

A 'Lucasland' Kind of Day at Disney's Hollywood Studios: A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Sandy Symianick, PassPorter Guest Contributor

A Walt Disney World vacation is always a magical experience to start, but one way to add even more magic to your trip, is through the theming you can build into your touring plans.

On our last trip, we planned a 'Lucasland Day' as part of our touring at Disney's Hollywood Studios. While this was mainly for the benefit of our 6 year son and my husband who are Star Wars fans; our 4 year old daughter has a basic understanding of Star Wars, and knows some of the more cuddly characters such as Yoda, Chewbacca, and the Ewoks.

One of the first things to plan is dining for your themed day. Most Table Service restaurants need to be reserved 180 days in advance. In our case, getting the kids signed up for the Jedi Training Academy was a priority. In order to get us into the park before open, we scheduled breakfast at the Sci-Fi Dine-In which was seasonally open for breakfast at the time. This was a great option as the restaurant is themed as a Drive-in at night, showing snippets of old horror and science fiction movies. Most of the tables in the restaurant are bench seating in old 1950s style cars. The breakfast food was delicious, with huge portions. I would suggest bringing a Ziploc bag with you to save the pastries that come at the beginning of the meal for later -- we were all so full! Equally, you could book breakfast at Hollywood and Vine with the Disney Junior Characters to allow you before Park Open access.

☐ While waiting to enter the park for our dining reservation, I walked over to guest services to have a cast member map out the sign-up location for the Jedi Training Academy so we could find it quickly after breakfast. When I told them we would be going for breakfast at the Sci-Fi Dine-in first, they even mapped out a short-cut for us to get to the Jedi sign-up!

☐ Young Padawans can sign-up for Jedi training at the Indiana Jones Gift Shop. Your child(ren) must be present with you in order to sign-up for the activity. Keep you're My Disney Experience App open to see where your Fastpasses fall throughout the day -- the cast members booking, might have a few different available time options. We arrived in line at 9:05, despite having a breakfast reservation. After a 20 minute wait, the first available spot that worked with our touring plans for the day was around 11:30!

With a bit of time to spare, we meandered around the gift shop for a bit looking at the great Indiana Jones gear (who doesn't need a leather wide-brimmed hat!) and then watched Path of the Jedi that was being shown in a theatre nearby. This was a great quick introduction for our daughter to some of the characters in the film, as well as a good way to gauge how she would react to some of the more imposing, villainous characters. We then took in a showing of the Muppets and posed for pictures riding a replica speeder from the Planet of Endor.

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□ Then, it was time for our first Fastpass of the day on Star Tours! While our son had been tall enough to ride Star Tours on our first trip to Walt Disney World; this was our daughter's first time on the attraction. She loved all the droids in the queue, and thought C3PO was simply hilarious, giggling hysterically whenever he would speak. Often, Star Tours will have reasonable wait times for the stand-by line, and it can be fun to ride it again to see if you get the same voyage or are whisked away to a different planet! We all loved the experience!

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□ A little word of warning however - the Star Tours attraction exit is through the Tatooine Traders Gift Shop. Any self-respecting Star Wars fan will want to stop and check out all the amazing merchandise. We would suggest building a little time for this into your touring plans. In our case, we knew that the kids could build their own light sabers here, and after 20 minutes of laboring over all the different permutations possible -- we had 2 light sabers built to spec for our little Padawans! Now, you might think me a kill-joy, but I had them shipped to the front of the park for pick up at the end of the day… I could just see us forgetting one of them somewhere along the way, and didn't want to have our young Jedis turning to the dark side in disappointment over lost light sabers!

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□ Next, it was off to the Jedi Training Academy meeting area, just outside the Indiana Jones Gift Shop. The kids showed their reservation slips, were lined up according to height, given very cute robes to put on, and then waited. And waited. And waited. Let me put this in perspective: 20-30 little ones all very excited and asked to remain in a line shoulder-to-shoulder, to wait for a prolonged period of time with no interactive queue to keep them entertained… Please for your own sanity, pack something with you to keep your little ones entertained! Luckily, I had a life-time supply of mini-bottles of bubbles packed in our park touring bag, so the kids were able to hand out a couple of extra bottles to the kids around them to pass the time until the activity began.

