

Tokyo Disney Resort - Part 3: Tokyo Disneyland: A Disney Theme Park Review

by Bernie Edwards, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Tokyo Disneyland was the first theme park built at the Tokyo Disney Resort and the first Disney theme park built outside of the United States.

Usually Tokyo Disneyland ranks as the third most visited theme park in the world, annually, just behind the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World and Disneyland Park in California.

A unique feature of Tokyo Disneyland is that their Main Street, called World Bazaar, is covered in an iron and glass canopy. That seemed very strange to me. While I understand it can rain a lot in Tokyo, the rest of the park is not covered and thus guests will eventually get rained on anyways. Also, World Bazaar seemed more like a square than a long rectangle; there is a Main Street that runs between the park's entrance and the castle, and Center Street which crosses Main Street with one end going to Adventureland the other going to Tomorrowland. Center Street is long enough to have stores on it. However, with an overall theming of early 20th Century America, a Disney fan will have no problems recognizing World Bazaar as Main Street!

There is a huge space between the end of World Bazaar and Cinderella Castle. In fact Tokyo Disneyland is known for its many wide open spaces that help to absorb the crowds on a busy park day. On the outside, the castle looks exactly like Cinderella Castle in Walt Disney World, except with a slightly different paint scheme. Inside, Cinderella Castle contains Cinderella's Fairy Tale Hall. Guests can visit several rooms displaying artwork portraying scenes from Cinderella's story. If you go in, be sure to see the diorama that shows Cinderella being magically transformed from rags into her beautiful ball gown. You will even find a glass slipper that you can try on, for a great photo op!

The other major lands in Tokyo Disneyland are Adventureland, Westernland, Tomorrowland, and Fantasyland. Adventureland is similar to Adventureland in the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World plus New Orleans Square from Disneyland in California. The attractions are similar, but be sure to visit the Enchanted Tiki Room. In Tokyo Disneyland, Stitch from the Disney film, "Lilo and Stitch," plays a prominent role. Westernland is basically an extensive Frontierland and Tomorrowland is similar to what Tomorrowland looked like in the Magic

Kingdom at Walt Disney World in the late 1970s and 1980s, though upgraded with modern attractions like Buzz Lightyear's Astro Blasters and Star Tours.

There are two minor lands at the park, Toontown and Critter Country. Toontown is very similar to Toontown in Disneyland in California. Critter Country is the same in concept as the version in California, but its implementation is much more extensive in Tokyo Disneyland. There are only two attractions in Critter Country, Splash Mountain and the Beaver Brothers Explorer Canoes, but there are some restaurants and shops that make the area well integrated and seem more extensive than it is. Splash Mountain itself should definitely not be missed. While it is very similar to the attraction in the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World, there are some unique scenes and there are effects in operation in Tokyo that I haven't seen in Walt Disney World in many years; a testament to the high level of maintenance at the Tokyo Disney Resort.

□ An attraction not to be missed is Pooh's Honey Hunt, which opened in 2000 and exists only at Tokyo Disneyland. It is a fabulous trackless dark ride in Fantasyland, and it is a very popular. The queue for the ride zig-zags outside and then inside the show building among pages of a giant storybook introducing guests to the story. Guests are then loaded into honey pot cars comprised of two rows of seating with each row holding between two and three guests. The honey pot cars travel in groups of three. As they enter a room, they move in seemingly random directions and appear to dance with each other and with another car containing a heffalump and a woozle. This is definitely an attraction that should not be missed! I think it is the best "dark ride-like"; a Disney attraction that I have ever experienced.

□ Another attraction that doesn't exist in the United States is Monsters, Inc. Ride and Go Seek. This attraction is also a dark ride, and it can be found in Tomorrowland. The scenes take place after the events of the Disney / Pixar film. It is consistent with Monsters, Inc Laugh Floor in the States in that instead of trying to scare children to collect power, the monsters now want laughter. That theme, however, is about the only thing similar to the attraction in the United States. At Tokyo Disneyland, guests play flashlight tag with various monsters. Each guest boards a two- to three-person vehicle and grabs a flashlight. Guests can point at various objects and monsters, activating special features and making some monsters come to life. It is a fun attraction!

□ I am a huge fan of The Haunted Mansion and like to experience it whenever I visit a Disney park. The Tokyo Disneyland version has a nice special effect: a book walks across the floor on its own. Besides that, however, I thought it was very similar to the Haunted Mansion in Walt

Disney World. By the way, if you are a fan of the Pirates of the Caribbean attraction and want to experience it the way it was before it was modified to be more politically correct, then definitely try out the attraction in Tokyo Disneyland.

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□I watched the daytime parade, Jubilation, and the nighttime parade called Tokyo Disney Electrical Parade Dreamlights. Both were enjoyable to watch, but if you only have time to watch one, then I definitely recommend watching Dreamlights. It is very similar to the Main Street Electrical Parade now being performed at the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World, but it has several unique and absolutely fabulous floats that should not be missed. There are also several stage shows to enjoy at Tokyo Disneyland. One that I was really looking forward to was One Man's Dream II -- The Magic Lives On, but it was closed for refurbishment when I was there. In that show guests watch Walt Disney's imagination give birth to Mickey Mouse and other classic Disney characters. It is supposed to be a great show, and I'm sorry I missed it.

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□There are a lot of quick service and table service restaurants, and snack vendors, throughout Tokyo Disneyland. I had lunch at the Blue Bayou restaurant, which was very similar in atmosphere and appearance to Blue Bayou in Disneyland in California; however, then menu was a lot different. I was very disappointed in my selection, but I should have known better and stuck to a restaurant serving more Asian-style dishes. I had dinner at the Queen of Hearts quick service restaurant in Fantasyland, which I thought was wonderfully themed on both the outside and inside. The food was also good. I definitely recommend trying out the Queen of Hearts on your visit to Tokyo Disneyland. At the very least, go in and get a snack. It is worth seeing even if you aren't hungry!

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□By the way, some of the very long lines in the park are to purchase popcorn in various souvenir popcorn buckets. You can find a lot of flavors not normally found in the United States, so definitely experiment. When I was there a stand selling honey-flavored popcorn had the longest line; the smallest line was for "regular" buttered popcorn with salt, which was actually hard for me to find! Most stands offer their own unique souvenir bucket, so be sure to look around for the bucket and flavor that you want.

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□Tokyo Disneyland is a great Disney theme park that in many ways encompasses some of the best features of both Disneyland in California and Walt Disney World in Florida. If you only have one day at the Tokyo Disney Resort, I would focus on Tokyo DisneySea because it is so unique. However, if you have two days then I would definitely suggest

visiting Tokyo Disneyland for a while.

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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