

Florida 2011 – Trip Diary – Part 3

Tuesday January 18 – We began the day at Sizzler's breakfast buffet, again. If you are noticing a pattern, you won't be surprised to see this in the diary for pretty much every day of the week. The prices there were great (\$3.99 per adult and kids were free!), the food wasn't bad, and it left our group full enough to sustain us until mid-afternoon, which saved us a lot of money. Today was Epcot day, and it was a great day – the sun finally came out, and the temp was in the low 70s. We rode the usual favorites, and we got to take our daughter Disney on my favorite Epcot ride Soarin' for the first time because she was finally tall enough – and she liked it! Epcot has a World Showcase which is an area set up like different countries, so we took the ferry to Germany and walked to Japan for their delicious snow cones. We walked around the lake through Morocco and Italy, and stopped in Norway and Mexico for their boat rides which are very cool. Someday I would like to visit the countries in Epcot, sampling the ethnic foods as I go – but that's more of a retirement plan since the kids would never go for that now! Oh, and we ran into Stitch in America!



After the day at Epcot, we sent the little ones home with Grandma, and Hubby, Jamy and I attempted to find a good place to eat dinner, but to our surprise, there

weren't many good dinner choices left at 10pm, even in Orlando. We ended up at Perkins – famished – and they were out of most everything I asked for. I stomached the sandwich I got, which wasn't very good, and Hubby was not too happy with his salad. We did end up with a box of Eclairs to go, and those were pretty good – well, what little of them we had anyway once the kids got a hold of them. Our friend Derek arrived that night while we were sleeping, so our next day would see one more joining our group...

Wednesday January 19 – Breakfast at Sizzler (did you think I was exaggerating about eating there every day?), then on to the Magic Kingdom where we spent a fun-filled day. We learned that there is an expansion planned and under construction to double the size of Fantasyland, so we are looking forward to seeing that on a future visit. Splashwater Falls was undergoing maintenance (usually does in January when we go, but this is a small price to pay for ideal weather and low crowds – BEST time to visit Orlando!!), but we enjoyed the classics like Big Thunder Mountain Railroad (and little Disney liked this one, even though it is a roller coaster!), Jungle Cruise, Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean, and Hubby's and my personal favorite that many others find to be lame, The Carousel of Progress. We skipped out on Space Mountain this time, mainly because the kids wouldn't have liked it, and we don't find that its long wait is worth it for a herky-jerky outdated roller coaster. If you are into indoor roller coasters in the dark, I've always liked the Aerosmith one at Disney's MGM, er, Hollywood Studios, although we never find that park worth the time for a visit since there isn't much there. And [King's Island](#) in Mason Ohio outside of Cincinnati has a SUPER dark coaster called Flight of Fear. But back in Orlando, the People Mover ride in the Magic Kingdom, an elevated train-type ride that goes all around Tomorrowland, treated us to a one-of-a-kind glimpse inside Space Mountain – *with the lights on!!* The People Mover travels into the Space Mountain building, but usually you can only see the glowing

streaks of the ride trains as they zip past. Because of a ride malfunction, the lights in the building were on, so we got an insider's view of all the tracks and trains which was pretty cool!! After the Magic Kingdom, Derek, Chris and I took the two oldest kids to Fun Spot to try the extreme go-karts, but it didn't go over so well. The oldest hated them, and she made me go putt-putt-putt all the way up the spiral and around the track – that was not fun; I'm more pedal-to-the-metal! But we all took a spin on the bumper cars, and that was some great old-fashioned family fun that everyone was able to enjoy.

