

Around the World on a Segway : A Walt Disney World Feature

by Laura Clarkson, PassPorter Guest Contributor

On our most recent visit to Walt Disney World in April this year, my husband, Andy, and I decided to take the Around the World at Epcot Segway tour. We found out about this tour a few months ago, and having always been jealous of the cast members riding around on two-wheeled Segway Human Transporters, we knew we had to book it for our next trip.

On the morning of our tour we arrived at Epcot at 9:00 am. The tour started at 9:30 am but we had been told to arrive by 9:15 am. We were both excited and I was also feeling a little nervous. On arrival, we had to sign a waiver form and were given stickers to wear with our names on them. When everyone had arrived a cast member came and took us over to the training center, which is in Innoventions. There were eight people in our group.

We met the tutor and then had to pick out helmets, either medium or large, and put them on. We watched the instructional video and I began to realize just how tricky this might be!

The instructor then brought out a Segway to demonstrate to us how it works and how you switch it on and turn left and right. Then came the moment of truth - we were led out to our own Segways!

We were guided through switching them on (rubbing the "key" - a round piece of metal - on a spot on the vehicle's handlebar) and then shown how to get on and off - putting one foot on and then holding on, looking straight ahead and stepping up your other foot. Another instructor had joined us by this point so there were two people looking out for everyone.

Once we had mastered this (with several people doing what they call "the Segway dance" when it shoots forward as you get on because you have leaned forward instead of standing up straight), we stood on them for a few minutes to get used to the sensation. The instructor told us that this feeling has been described as trying to balance on a log in a river. I can't think of a better way to describe it - this was exactly what it felt like. It's very strange you think when you first get on that this could never feel natural, but it really doesn't take long to get used to it.

We then learned to move backwards and forwards - lean forward to go

forwards, and lean back to go backwards. We were told by the second instructor not to touch the wall to stop ourselves because if we lean forwards we could keep going or tip off the Segway.

Once everyone had mastered backwards and forwards, we split into two groups. Our group firstly had a set of cones which we had to weave in and out of to practice turning left and right - which is done by twisting the left grip of the handlebar. We then swapped with the other group and had to take the Segway up and down a ramp. This was a little tricky, but not as hard as it looked.

After this we were brought back as one group and shown how to lift the Segway over an obstacle - this was because we would be traveling round the World Showcase while cast members were setting up for the day, so there was a possibility that there might be hoses across the ground. Luckily, we didn't encounter any obstacles.

We were then allowed out into the World! The scariest part for me was actually getting to (and later from) the World Showcase, as Future World was pretty crowded. However, one of the instructors stayed at the front of the group and one at the back so we were never far from assistance if we needed it.

Once we got to World Showcase, we stopped in each country as far as France and one of the instructors told us a bit about the country we were in. There were also some challenges along the way that were optional - I sat some of these out - but I did go round the water garden in Japan, which was lovely. We stopped in front of the Illuminations globe, where the instructors took pictures for us and we had some free time and the opportunity to whiz around at the Segway's speed limit of 5 mph. (Trust me, that sounds slow, but on these it was really pretty quick!)

Once we got to France we headed straight back to Innoventions. At the end of the course, we were all presented with a Segway pin. These are only given to people who have taken this tour so they are pretty special. I was thrilled with mine. It has a little man on a Segway, and you can make him move up and down.

One more thing. I always thought Segways were an easy option for getting around. I take it back! This was hard work - we both had very achy feet and legs afterwards, in fact, it was a struggle to walk for the rest of the day. I would, however, recommend this tour to anyone remotely interested in Segways; it was a lot of fun, if harder than it looks!

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The tour costs \$80 per person (including tax) with a 15% discount for Annual Passholders, AAA members and DVC owners. The minimum age for taking the tour is 16 (16 and 17 year olds require the signature of their parent or guardian) and there is a 250 lb. maximum weight limit. Tours run three times a day at 8:30 am, 9:00 am & 9:15 am.

About The Author: Laura Clarkson lives in England and has been visiting Walt Disney World since 2002 with her husband, Andy. She is currently looking forward to their next trip to the World in September.

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