

2016 at Walt Disney World - A Look Ahead: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Cheryl Pendry, *PassPorter Featured Columnist*

The start of a new year is always a good time to look ahead to the future, and for many of us, that means vacation plans.

We all look forward to our next visit to a Disney park, and we'll be returning to Walt Disney World in September of this year. By that time, it will have been over 18 months since we were last there, and there will have been huge changes during that time, so what new things am I most looking forward to experiencing the next time we visit?

Perhaps surprisingly, one of the biggest things I can't wait to see isn't actually inside any of the four theme parks. I want to enjoy Disney Springs in its completed glory, as the last time we were there, it was home to numerous construction walls, as Downtown Disney was gradually converted into a much bigger shopping and retail outlet, but it's much more than that. When we last visited though, even in the midst of the work, you could tell that the whole area had a different feel to it.

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□The reason for that is that there's more than just a name change going on here. In line with everywhere else in Walt Disney World, the area now has a back story, with the town having grown up around a natural spring. There will be four distinct neighborhoods, the Landing, Marketplace, West Side, and Town Centre, and personally I can't wait to wander through all of them, and experience what I hope will be a truly relaxing area to shop and eat in. For a long time, I've hoped Disney would make more of Village Lake, and now it looks as if finally that wish is coming true with all the changes they're making, and waterfront dining in the likes of the Boathouse.

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□The other really exciting development for me is at Animal Kingdom. Many, many years ago, we were fortunate enough to visit the park after dark, and we took an experimental night-time version of Kilimanjaro Safaris, which we adored, so I was truly delighted when Disney announced plans for a sunset version. Even better, African wild dogs and hyenas will be introduced in this version, which is a real treat.

Alongside this, with Disney's efforts to make Animal Kingdom into an evening destination, Rivers of Light will debut on Discovery River, which is described as combining live performers with floating lanterns, water screens, and swirling animal imagery. I'm thinking a nature version of

Fantasmic!, but with a few added extras, although I'm only guessing, given what tantalizing information Disney have teased us with so far.

□ I'm also hoping there might be a dining package with the Rivers of Light, and preferably with the option of dining at Tiffins, which will be the park's debut signature restaurant. We love our signature dining, and it's a rare pleasure to discover Disney will be adding another one in one of their parks, as the majority are currently located in the various resorts.

□ Dining is going to be a real theme of our next Walt Disney World visit, although in truth, who am I kidding? It's always a feature of every one of our Disney vacations. However, this time around, Disney will have a wide array of new places for us to sample. Alongside Tiffins, there's the Skipper Canteen in the Magic Kingdom, with its Jungle Cruise theming, Trader Sam's at the Polynesian Village Resort, which sadly opened just after our last visit, along with numerous new offerings at Disney Springs. I've already mentioned the Boathouse, then there's Morimoto Asia, which I've heard mixed reviews of, Jock Lindsay's Hangar Bar, which I've heard very good things about, and the forthcoming STK Orlando. Then there are a number of restaurants adding in new meals to their repertoire, with the Garden Grill and Be Our Guest having added in breakfast since our last vacation, and Hollywood and Vine changing their dinner to offer meetings with Minnie and friends in a variety of themes throughout the year. Decisions, decisions…. Making Advanced Dining Reservations for this trip is certainly going to be a challenge!

□ In Epcot, I was very sad to see the demise of Maelstrom in Norway, and in truth, I'm still not 100% sure about its replacement, Frozen Ever After. I'm personally getting the feeling that there's a little too much Frozen in the parks, although I'm sure there's a legion of young girls who would disagree with me on that count. However, the concept art does look intriguing, and Norway has always been one of my favorite pavilions, so fingers crossed, the Imagineers will come good, and deliver something truly spectacular to replace a much loved attraction.

□ Turning to Disney's Hollywood Studios, while there will be many changes coming to this park over the next few years, some have already arrived. Ahead of the development of Star Wars Land in the park, guests can still celebrate the magic of those particular movies in a number of different ways. I've heard reviews of the Star Wars Launch Bay, and I cannot wait to see the exhibits, models, and costumes they have in there, although I have heeded the warnings that fans can easily spend a couple of hours in there. And that's before you get to the line to either meet Chewbacca or Darth Vader.

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□As huge firework fans, I also can't wait to see the new Symphony in the Stars: A Galactic Spectacular, presented on select nights. Who knows, we may even spring for the dessert party to celebrate properly!

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□We've only got a few short days the next time we're in Walt Disney World, and now I list everything that's new that we want to see and do, I realize just what a challenge that's going to be. Where else in the world can somewhere undergo such radical changes in just over 18 months? I guess that's one of the reasons we love Disney so much, it's constantly evolving with something new to enjoy on every visit.

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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