were able to gain backstage information from our guide, and I loved the perks of FASTPASSES and the lanyard and pin. We also found out that if tour participants did not have park hopper passes and wanted to go into DCA to use the FASTPASSES they'd received or to see the Aladdin show, all they had to do was show their tour badge to gain entry. Our tour lasted approximately 3 hours; and while this was a good part of our day, the tour was worth it.

□ Both Disneyland and Walt Disney World offer tours of differing lengths, parks, cost, and topics. Additionally, Disney offers something called VIP tour guides, which are personalized for your group so you can spend your time playing, not planning. Information on the tours can be found at the Disney Parks websites, and I also found [www.allears.net](http://www.allears.net) to be very helpful as well as my PassPorter guidebook.

□ Some details to know about the tours: Reservations are recommended; there may be walk ups, but this is based on availability. Some tours have age restrictions; some tours are seasonal; most tours require park admission; a credit card will be required to make a reservation; and inquire about tour restrictions for any guests with special needs.

*About The Author: Jennifer is a Disney veteran and self-admitted Disney "geek," having visited Walt Disney World for the first time when she was just 6 months old. Jennifer and her husband Dave has been to Walt Disney World several times, sailed on the Disney Dream in 2012, and have visited Disneyland. She is looking forward to her next trip to Walt Disney World to celebrate her 40th birthday in February 2013.*

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