

DARE TO COMPARE!

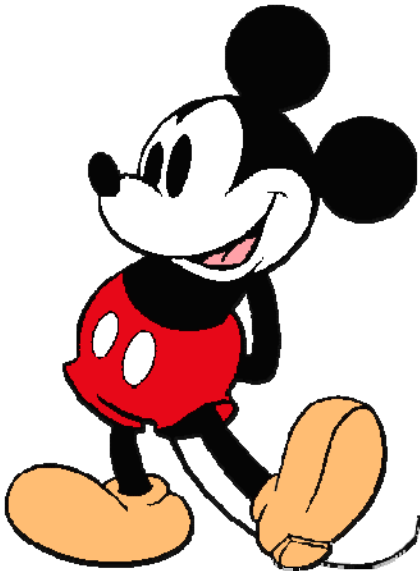
Disney Double Dip: A Tail of Two Castles

January 2010

*Adventures by Disney 'Backstage Magic'
Disneyland & California Adventure
Grand Californian Hotel*

February 2010

*Walt Disney World Magic Kingdom
Contemporary Resort*



Of all the cities in all the lands in all the worlds, we decided this year to 'do Disney'. We? Well, I did. I wanted to try an 'Adventures by Disney' vacation, and the 'Backstage Magic' adventure was extremely appealing... all the fun of a Disney park and none of the planning? Count me in. He'll be happy to come along for the ride. (No pun intended.) It started out that simple. The vacation to California turned out great, and on the way home, he said as an afterthought, "We should go to Disney World sometime and compare them." Whaaaaa? He should have known better than to tease me with that! Four weeks later, we found ourselves in the Magic Kingdom for another long weekend with the Mouse. Ha!

A little background... First, we are really not obsessed with Disney. Really, we're not. The extent of our combined Disney experiences include a single trip to Epcot (separately) and three half-week DCL vacations (because my family organizes them every few years.) We just are two typical Americans: good jobs, great families, a few hobbies, and more than a few cats. We do like to vacation though and we like to try new things, so in hindsight, these adventures were not such a stretch. Disney was something new for us and although we are not fanatics, we have definitely enjoyed experiencing the parks, as well as learning about the company and the man himself.

Furthermore, we have two excellent vacations to show for the year! I decided to summarize these vacations in the following links because we have so many awesome photos and equally-magnificent memories. These trips were quite short compared to the norm, so there are no detail analyses or veteran opinions to offer, but a merely a wonderful overview of our first visit to both magical parks!

We were fortunate to be able to enjoy the many aspects of the experiences on both adventures: the attractions, the parades & fireworks, character meals, and even behind-the-scenes tours. While the first vacation included some tours around Hollywood, it left us about two and a half days to visit the Disney parks in Anaheim, CA. While there, we focused most of our free time on Disneyland park, since California Adventure had so many renovations taking place, and not nearly as many rides.

Our trip to California included two hotel stays - both of which were extremely nice, but the Disney Grand Californian Hotel was the cleaner of the two. It was much easier to dry out our wet gear in that hotel, which had a better layout, a couch, and an awesome coat hanger rack on the wall! The ABD tours really did immerse you in all things Disney. The experience included the backstage of a theater and a late night show, several studios, a railroad museum, an R&D group, an archives department, and of course, the parks themselves. Although each day had it's own 'theme' and 'word' to highlight its events, there was an overall vision that was that can not be ignored: Your dreams can come true!

See 'January2010Hollywood.pdf' file.

See 'January2010Parks.pdf' file.

See 'January2010Dining.pdf' file.

When we returned from our California vacation, the whole experience had both of us asking ourselves if Disney World actually had something to offer us. He wondered out loud how the two 'castle' parks differed. After experiencing the 'smaller' of the two domestic Disney resort locations in such a positive manner, I was not as intimidated by the 'World' - especially if it was just for a long weekend, as he mentioned! In fact, the planning was way too easy for two adults!!

We both wanted to stay at a monorail resort. (After I found a PIN code, we actually could!) I wanted to take some behind-the-scenes tours, and we needed to be able to get to the Magic Kingdom EARLY for them, so the Contemporary Resort became the most appealing because of it's walking path. It also had a character meal restaurant and turned out to be the least expensive of the three monorail resorts. SOLD! To the ladies with Mickey in her eyes! Besides the two tours, which I had no problems reserving, I wrestled for a few ADRs, but none of them would have been deal-breakers. It was even fun to 'hunt' for them,

since we booked the trip so late that I didn't know what to expect! It only took about two weeks to get the four I wanted (and even then, none of those were the most popular ones I had heard about.)

The three days there flew by. We rode as many rides as we could, but we didn't push ourselves. We definitely enjoyed 'comparing' things here and there to the Anaheim park, but we mostly just enjoyed the park for what it was, entertainment value. The 'rough' schedule I told him about the night we arrived had probably not seemed like fun at the time, but when he saw how long the lines were by the middle of the first day (not to mention the second!!), I knew I had proven myself worthy to him!

See 'February2010Kingdom.pdf' file.

See 'February2010Dining.pdf' file.

