

Disneyland Lessons Learned: A Disneyland Planning Article

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

In the final part of this [series of articles](#) looking at the lessons we've learnt from recent Disney vacations, we reach Disneyland, and it's no ordinary Disneyland.

When we visited Disneyland in September, it was experiencing exceptionally hot temperatures, and that was the first thing I learnt, that although we don't cope with heat very well, there are some coping strategies that make it more bearable. We're talking things like going out to the parks either first thing in the morning or last thing in the evening, when the heat isn't quite as intense, drinking as much water as you can, and taking every opportunity to enjoy air conditioning. I think we saw more of the interior of shops than on any other Disney trip we've ever taken!

One thing I knew before we went is that we didn't really have enough time in Disneyland. There wasn't much I could do about it, as I could only fit in three nights, given the itinerary we had for our two week trip, which also included an Alaskan cruise. However, a lot of the diamond anniversary celebrations are focused on evening events, with the Disneyland Park playing host to the amazing Paint the Night parade, followed by the Disneyland Forever fireworks, and California Adventure hosting a special version of the spectacular World of Color. Although we saw all of them, I really would have liked to have enjoyed them more than once, which just wasn't possible on this whirlwind trip.

Of course, what didn't help with that was that we were lucky enough to get into Club 33, the exclusive members-only club in Disneyland. I learnt that it's very easy to get spoilt, as I could happily do this every time we visit. Beforehand, I must admit I was in the dark about why on earth people would pay this much to be members (we're talking five figures when you first join is, plus dues each year of four figures, if I remember right….), but now having seen the place for myself, I really could understand it. What a superb place, and you really do feel special when you're in there. By the time we left, and were escorted out by a Cast Member, as we were the last members of the public to leave the park that night, I really did feel like a VIP!

Disneyland didn't inspire me with dining choices before we headed out there, having had some not-so-great experiences on our previous visit in 2012. We did have some better meals out there this time, but in truth, they were places we'd tried and enjoyed before. Perhaps the next time

we visit (maybe Christmas 2017, if everything works out…) I'll have the courage to go back to some of those places that didn't impress us previously. This time, those experiences were just too fresh in my memory for me to bring myself to return.

I had heard before our visit that Radiator Springs Racers is still just as popular as it always has been, and it certainly is. I was hoping that perhaps this trip we wouldn't need to be doing the opening dash over there, or grabbing Fastpasses, but not a bit of it. If you want to ride, you're still going to need to do one or the other, or resign yourself to a really long wait.

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□I found it very odd to still have paper Fastpasses, although I have to confess I didn't really miss the MagicBands. I was always very happy with plastic cards, and I actually liked the Photopass cards they give you at Disneyland. It was on a lanyard, and to me, just as convenient as at Walt Disney World. Something I did learn though was that actually getting your Photopass card isn't the most straightforward thing. They send you a voucher when you pre-purchase it, and then you exchange it in one of the parks. However, it was a bit of a bizarre process, which involved you handing it in to one person, then getting your card from someone else. The first time we tried, there was a long line for the second person, so we gave up, and tried again early in the morning the next day, when we had no wait. It's certainly not something I'm used to having to do, and unless they change the process between now and our next visit, something I need to factor into our plans.

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□It was lovely to see Disney's California Adventure with all its enhancements now finished. The vast majority were done on our last visit, but now the Grizzly Peak area around Soarin' feels as if it's a proper land, with theming transporting you to an American national park. I wasn't expecting it to make much of a difference, but it really did, and suddenly you realised how disjointed this part of the park had been previously.

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□Sadly, much as I loved this trip to Disneyland, the overriding memory I have is of the heat, and how much it sapped us. There were so many things we didn't do this trip, as it would've been too much, from character meets (I even gave up on seeing my beloved donkey Eeyore!) to exploring the new additions to the Disneyland Hotel. I had such great plans, but I rapidly learnt that if the weather isn't going to cooperate with you, you may need to moderate those plans somewhat. I guess that's good to know, given our next visit to Florida is going to be in September, where we might encounter some of the same issues…

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to

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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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