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□ The Jedi Training Academy lasts about 20 minutes. The Younglings were paraded from the Indiana Jones Shop to the Jedi Training Academy stage situated next to Star Tours. There, they met the Jedi Masters that

would help them through their training. We enjoyed that the Jedi Masters for our particular training sessions were women, putting our daughter who was four at the time completely at ease -- because girls can be Jedi too of course! Then, it was time for them to be hop up onto the stage and take their positions to learn how to properly handle a Light Saber. The story behind the Trials of the Temple, is that Jedis must fight their deepest, darkest fears here -- which explains the appearances made by Darth Vader, Seventh Sister and Darth Maul! Children on the upper level of the stage battled Darth Vader, while children on the lower level battled the Seventh Sister; each with their own turn to battle their Dark Sides with the new Light Saber techniques just learned. While our son whole heartedly enjoyed battling Vader, our daughter was a little too scared and that was okay -- there was a Jedi Master for her to stand behind and who could protect her! At the end of the activity, the kids are each given a Trial of the Temple Certificate to take home with them. This activity is also brilliantly photographed by Disney Photopass Photographers, who will hand out cards to link the event and pictures to your My Disney Experience account.

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□ Our plan after the Jedi Training had been to sneak into the Indiana Jones Stage Show; but with bathroom breaks and a bit of a snack, we actually just missed the beginning of the showing we wanted to attend, and the theatre was at capacity. And this is where we were Pixie Dusted! As we ran up to the podium, to see if we could get in, one of the cast members told us that they were sorry and that there was no more room. He then asked us if we'd like to go on a mission to help Indy find some of his things that had gone missing! Of course we would! We were handed a treasure map to guide us through the wooded paths next to the Stage Show to hunt for Indy's hat, his satchel, his whip and some TREASURE! Upon finding all the missing items, the cast member handed us a little card with a return time on it and asked if the kids would like to open the next show by going on stage and shouting "Lights, Cameras, Action!!!!". Upon return, we were even escorted to reserved seating right up front! (And of course, we forgot to take pictures or a video of this -- we were too excited!)

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□ The rest of our park touring agenda had included a number of activities in the Launch Bay -- going through the exhibits of Star Wars Movie Memorabilia, meeting Chewbacca and Kylo Ren, and trading with the Jawas if they were there (hence the lifetime supply of bubbles I had been carrying with me that I had hoped we could entice them to trade for) -- all of which fell by the wayside. After a number of days touring the parks, with a very organized touring plan, we had accomplished seeing and doing most of what we had wanted to see and do; and were prepared to cut our losses. It was a lovely day, and before any meltdowns ensued, we heeded the call of the pools and some relaxation

at the resort without visiting the Launch Bay.

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□ Other things to stop and enjoy…

□ Take a moment to also pose in the outdoor portion of the queue for Star Tours -- when is the next time you'll be able to get a picture standing under an AT-AT or at an Ewok Village?

□ Pull the Rope that says "Don't Pull!" at the Indiana Jones Stage Show, and listen carefully.

□ Take in the Star Wars Galactic Spectacular Fireworks show, and maybe even sign-up for a Dessert Party with reserved seating.

□ Stop to watch the Star Wars: A Galaxy Far, Far Away Stage Show

□ Dress in your favorite Star Wars t-shirt, or channel you inner Indy Disney Bounding with a pair of Khakis and a white shirt

About The Author: Sandy caught the Disney bug back in 2014 while visiting Walt Disney World on her family's first vacation there. Mom to Jakob (7), Evey (5) and wife to Thomas; she's constantly researching for the family's next trip to a Disney Resort! She loves to talk Disney with anyone who will listen, and regularly gets asked by friends and family to help them with their trip planning to Disney Destinations.

Article last updated: 02-02-2017

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