

Tokyo Disney Resort - Part 2: Tokyo DisneySea: A Disney Theme Park Review

by Bernie Edwards, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Tokyo DisneySea is one of the two theme parks at the Tokyo Disney Resort and it is one of the most unique theme parks I have ever visited.

It opened in 2001 to rave reviews and seeing it was the primary reason I wanted to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort on my trip to Japan.

Tokyo DisneySea is billed as "the first Disney theme park in the world inspired by the myths and legends of the sea." Like other Disney parks, Tokyo DisneySea is divided into areas, in this case, called "ports." There are also a lot of waterways. In fact Tokyo DisneySea contains about 41 million gallons (155 million liters) of water, covering about 22 of the 121 acres (9 of the 49 hectares) accessible to guests. The main waterway that weaves throughout the theme park is the largest waterway in any Disney theme park, worldwide.

□ Be sure to pick up a couple of guide maps in English at the turnstile as you enter the park. You won't be able to easily get one elsewhere and you don't want to make the long hike from the back of the park to the front just for another map in English. When you get the map, you will also get an entertainment guide that tells you what shows, fireworks, parades, etc. are being offered during your visit, and at what times. You will definitely want this in English unless you read Japanese.

□ By the way, if you arrive before the park opens, be ready for a very long line. At a half-hour before park opening the line was already huge, and I visited on a weekday after a major snow storm had shut down transportation throughout the city. Also, bring good shoes. You'll need them for the morning run, in addition to walking around the park later in the day; yes, once the park opens to the public, the guests all go running to their favorite attraction! Everywhere you look you will see Disney Cast Members smiling and waving to the runners. They almost seem to be encouraging guests to run faster!

When you enter the park you're in Mediterranean Harbor. The piazza and the buildings near the entrance look like they were lifted right out of an Italian port city. There are Venetian-style canals, and even gondolas for guests to enjoy. If you have been to the Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando, the basic theme is similar, but the level of detail at Tokyo DisneySea is incredible. In the distance you can see

Mount Prometheus, the volcano that is part of Mysterious Island and the icon of the park, and Fortress Explorations, a fabulous Renaissance fort.

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□Fortress Explorations represents the Golden Age of European Exploration. The fortress is basically a large, elaborate interactive play area for guests of all ages. Be sure to go into the Chamber of Planets, which is a room containing a belt-driven model of the solar system. It is stunning. There is also a full-size galleon docked right next to the fortress, waiting to be explored! Maps of Fortress Explorations are available in English, so be sure to ask a Disney Cast Member for one.

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□If you love Jules Verne, and especially the classic Disney film "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," then Mysterious Island is a must. You enter the volcano's water-filled crater via one of the tunnels carved into the volcano's side. Below you will see the Nautilus submarine, just as it looked in the film; above you is a huge drilling machine boring into the side of the volcano. Mysterious Island also houses two E-ticket attractions: Journey to the Center of the Earth and 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. Journey to the Center of the Earth is a must-do attraction that uses the same type of ride vehicles used at Test Track in Epcot and at Radiator Springs Racers in Disney California Adventure.

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□My next-favorite "port" is the Lost River Delta. The theming again is incredible. A highlight is seeing an ancient temple pyramid rise out of the surrounding jungle. The Lost River Delta is home to two very popular attractions: The Indiana Jones Adventure ride and the Raging Spirits roller coaster (which contains a loop). The Indiana Jones Adventure is very similar to the attraction in California's Disneyland, but it is better in my opinion because a lot of the special effects that no longer work or were removed at Disneyland still work at Tokyo DisneySea. In fact, the high level of maintenance is very evident in all of the attractions across the park, especially in attractions that exist elsewhere in the world. I saw features working that I haven't seen work in similar Disneyland or Walt Disney World attractions in years.

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□Port Discovery and the American Waterfront are two other "ports" with E-ticket attractions. Visitors who enjoy motion simulators should definitely try out StormRider. Another big hit in Port Discovery is Aquatopia, where self-guided hovercraft-like boats travel amidst rocks, fountains, and whirlpools. It is fabulous! The American Waterfront is a combination of turn-of-the-20th Century New York and Chicago, with a New England fishing town off to one side; it is home to the Tower of Terror, and while the ride itself is similar to the ride at Disney California Adventure, the theming is a lot different and should definitely not be missed.

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□If you have young children in your party, you will definitely want to visit Mermaid Lagoon and the Arabian Coast. Mermaid Lagoon consists of an outdoor area and an indoor "underwater kingdom" area that is meant to remind you of King Triton's Palace. The indoor and outdoor areas are stunning, especially at night. Definitely take the time to explore the area even if you don't have young children. The Arabian Coast recreates the world of Aladdin and Sinbad. If you visit the Magic Lamp Theater, be sure to ask a Cast Member for an electronic translator. The carousel in this port has two levels and is especially beautiful at night.

□There are two great shows that take place in Mediterranean Harbor: The Legend of Mythica is performed during the day, and Fantasmic at night. The Legend of Mythica stars Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters as they set off on an adventure on Renaissance-style sailing ships. The show features several large themed galleons and jet skis trailing banners and kites. Fantasmic is based on the show performed at Disneyland in California, but it is drastically different. To help put this in perspective for readers who have seen both shows in the United States, the show in Tokyo DisneySea is significantly different than the original show in Disneyland. By comparison, the Walt Disney World is almost the same as the original. Fantasmic at Tokyo DisneySea makes a lot of use of special floats and boats to tell the story, and Stitch plays a prominent role. Both shows are definitely worth watching, though if you can only see one, definitely see Fantasmic! Even if you have seen Fantasmic 100 times at both Disneyland in California and in Walt Disney World, you won't be disappointed with Fantasmic at Tokyo DisneySea!

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□Like Tokyo Disneyland, Tokyo DisneySea is filled with over 30 wonderful locations serving food; everything from a quick snack from a street vendor to quick service and table service restaurants. You definitely won't go hungry in this park! I definitely recommend the Vulcania Restaurant, a buffeteria inside the volcano on Mysterious Island. It serves good Chinese food and has incredible theming and detail. For a great table service restaurant, try Magellan's near Fortress Explorations.

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□I mentioned in the [first article](#) that souvenir shopping is a lot different at the Tokyo Disney Resort than at the parks in the United States. As I said, I had a really hard time finding clothing that mentioned Tokyo Disneyland or Tokyo DisneySea. Something that I noticed while I was shopping was the large amount of Duffy the Disney Bear-related merchandise. I learned that Duffy plush characters are the most popular items sold at the Tokyo Disney Resort. You will also see a lot of guests bring their Duffy plush with them into the parks. In fact, there's

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a table service restaurant in the American Waterfront port of Tokyo DisneySea where Duffy and his friend ShellieMae are the stars. They also had a huge meet and greet line in the park; I didn't see that for any other character.

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□ If you are a Disney fan, a visit to Tokyo DisneySea must be on your bucket list. No other Disney park in the world is like it and the amount of detail is incredible. Disney fans in the United States have been particularly happy with the details found in Cars Land in Disney California Adventure and in the Fantasyland expansion at the Magic Kingdom; imagine a whole theme park with that level of detail, and even more. Tokyo DisneySea is such a park.

About The Author: Bernie Edwards lives in Maryland with his wife and two children. He is an engineer for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and a member of the Disney Parks Moms Panel. He enjoys visiting both Walt Disney World and Disneyland, and sailing on the Disney Cruise Line.

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