

Universal Orlando: Guide to New Attractions

by Michelle Clark, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Universal Studios Florida consists of two theme parks with some of the most popular attractions in central Florida. With the local competition including Walt Disney World's four theme parks as well as nearby Sea World and Busch Gardens, area parks are frequently adding, replacing, or refurbishing attractions in order to draw guests wanting new experiences. Universal theme park visitors can look forward to several new attractions currently under construction in both Universal Studios and the Islands of Adventure parks.

Universal Studios has not had a new major attraction since the "Revenge of the Mummy" indoor coaster in 2004, so there is much excitement about the two new attractions, one of which just opened this month and one slated to open at the Studios in the near future.

"Earthquake - The Big One" closed in early November to be reconfigured as a new attraction titled "Disaster! A Major Motion Picture Ride...Starring You." This new show/ride is similar to the previous "Earthquake" attraction. The pre-show has been re-done with some new celebrity talent. The ride portion, which consists of a subway car in an earthquake, is similar to its predecessor except that it has been updated and enhanced with new technology. The new storyline involves shooting an action film for Disaster Studios starring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. Guests are asked to star as "extras" in the movie, and will be able to view the finished product once the ride is over.

The Universal Studios attraction currently still in production is The Simpsons ride, which will take the place of the "Back to the Future" ride simulator attraction that closed in March 2007. The premise of this new ride involves that famous TV family, The Simpsons, and a visit to a new amusement park in Springfield created by Krusty the Clown. Universal is reporting that several well-known Simpsons characters will be a part of the ride, and all of the original actors will voice their characters in the attraction. The new Simpsons attraction is scheduled to open in Spring 2008. The old Back to the Future gift shop at the ride exit has already been converted to a "Kwik-E-Mart," which is familiar to fans of the show.

Not an attraction, but expected to draw long lines is a new, larger Starbucks coffee shop, which is located in the former arcade building in the New York section of Universal Studios. There is also a Ben & Jerry's counter.

Many Universal fans feel that Islands of Adventure is long overdue for a new addition, with the only new attraction to open there in the last few years being the "High in the Sky Seuss Trolley," a slow-moving overhead train ride in Seuss Landing. So news of construction on "The Wizarding World of Harry Potter" has been met with much excitement and anticipation by Universal guests as well as loyal readers of this immensely popular book series. Islands of Adventure is divided into five uniquely themed "islands." The Harry Potter section will be created as a sixth "island," also described by the Universal press release as a "theme park within a theme park." The new island will consist of a portion of the Lost Continent and adjacent vacant land. Guests will be able to visit several locations familiar to readers of the books including Hogwarts Castle, Hogsmeade, and the Forbidden Forest. The specifics of the attractions to be included in this area have not been released by Universal, however, Universal's official web site states that one attraction will be "state of the art." This island will also include shops and restaurants designed in keeping with the Harry Potter theme. Estimated opening date for "The Wizarding World of Harry Potter" is late 2009/early 2010. For more information on the new Harry Potter "island," visit the Universal website where you can see conceptual art, read the official press release, and browse through Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and other information.

There is a rumor currently circulating at several theme park Internet websites that Universal may be adding a new coaster to the Studios similar to the "Hollywood Dream" coaster located at Universal Studios Japan. However, this has not been confirmed by Universal and is only speculation at the present time.

For more information and updates on these new attractions, check out the official [Universal Orlando web site](#). There are several Universal fan-based web sites that frequently post information on confirmed and rumored new attractions at the Universal parks. My favorites are <http://www.themeparkinsider.com>, <http://www.screamscape.com>, <http://www.ioacentral.com>, and <http://www.orlandorocks.com>. There is also a [forum on our PassPorter Message boards](#) devoted entirely to Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure where Universal news and rumors are regularly posted and discussed.

About The Author: About the Author: Michelle Clark is a self-professed theme park junkie and the mother of three teens. Their family has made nearly a dozen trips to the Orlando theme parks and resorts, and is currently planning a trip to several theme parks in the Northeastern U.S. Michelle is also a Guide on the PassPorter Message Boards.

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