Thursday January 20 – Breakfast at Sizzler (every day – told ya!), then on to our second day at Universal, this time with Derek, although we lost one because by now, Jamy's back pain was so bad that he had to stay in the rental house and relax all day. Thankfully it did not rain this time, and we had a wonderful day. It was a bit chilly, but we couldn't resist the urge to ride Bluto's Barges 3 (or was it 4? I can't remember) times in a row – we were drenched! Smarter ones in our group (Derek and Grandma) opted to stay out and stay dry, but those of us who got off soaked (and shivered) had a blast. It's a large round boat that's propelled down a raging river of rapids; every time it dips, the riders on that side get drenched by a wave that cascades over the wall of the boat. Then there are waterfalls and waterspouts – it's so much fun to bond with the strangers in your boat as you take turns laughing over who gets soaked and who dodges the torrents of water – whether everyone speaks English or not, there is bonding in the boat! Next it was on to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, and I think I talked about this earlier in this diary – it's amazing; that's all I need to repeat. We went on the Forbidden Journey ride again, this time with Derek, and he really liked it. Unfortunately, they decided that Sammie had shrunk an inch or two since Monday, and she no longer met the height requirement, so she had to wait in the child swap room – which is actually quite entertaining because

they have the old Harry Potter movies playing, and I had forgotten how young Harry Potter (actor Daniel Radcliffe) was when the movies began.

After Universal, we went to the McDonald's largest Playplace where the kids had a blast. Grandma stayed with them while Hubby, Derek and I went to the Titanic attraction I've always wanted to see. Unfortunately, our adventure was a bit marred when Hubby was pulled over and ticketed for U-turn in a No U-turn intersection. In our opinion, it should have been a warning – clearly we were tourists, it was an honest mistake, he didn't do it when there was oncoming traffic present so no one was in direct danger, and of the 3 people in the car, not one of us saw the (supposed) no U-turn sign. Personally, I think Orlando should treat their tourists a little more like the guests that they are, especially considering how much money the average tourist brings into their local economy. Also, they seemed to milk us for every penny – the ticket itself was very expensive, and because we were from out of town, we couldn't even show up to traffic court and contest the ticket, not to mention that when we returned home, we were bombarded with offers of traffic school via mail, which showed that they were looking for even more money by selling our info to these traffic schools so they could bombard us with ads. A frustrating episode in our otherwise super vacation, but that's enough – traffic ticket tangent over!

So back to the Titanic exhibit... I've always wanted to see it, but it's quite pricey, and we were always nervous about spending so much on trying something new that we didn't even know would be worth the cost or not. So enter Groupon – before we left, there was a Groupon for Titanic, and we got it. It kind of obligated us to fitting this in since we already had tickets, but with the money we saved on Groupon, it was worth it. And, we even made it on time, getting pulled over and all! Upon entry, each visitor gets a little card with the name and info of a Titanic passenger, and one of the rooms at the end of the tour has a wall with all the names of the passengers on it. The lights go down, and the names of

the passengers who survived stay bold while the names of those who perished are hollow, so you can see if “your” passenger made it. Mine survived, which I had guessed correctly because she had been a first class passenger. Our tour guide (portraying the famous Titanic personality “Unsinkable” Molly Brown) was very knowledgeable about all things Titanic, but our friend Derek’s passenger card stumped her – the name on his card was half-solid, half-hollowed, so we don’t know if he made it through the ill-fated voyage or not. But overall, it was a lot of fun, and a well spent hour or two. I’ve always been a Titanic buff (excluding the movie which I feel really commercialized, cheapened, and capitalized on the tragedy and the great loss of life involved – enough about that), so this museum was right up my alley. There were re-creations to see and explore (a first class cabin, the deck, which they had even chilled to provide an example of the actual temperature that night, and the grand staircase, see picture below), as well as actual artifacts recovered from the bottom of the ocean, like dishes. There was room after room of signs to read and pictures to look at, and as much as I don’t like the movie, they even had a few costumes and props from it which were interesting to see. Among my favorite parts of the exhibit: the hall of newspapers, which had newspaper editions reporting the disaster in 1912 from all over the country, complete with early 20th century advertisements and other news articles.

I also found this quite remarkable: it was an ordinary cooler, and the exploration staff autographed it and put it down at the bottom of the ocean where the Titanic now lies. I forgot how long it was there, but it’s not nearly as long as the remains of the ship have been there, and this is what the ocean pressure did to it:



Interesting as it may be, it is a sad representation of what will happen to the remains of the luxury liner itself. Scientists estimate that it won't last more than 50 additional years if people don't find a way to salvage it and bring it up for study.



