

SeaWorld Orlando: Reflections On A Return Trip Under The Sea

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

We all know how hard it can be, cramming in everything that there is to do in Orlando. Not only do you have the four Disney theme parks, which can easily take up the best part of a week's vacation time, but there are also the Disney water parks, Downtown Disney and then there's the world outside of Walt Disney World.

Options outside of Disney include Universal Orlando, SeaWorld, Discovery Cove, and Busch Gardens Tampa, and soon that will increase even more with the addition of Aquatica, the area's new theme park. So perhaps it's no surprise that by the time we returned to SeaWorld, it had been five long years since we had last visited it. In the meantime, four whole vacations had come and gone, yet we'd just not been able to squeeze in a return trip, even though it's a park that we love. I'd go as far as to say that it's probably our favorite park outside of Walt Disney World.

Firstly, what's changed in the five years since we were there last? Well, there are no new thrill rides or coasters for starters, which I find a bit of a relief. SeaWorld is already home to Kraken, Journey to Atlantis and a simulator ride in Wild Arctic, which you can opt to avoid if you're not a fan of such things. Instead, they've opted for new additions that expand their attraction to the widest range of guests possible.

Shamu's Happy Harbor gives the youngest of visitors a great deal more to do with an area of the park aimed specifically at them. It's certainly something that seemed to meet with the approval of our six-year-old niece and three-year-old nephew on our most recent visit.

Another new area of the park since our previous visit is the Waterfront and this was under construction the last time we were here. Because of where it's situated (unsurprisingly along a waterfront, hence the name), construction affected a lot of the park, as it's close to some of the park's major attractions, including the penguins, sharks and the ever-popular Clyde and Seamore show. The chaos caused by the construction work was well worth it, as the Waterfront adds some much needed dining options to the park. The area has a lovely Mediterranean theme and, as we walked through it, I couldn't help but think of some of the beautiful sights we had seen just a few months earlier on our Mediterranean cruise. It's just a great shame that on the day we visited the temperatures took a huge tumble, with highs only just into the 50s. I

could imagine on a warmer day there'd be nothing nicer than sitting outside on the Waterfront enjoying some food as you look at the superb views.

One of those views across the water is another of the newer additions to SeaWorld Orlando - and it's got to be the most striking one as well. Let's be honest, Shamu has been around at SeaWorld for as long as I -- and probably most of you -- can remember. On my first visit to Orlando, when I was just eight, I clearly remember watching the Shamu show and being spellbound by the majesty of these beautiful animals and what they could do. That fascination remains with me today, but in keeping with many other people, having grown up with shows like this, it takes a lot more to wow me these days and no doubt SeaWorld realized that when they decided to completely revamp their main show.

The result is Believe and it's truly spectacular. Obviously designed to be more breathtaking and amazing than ever before, it succeeds. Perhaps it's so powerful because it relies on music, images, and the performance of the killer whales themselves. These animals not only look stunning, but the bond they clearly have with their trainers is one of themes running through the show, with the trainers becoming the stars alongside them -- and rightly so.

Whatever money SeaWorld spent on redesigning the show, it was worth every penny. I came away truly wowed by Believe and honestly do believe ... that it's something you must see when you visit. It's by far the best attraction at the park in my eyes and I'd almost go as far as to say that it's worth the price of admission alone, it's that good.

The rest of SeaWorld pretty much remains the same as our last visit here and that's no bad thing, as the animal exhibits are first class. If anything, we felt that there were more manatees and dolphins to be seen than on our previous visits, but maybe we just lucked out and saw more than usual. They pay a fine tribute to life in our seas, allowing you to take a unique peek into the world of animals such as penguins and sharks. There's no way you can call this place an aquarium and perhaps that's why I get disappointed every time we visit one, as they can never live up to somewhere like SeaWorld.

I always come back from SeaWorld feeling that there is so much to explore there, with so many beautiful animals that just don't get the attention from any other park, even though Disney tries with the Seas with Nemo and Friends at Epcot. It's a shame that it's been five years in between our visits to SeaWorld and this time, I'm hoping that we don't wait five years before returning, as it's a great way to spend a day whenever you're on vacation in Orlando.

For more information check out SeaWorld's official web site:

<http://www.seaworld.com>

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!](#)

Article last updated: 2/21/2008

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