

The High in the Sky Seuss Trolley Train Ride: Attraction Review

by Barry Hom, PassPorter Guest Contributor

When Universal Orlando's Islands of Adventure theme park debuted in 1999, all of the amazing rides opened except for one: Sylvester Monkey McBean's Very Unusual Driving Machines. The track wound around Seuss Landing and a vehicle negotiated the track every so often, but there were no signs that guests could experience the ride. A sign outside said it was opening in 2000 and then it changed to 2001. The name was changed to the Sneetches and the sign said, "Opening Soon." Eventually, the signs were covered up. The queue to the ride became the Grinch's Lair for a few years. There were many reasons why Sylvester Monkey McBean's Very Unusual Driving Machines never opened. Some were practical, some were technical, and many were rumors. Whatever the reason, finally in summer 2006, the long dormant ride opened as The High in the Sky Seuss Trolley Train Ride. Was it worth the wait? We'll see...

The original concept of the High in the Sky Seuss Trolley Train Ride was that you traveled high above Seuss Landing on ride vehicles. Reflecting the Sneetches story from the book *Sneetches and Other Stories*, one side would be the Star-Bellied side and the other the Plain-Bellied side. Each side would tell the story of the Sneetches, but would go through the show scenes in a different path. You could bump the vehicle in front of you and your ride vehicle would make Seussian sounds. Luckily, most of the original ride concepts did make it into the final design.

The colorful ride entrance and wonky music beckon you to enter. The Team Members are dressed up in railroad worker overalls and cap. Their overalls have a yellow star on them. The queue tells the first half of the Sneetches' story. Illustrations and text from the story decorate the walls. The queue area winds up past Sylvester Monkey McBean's massive machine and ends in the load area. The load area has two tracks. The aqua track is to the left and the teal track is to the right. The 20-seat trolley pulls up into the load area to unload and load guests. As the trolley pulls into the load area, the Team Members ask the guests to yell out a loud, "Choo-choo!"

As in the original ride concept, the teal track is the Star-Bellied side and the aqua track is the Plain-Bellied side. The Star-Bellied side has a sign that says Star-Bellied Sneetches are allowed to enter before the trolley drives through Circus McGurkus. The Plain-Bellied side first passes by a car wash-type scene, where Sneetches can get their stars on their

bellies "washed off."

The Star-Bellied side is the side that tells the story of the Sneetches. The narrator is a young boy. The story of the Sneetches is interrupted as you pass a Seuss Landing building. When your trolley passes a building, the narrator tells a part of the story that is represented by the structure. For example, when you pass by the Green Eggs and Ham Cafe, the Sneetches story switches to lines from Green Eggs and Ham. When you are out of sight of the Green Eggs and Ham Cafe, the narrator continues the Sneetches story. The Star-Bellied side also passes through the Circus McGurkus Restaurant. When this happens, the narrator tells of the circus performers that he sees throughout the restaurant. Near the end of the ride, the trolley passes by Sylvester Monkey McBean and two Sneetches shaking hands. The narrator tells parts of the Sneetches tale that these figures represent.

The Plain-Bellied side takes a different route through Seuss Landing and does not tell the Sneetches story. The narrator is a young girl. The girl said that her father tells her that she can see many amazing things if she would be alert and keep her eyes open. As you pass by the buildings around the island, the narrator tells about the stories represented by the building. You can hear snippets of the stories Green Eggs and Ham, Sneetches and Other Stories, The Cat in the Hat, and others. You still pass by the same Sylvester Monkey McBean and the two Sneetches as on the Star-Bellied side, but the narrator says nothing about these figures.

In a park full of thrilling rides, guests might have expected the High in the Sky Seuss Trolley Ride to be a fast-moving, heart-stopping ride. Rather, it's a slow-moving ride targeted to young kids and families. It's pretty much a side attraction to the bigger and badder rides around the park. The ride is pretty relaxing and does give good aerial views of Seuss Landing. I think it could have used more show scenes about the Sneetches. Some of the show scenes make more sense if you listen to the narration of the Star-Bellied side. If you ride the Plain-Bellied side, you might be confused on the appearance of McBean and the Sneetches at the end. It would be helpful to know the Sneetches story ahead of time if you choose the Plain-Bellied side.

The biggest drawback of the ride is the loading time because the trolleys are dispatched every 3 to 4 minutes. Lines can get very long, very quickly. I've seen the line go up to 60 minutes or more during a busy afternoon. Even if you use Universal Express, you can expect to wait at least 15 minutes to ride. Because of the potentially long wait times, try to ride the High in the Sky Seuss Trolley early.

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My enjoyment of the ride was directly based on how long I had to wait for it. When I first rode it, I waited 30 minutes. After riding, I thought, "That was it? This is what I waited seven years for?" I wasn't too impressed. When I rode it again, I waited 15 minutes in Universal Express and enjoyed the ride more. The last time I rode it was in the first hour of the park operation and I waited 5 minutes. The ride was pretty enjoyable then, too. It is a fun ride and a change of pace from the thrills in the other areas of the park, but it's not a ride that I want to invest a lot of time in the queue line. With the long waits, I would expect some more queue line entertainment. If you want to ride, use Universal Express or ride early in the morning. If you wait later in the day, you might enjoy the ride, but you probably won't enjoy the long line!

As you walk around the ride's queue area and Seuss Landing, note some of the details. The back of each trolley has its unique name on it. See if you can find all the names of the trolley. The trash cans around the ride have the Once-Ler's famous saying from *The Lorax*. If you have lunch in Circus McGurkus and you see a trolley go by, wave at the passengers!

About The Author: Barry is a roller coaster and theme/amusement park enthusiast. So far, he has ridden 471 roller coasters and visited over 80 theme and amusement parks in many U.S. states, France, United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, and Japan. He is also a columnist and a moderator for the website IOA Central (<http://www.ioacentral.com>). He is looking forward to the opening of the Hard Rock Park in Myrtle Beach, SC in Spring 2008.

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