Hubby and I in front of the actual sized re-creation of the Titanic's Grand Staircase

After Titanic, we stopped at Dippin' Dots, but it was our only taste of the delicious ice creamish treat for this trip, and I was SO disappointed to find out they discontinued my favorite flavor of Dippin' Dots: Root Beer Float. ☐

Rides Jamiahsh Broke

This is the long-awaited post (by some anyway) that details the uncanny coincidences of ride break-downs we encountered while in Orlando, Florida. Here is a list of the following rides that stalled or broke down while fellow blogger jamiahsh was along. Not to blame him, but... ☐

Epcot: Spaceship Earth, the boat ride in Mexico, the boat ride in Norway – not only did the boat stall during the ride, but also, after we exited the boat, the doors at the end of the ride failed to open, trapping us and the 4-5 boat-fulls after us!

Universal Studios – The Mummy – got stuck where the ride gets “hot”, the Simpsons ride, Cat in the Hat ride

Magic Kingdom – Carousel of Progress glitched, Peter Pan’s Flight, Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean (multiple times), Snow White

We’ve been to Disney World lots of times, and although we’ve been involved in rides stalling and getting backed up, it’s never happened with the frequency of this year when jamiahsh was with us. Therefore, the phenomonon of him “breaking the rides” is a running joke of sorts, and that’s why I had to make a post of it. Break-downs aside, a fun trip was had by all, and the uncanny ride luck jamiahsh had is now merely blog fodder – and that’s always fun.

Vacation Diary – Chapter Three

Tuesday, Oct 21 – We visited Universal Studios, Islands of Adventure, and the Out of Control Magic Show at Wonderworks. Universal and Islands are right next to each other, but there is a lot of walking between the two. A lot of walking and not so much for the kids. But they did have fun, especially Disney who got to see Barney Live. I missed the Animal Actors show this year, but I was more in the mood for rides, and we got to ride plenty. The new Simpsons ride is actually better than I expected. It's the old Back to the Future ride except you are now riding through Springfield. The waiting area is themed well, and you get to watch little Simpsons snippets while you wait – talk about making the time go by fast! The ride is very cool, and you actually feel like you're riding around Springfield. The Mummy ride is still my favorite thing in both parks, and it's as cool as I remember. I especially like sitting near people who haven't been on it before – it's a blast to see the reactions to the haunted house meets roller coaster. Over at Islands, we got positively soaked to the core riding the Bluto boat ride, but that was expected because I rode it twice – those huge raft rides are my favorite type of water ride. My 4-year-old Sammie hated it, much to my surprise because she was just playing in the sprinklers at Epcot the night before. But she felt better after going on one of the kids' favorites, the Cat in The Hat ride. Our two-year-old loved that one too. We were a bit strapped for time and didn't get to try some of the coasters and other rides I've never been on over at Islands, but oh well, we still had fun. And my husband got chosen again (4th time now) to be an "actor" in the skit they do before the Earthquake ride which is now known as "Disaster". They redid it and added a cool hologram of Christopher Walken. And they chose my husband to be the "hunky" lead actor – but then, I always knew that ☐

The magic show was a lot of fun and it made me want to produce something like it locally for our community theater. It's kind of like stand-up comedy AND magic in one, with lots of audience participation. My husband, daughter, and our friend were all chosen to go on stage, and I filled up the camera's memory card trying to record everything. And a note to Jamiahsh – you really don't know me well enough by now to not point at me when they're asking for volunteers?!? You are so lucky he didn't pick me – I would have blamed you and had your head! Just kidding... well, kind of, but don't do that again!

