

Disneyland : Planning a Trip to the Original Disney Destination

by Sarah Mudd, PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)

I grew up in Southern California, going to Disneyland, so the park affectionately known as "The Original" will always have a special place in my heart.

Over the years, I have heard many people, when asked their opinion on the Disneyland Resort, say things like, "There's only two parks, so it's not really worth it." and, perhaps the most negative comment I have seen: "We went there last year and I felt really ripped off. I'd rather go to Disney World.

I overheard a conversation in the grocery store recently where one of the involved people said, when asked if they enjoyed their trip, "You know, there really wasn't much to do there." NOT MUCH TO DO THERE?! It was all I could do to not talk the lady's ear off to prove her wrong and help her plan a return trip! So, since I couldn't help her, I am hoping to help you faithful PassPorter readers, over the course of the next few articles, to see that there is, in fact, plenty to do at the Disneyland Resort and help you plan a trip to the place where it all began.

I'd like to start by pointing out the obvious: Compared to Walt Disney World, the Disneyland Resort is small. There are really no two ways about that. I think that is the one thing that the resort has always had going against it and what ultimately, and unfortunately, turns those seasoned Walt Disney World visitors off from visiting. Let me assure you, however, that while short on size, Disneyland is big on magic!

Consisting of two theme parks, three resort hotels and the Downtown Disney District, the Disneyland Resort is more intimate than the Walt Disney World Resort. Park Hopping is very easy as you can exit one park, walk across the Esplanade plaza and enter the other park in just a couple of minutes. Getting around the parks is just as easy, especially Disneyland Park, as the rides and attractions are generally within close proximity of one another so you really don't have to go too far to get from one ride to the next. There is no resort transportation as everything is within easy walking distance. The monorail is more of an attraction (taking you from the west end of Downtown Disney into Tomorrowland inside of Disneyland Park and back) than a mode of transportation. In fact, the only transportation you may need at the Disneyland Resort is a shuttle bus back to your hotel if you are staying offsite at one of their 40+ Good Neighbor Hotels! Even though the

resort isn't as spread out and isolated from the outside world as Walt Disney World, I still feel as if I am inside my "Disney Bubble" the minute I step on to Disneyland property.

□ So, where should you start to plan? Well, nail down a time to visit, of course! Generally, the Disneyland Resort has two seasons: Peak and not-Peak. The Peak seasons are June through Labor Day, Christmas time and Spring Break. The rest of the year can be pretty mellow, as far as attendance is concerned! If you want to visit when the weather is nicest, April and May would be your best bet, in my opinion. Crowds will be low on weekdays and the weather should be agreeable!

The next logical step is to choose your hotel and this is where it can get tricky, as you aren't just dealing with the three resort hotels but also the 40 or more Good Neighbor Hotels that Disneyland partners with, just off-site. There are several that are just across the street (and a couple that are within closer walking distance than Disneyland Hotel and Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel, believe it or not!). The Good Neighbor Hotels are broken down much like Walt Disney World's hotels in the levels of Economy, Moderate, Superior and Suites, so your first step would be to choose the amenities you'd like or need in a hotel. The official Disneyland website has a page dedicated to the Good Neighbor Hotels with clickable links for each of the hotels showing the amenities offered, check in and check out times, facilities and services. You can also enter the specific amenities that you prefer and the site will match hotels with those choices and list them for you.

□ If you are one who likes to stay completely immersed in the "Disney Bubble," the onsite Disney resorts are hard to beat. A benefit to staying at the onsite hotels is that you will be able to participate in Magic Mornings (early entry into Disneyland park) on any or all of the days that it is offered during the length of your stay. Magic Mornings are offered to folks staying at most Good Neighbor Hotels or those with 3-4 day Park Hopper tickets as well, but they are only entitled to use it on one morning.

□ The Disneyland resort offers three beautiful on-site hotels. The more moderately priced Paradise Pier Hotel has a California beach theme and you are greeted by a statue of Surfer Goofy just inside the lobby. The hotel has a total of 481 guest rooms, some with views of Disney California Adventure. It also offers kids activities, a fun rooftop pool and waterslide, as well as the Surf's Up character breakfast with Mickey and Minnie. The mid-range Disneyland Hotel is the original. It was built in 1955 and has been expanded, renovated, and downsized several times over the years, but still has never lost its charm. The hotel is currently undergoing another major renovation (but it is still open!) including

remodeling the 990 rooms and suites, improving the Never Land pool area, opening new eateries and renaming the tower buildings. The Disneyland Hotel offers two penthouse suites, kids activities, a character meal with Chef Goofy at Goofy's Kitchen, and elegant dining at Steakhouse 55. The grand-daddy of them all is Disney's Grand Californian Hotel and Spa, with architecture based on the Arts and Crafts movement of the early 1900s. The Grand Californian has 745 rooms that offer views of either the Downtown Disney District or Disney California Adventure park. Like the other hotels, the Grand Californian offers kids activities as well as a character breakfast at Storyteller's Cafe (and, if you ask me, it is the best character meal at Disneyland!). It is also home to the most elegant, popular and award-winning restaurant on Disneyland property: Napa Rose. All three Disneyland Resort hotels offer free internet access to guests but two perks that the Grand Californian offers that the other two do not is a "private" entrance into Disney's California Adventure park, and direct access into the Downtown Disney District.

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□So . . . bet you didn't think your decision would be that hard to make, did you? Now that I have given you some food for thought for the initial part of your planning phase, let it all sink in and consider your options and choices. When we meet again, we'll break the parks down one-by-one and land-by-land to see just how much you have to choose from inside the parks!

About The Author: Sarah is a busy stay-at-home mom, Travel Consultant with [Ears to You Travel](#), PassPorter Message Board Guide and Navy wife whose family is currently stationed in Washington state. She has made many trips to both Walt Disney World and Disneyland. Her family is excited to be heading to Disneyland (her husband and 2-year-old son's first trip) in August 2011!

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