

# Harry Potter And The Sorcerer's Stone

I did it. I've finished reading the first book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. And I really enjoyed it; I think I can officially call myself a Harry Potter fan! The book was very fast-moving, and because it's kind of a kids' fantasy book (but don't get the wrong idea – MANY adults like it too!), I was able to finish the entire 300 pages on my limited reading schedule without even having to renew it at the library once!

Tonight, I'm going to start the second book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, and if I can convince my husband, we'll be watching the movie of the first book this weekend. And now I am REALLY excited to see the new [Wizarding World of Harry Potter](#) at Universal Studios in Orlando. They are being kinda secretive about the Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey attraction, but it promises to use "entirely new technology" to bring the Harry Potter series to life "in a way never before experienced"! Maybe something like The Mummy ride or The Amazing Adventures of Spiderman 3D? How cool would that be for Harry Potter!! And the shops and restaurants are all going to keep in the tradition of the boy wizard's world. Chocolate frogs, anyone? The world doesn't open until spring, and it doesn't look like we're going to get to Florida before the fall or next winter anyway, so if that becomes a reality, we will have to make sure we get to Universal – I really liked Islands of Adventure anyway, and now it's going to be even better! I just have to make sure I read all the Potter books by then. And I almost don't want to read too much about the new world on the internet for fear that it would be spoilers about things I haven't discovered yet.

As much as I'm enjoying the Harry Potter series, I'm not

usually one to stick to one type of book. If I need a break from Hogwart's before I get through all 7 stories, I might try [\*The Zookeeper's Wife\*](#), a story about a zoo in Poland in the 1930's and how it's destroyed during the holocaust – as long as it's not too depressing of a read.

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## Disney Vs. Universal – Round 1,642

As a frequent visitor to Orlando Florida, the United States theme park capital, the following news stories caught my eye. Disney World and Universal Studios have been competing in an epic battle for tourists for a few decades now, and as a result, us tourists are the real winners! Check out the two new additions to each park!

[Universal Studios is adding a Harry Potter-themed world!](#) I'm not even a fan of the series and the pictures and descriptions of this place excited me! I might have to read a Harry Potter book or see some of the movies before I check it out! This answers the question I posed in a previous blog post – What will happen to Marvel Superhero Island when Disney buys Marvel? Answer: who cares? Universal will have the Wizarding World of Harry Potter!

Not to be outdone, Disney has released that they are doubling the size of their current Fantasyland area, adding a Little Mermaid attraction, among other things. If the rumors on [this blog](#) are true, it seems to me like Universal is going to win this time. More meet-and-greet space at Disney? Yawn! Bring on the thrill rides! But if I know the folks at Disney, they have more than doubling Dumbo and adding more Disney princess

meet-and-greet up their sleeves and just haven't leaked that part of the expansion to the public yet... So stay tuned!

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# What Will Happen To Marvel Island?

From the Financial Pages today – business news is not something I usually write about, but you'll see why the following story would interest me:

## [Disney To Acquire Marvel Entertainment](#)

Our family frequents the Orlando Florida area, home of Disney World and also their major competitor – Universal Studios. For those of you who don't know, at Universal's Islands of Adventure (the newer and more thrill-ride oriented of Universal's two Orlando parks), there is an entire area called Marvel Superhero Island®. So my question is, now that Disney, Universal's biggest competitor and business enemy, has bought Marvel, what will happen to Superhero Island at Islands of Adventure? I can't imagine that Universal would want to keep the same characters, now owned by Disney, at their park. And I can't imagine Disney letting Universal keep the characters at their park, unless the price was right, of course. But based upon the competitiveness that is obvious to the tourists flocking to the area, Disney's superhero lease price would probably put Universal out of business!

[Marvel's Superhero Island](#) currently contains (click the link for an interactive map – Superhero Island is on the left side of the park, just left of the main gate) the following attractions: The Amazing Adventures of Spiderman, The Incredible Hulk Coaster, Doctor Doom's Fear Fall, and Storm

Force Accelatron, which we've always skipped since it seemed like Universal's answer to Disney's Teacup ride. We always skipped Doctor Doom also since it's a free-fall ride and I'm afraid to go on those. I think my husband went on this one however, but I don't remember him saying it was any different from the rest of these types of rides. In short, it probably won't be much of a problem to rename these two rides. The Hulk coaster is an awesome coaster and should also be able to withstand the re-themeing, although it might need a paint job to change its current green/purple Hulk theme. The Adventures of Spiderman is another story. This ride is awesome! There really isn't anything else like it in either of the two parks. It's basically like taking a thrill ride *into* a 3D Spiderman movie. I guess they'd have to choose a new character and make a new movie. Whatever they do, I hope it's as good as the original Spiderman ride! Also complicating a theming switch would be the superheros and villians that walk around Marvel's Superhero Island. I guess all the costumes would be sold to Disney. Perhaps Disney will build a superhero section – my guess would be at MGM Hollywood Studios if I had to pick a place.