Vacation Diary – Chapter Two

Monday, October 20 (Disney's 2nd birthday!!) – Started off bright and early in Orlando with a time share presentation – yuck. We've been to a few of these, and we try to schedule at least one every time we're in the Orlando area because they pay well. This time, we got \$100 cash. It took over 3 hours, but hey, that's over \$30/hour – well worth it in my opinion. I could go on and on about time share presentations because there are always certain things they do to get you to buy one – there must be a formula to the presentations. And let's face it, they're one of the biggest rip-offs that exist. The last few we've gone to, we've played a little game where I think of a random word my husband has to say to the time share people. This time it was "gondola". Unfortunately, we didn't get the word in because the presentation took much longer than they said it would (big surprise) and we had our friend jamiahsh waiting for us. This also saw us getting to Epcot later than we would have liked, but we still got to do most of everything we wanted at Epcot. If you've been to a time share presentation (or 2 or 3 or more), then you should check out the South Park episode about it. I'm not a huge fan of the

show, but the time share episode is hilarious. It was actually recommended to us by a time share salesman once!

The manatees are my favorite thing at Epcot. My husband makes fun because we have manatees right here at the Columbus Zoo in Ohio, but that's 3 hours away and I've only been there once. Besides, I've been to Epcot a bunch and I'm starting to get to know their manatees. Last time I was lucky enough to see them hugging! A peaceful feeling comes over me as I watch them swim. We did miss the Crush (from Finding Nemo) show, and we meant to go back for it but forget – oh well. And for those of you who've been to Disney World before, you should know that they've updated the Spaceship Earth ride – that's the one in the big huge golfball that is Epcot's signature. I don't like the new version nearly as much as the old one. The ride needed updating. It takes riders through the history of human communication, and one of the scenes had become outdated as time passed because people don't communicate in the ways that they visualized we would when the ride was built. Soarin' is my favorite ride at Epcot, but it always has HUGE lines. This time we were able to get a fastpass, but we could only ride once and my husband wasn't able to ride because our 2 year old was in a Daddy-clingy kind of mood. We ended the night at Epcot by running all over the park in a desperate search for a soft pretzel. Our 4-year-old was being so uncharacteristically well-behaved that I was willing to get her anything she wanted, especially since she was asking about it nicely.

WHAT NO LISWATHISTAN!!!!???

HELLO EVERY PEOPLE!!! Morat he a go to Flor-ida country also. One day, the two little girl people and Morat go outside and a

find many, many snails. We a put them inside a big bowl but we a run out of a room, so we a get bigger bowl. Then, it was a time to go to the big, round golf ball. But a before that, Morat he a go to a share time place.

This man person giving tour laugh at Morat very much. He say Morat should a go to Vegas. He take Morat around the share time place and he see many womans working there. It a good thing woman not give me tour. I say, Morat will a not take tour from womans. He ask if they are married womans. Some say yes. I ask if they will go on Wife Swap trading on tv box. They all say no. I say Wooly Sheep. They a just laugh and turn a red face. Finally, strange man finish talking about share of time. Morat say no thank you very much.

Morat then wait looooooong time for OHHO people to finish at their share time. Man who gave talk come back a to Morat and say, "You're still here?" I no understand a dis share time. It a sound like a bunch of how you say, tech no speak.

When OHHO people come to a pick up Morat, they a go to the COT of EP at the Mouse house. Many, many strange things. We a go visit other countries like a you say No Way, and Mexico country. I a tell little people to bring the snails to France for de escargot. but a one thing I no understand. WHERE IS LISWATHISTAN!!! NO LISWATHISTAN AT MOUSE HOUSE!!! I WILL SUE DE MOUSE FOR 1 BOULLION CUBE!!! Or I just let Mouse drink all the soda of Italy. Not a so good ☐

But Morat a like many other things at eP of COT. I like a the [Big Golf ball ride](#). OHHHHH... the woman inside sound a like the woman who is the boss of Oh-oh-Seven... her name is a M.

I a also like a very much the [ride of Ellen](#). Is Ellen married woman? She a seem a little strange to me. Ellen goes on Jeopardy on tv box.

But my a favorite part of the Golf Ball Place is the [Soarin'](#). Wooly Sheep. EVERYONE WINS!!! OH, Morat almost a forget

about the little [Fig ride](#). The smelly animal made a big stink. And little person say Morat made a stink.