See 'February2010Train.pdf' file.

See 'February2010KTTK.pdf' file.

Realistically, our vacations only scratched the surface of what Disney offers, but that does not lessen the magic of it. In fact, it proves that Disney's 'magical' methods are universally successful for their industry - whether a vacation is long or short, on land or sea, includes children or not; the company, and by that I mean the cast members, include everyday people (no different than you and me) that are able to team up together to create this magic. As all the returning guests will tell you (including us now! Be on the lookout for us AGAIN in September 2010!), it IS worth the (rather high) cost of it all.



SIMPLE ADVICE: TEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WHICH I AM GLAD I LISTENED!

Lesson 1: USE a PIN code or special rate! Rearrange your travel dates, but don't ever pay full price!

Lesson 2: Lurk around www.disboards.com for at least a month prior to your trip. Just do it.

Lesson 3: Read/Browse the Official Guide! (MUCH better than Fodor's.) (Borrow from the library.)

Lesson 4: Don't give up on your ADR Wish List! No matter when you start calling in or looking on-line!

Lesson 5: Take a little time to study the map before you get there so you have at least a rough plan!

Lesson 6: Wear comfy shoes & comfy carry bag, please! Take less than you think you need!

Lesson 7: Ask the Photopass photographers for 'magical' photos. Even just to look at after you get home!

Lesson 8: Please USE Fastpass! It's way too easy! (You should at least try it once for the experience!)

Lesson 9: Put your camera down and just enjoy! (I still don't do this enough, but he helps in this area!)

Lesson 10: Don't be disappointed when you don't get to do something, just start planning for the next trip!

CASTLE COMPARISON

SUBJECT	WDW MAGIC KINGDOM	DISNEYLAND
<i>Monorail</i>	Older, larger cabins Seats face forward/aft No park ticket needed Much more track	Newer, smaller interiors Seats face sides of car Board w/Park ticket DTD & Tomorrowland stops
<i>Park Distance</i>	8 hour drive away	5 hour flight + 1 hour drive
<i>Park Size</i>	Larger geographically	central plaza 'spoke' paths are shorter
<i>Park Land Themes</i>	TL/TTF/FL meet	Lands are more artfully hidden from others
<i>Park Maintenance</i>	TTA dirty display glass	Looked like better maintenance & upkeep
<i>Parades</i>	Many more & better float	Less & smaller floats, less characters
<i>Photopass</i>	More photographers	MUCH better picture quality & 'magic' variety
<i>Fireworks</i>	Seemed larger	Tinkerbell flew around longer
<i>WDRR Steam Trains</i>	Seats face sides of car Cars seemed better maintained	Seats face forward/aft Cars seemed smaller
<i>Castle</i>	light grey in color, taller Walked up side ramps to go in walkway blocked by BBB/CRT nice mural (closed off often)	light pink in color, shorter - but not drastically Walked straight into castle from Central Plaza Shorter walk-though but not as congested fun Sleeping Beauty walk-through off to the side
<i>Peter Pan's Flight</i>	Longer ride	Fiber optics in 'London' room were awesome!!
<i>Snow White</i>	Smaller cars, two rows	Dwarf cars had three rows
<i>Pooh v. Mr. Toad</i>	Many Adventures of Pooh	Mr. Toad's Wild Ride
<i>Carousel</i>	Cinderella: smaller, shorter	King Arthur: Much larger ride
<i>Attraction s/b at both</i>	Philharmagic - AWESOME!	Casey Jones, Storybook Canals - CUTE!
<i>Fantasyland buildings</i>	Tent-like, plain-looking	More European, Looks less "temporary"
<i>Haunted Mansion</i>	See the S/R roof rising	Feel the S/R move to descend
<i>Jungle Cruise</i>	Seemed longer (Temple cave)	same number of animatronics, it seemed
<i>Tiki Room</i>	New show not as much fun	Audience sang with the birds - fun!!
<i>Buzz Lightyear</i>	Laser guns attached directly	Laser guns on rope attached to attraction cars
<i>COP v. Innoventions</i>	COP - much more interesting	Innoventions - really annoying
<i>Toontown Fair</i>	Mickey home is smaller Toontown Park only for kids	Mickey's home has no garden Toontown Square walk-through for adults, too
<i>Deluxe Resort</i>	Contemporary Resort Bay Lake view Two Queen beds + couch good size balcony for two well-lit Shower pressure ok Toilet shared bathroom no chocolate at turndown	Grand Californian Hotel parking lot view Single King bed + couch REALLY NARROW balcony Not enough lighting, esp. in common areas/halls NO Shower pressure, spinning shower head Toilet had separate room Disney chocolate coins at turndown each night
<i>Character Buffets</i>	Lower quality food Less characters	More variety food, better quality More characters, more time spent with them
<i>Tours</i>	KTTK & Steam Trains Very knowledgeable guides Interesting, Fun, Recommend Better value KTTK not very technical	ABD Backstage Magic Very knowledgeable guides Interesting, Fun, Recommend ABD more expensive, but more intense several behind-the-ride technical explanations