And Universal would have an entire area to theme and fill. Hmmm, imagine the possibilities...

Let's see, would they coincide the new area with a new movie coming out (Smurfs (sorry Carol), Jetsons – not sure if those are Universal movies)? Or would they take one of their existing franchises (Simpsons – they'd have to move that super-cool new ride from the Studios park to the Islands park!, NBC land (The Office – The Ride!)) and create a whole new world? Any ideas?

**\*\*UPDATE\*\*** – From [orlandosentinel.com](http://orlandosentinel.com): *"...theme-park rival Universal Orlando will likely retain the park rights to its four Marvel superstars, including Spider-Man and the Incredible Hulk...*

*...Universal's contracts apparently gives it exclusive U.S.*

*rights east of the Mississippi River for theme-park attractions built around certain of those characters, notably Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk, X-Men and Dr. Doom.*

*Universal Orlando said Marvel characters will remain a staple at its parks.*

*“Marvel Super Hero Island at Universal’s Islands of Adventure and the Marvel characters are an important part of the Universal Orlando experience. They will remain so,” said Tom Schroder, a Universal spokesman. “Our agreement with Marvel stands for as long as we follow the terms of our existing contract and for as long as we want there to be a Marvel Super Hero Island.”*

So in response to several comments from blog readers, there are a separate set of rights for the Marvel characters in question – theme park rights.

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## **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!

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# The Amazing, Hulk-Outing, Drenching Adventure

I must say that the worst part of the Universal was the transition from the two parks. There was a huge mob of people resembling a herd of cattle waiting to be lead through the gate. The problem being... there were only 2 people taking tickets and we picked the SL00000000W line. But we finally made it with plenty of time to enjoy what Islands of Adventure had to offer... LOTS.

Not only were there rides drawing from Dr. Seuss, cartoons from days gone by (Popeye and Dudley-Do-Right on which I will elaborate further), but also Marvel Superheros. While C & L went The TRUELY AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ride, I waited with the kids to take my turn (thank heaven for baby swap). While waiting a parade of heroes riding motorized bikes came zooming in. I saw Captain America, Wolverine (in the traditional yellow and blue comic outfit), and Spidey himself. This was cool not only to see them, but it also made little Dis stop and look... this was before Lis introduced me to the secret weapon.

I had a very hard time figuring out which my favorite ride was: definitely a toss up. [The Amazing Spider-Man](#) is a 3-D marvel that puts you right in the middle of a comic-book starring everyone's favorite web-slinging neighborhood do-gooder as he battles some of his most sinister villains: Hobgoblin, Hydro Man (not REAALY familiar with him), Electro, and Spidey's arch-nemesis, Dr. Otto Octavius.

What theme park visit is complete with out some wet fun. The first was definitely the worst. You have read the disclaimer: YOU WILL GET WET ON THIS RIDE. On [Popeye and Blutto's Bilge-Rat Barges](#), you not only get wet, if you sit in the wrong spot... guess who... you may not neet to shower for a day.

The second water soaker featured the melodramatic adventures of Dudley-Do-Right on Ripsaw Falls. Along the way the villainous Snidely Whiplash once again had the virtuous Nell tied to the tracks. Nowhere near as drenching as P&B's, but good. Not so good for Chris who was suffering from an ingrown toenail. As I was entering the log I heard a loud howl from behind me. I had stepped on his toe. OMG... THE PAIN!!!! More on that later, but I KNOW how he felt. I felt awful.

The last thrill was one we had by-passed and said we would do if we had time remaining. Not only am I glad that we made it just to ride, it helped in the drying process. [The Hulk](#) is a good old-fashioned green steel monster with corkscrews, loops, tunnels, and blinding smoke. While Chris took the girls to Seuss land, Lisa and I conquered the monster twice... fast pass is great. What a rush and it never stopped. totally awesome.

Being led by people who know the park is a great way to see the best and by-pass the rest.