

Looking Forward To The Next One

Well, here we are only 2 months out from our last trip to Disney World, and I'm already wanting to go back. That's nothing new, it's an awesome place, but I'm also reading about many changes taking place. Ok, so I'm not exactly planning the next trip (step one would be how to fit our family of soon-to-be 7 into the minivan along with a week's worth of luggage for a 20 hour drive), but articles like the following tempt me. Especially interesting: Disney's \$1 billion Next Generation project, which includes interactive line queues – they're adding things like an interactive mystery experience to the line of the Haunted Mansion attraction. And apparently they've already added interactive video games to Soarin' and Space Mountain, none of which I had noticed on our last visit! Maybe because we did the Fast Pass? That reminds me, Disney is going to try a new concept as part of the Next Gen project: guests will be able to book their ride times for various attractions from their hotels or from home ahead of time, drastically reducing or even eliminating the need to wait in line (and to see all these brand spanking new queue attractions?). Also something I missed this last time around: the new playground and interactive video games in the line for the Winnie the Pooh ride. Now where would they have room for that, I wonder? But no wonder that we didn't notice these enhancements; that ride normally has an over 40 minute wait even in the down season, so we don't usually indulge in it.

Lots of interesting changes and enhancements on the horizon, [check them out for yourself](#).

Disney World Fairy Tales (Not Quite)

I came across a really fun article awhile ago called: Confessions Of A Disney Cast Member. The article was written by a guy who spent 5 summers working at the Walt Disney World resort as a Disney cast member. If you're like me and a frequent visitor to the Magic Kingdom, then you will appreciate the following not-so-tall-tales. Even if you've never been to WDW, the following stories are fun to read. Among the entertaining stories he has to share:

Excuse me man, are you pregnant?

What's more terrifying than the 38-foot drop on Disney's Big Thunder Mountain Railroad? Having to ask women in line if they're pregnant. It's for their own safety, but forget a woman scorned—hell hath no fury like a woman who's been mistaken for being pregnant. Once, when I was in training, I watched a coworker approach a larger female park visitor and ask, "Excuse me, ma'am, but are you pregnant?" "Pregnant!?!!" the woman screamed, her voice turning heads at the happiest place on earth. "No! What are you saying? Do I look fat to you?!" She turned to her friend and screamed some more: "They think I look fat. Let's get out of here!" I was so traumatized by that incident I crafted a plan to avoid offending anyone. Whenever I spotted a "suspect," I asked everybody in the vicinity—including teenage boys and women in their 70s—if they were with child. If the woman I suspected was actually pregnant, she left the ride quickly. If she wasn't, she just thought I was working a gag.

I sure am Randy today.

Disney made the "first name" name tag famous, but the tag doesn't always match the person wearing it. One day, as I was steering the raft to Tom Sawyer Island, my name tag dropped

into the river, forcing me to get a new one. There wasn't a single "Robert" left, so until a replacement could be made, I pretended to be "Randy," a name that amused visitors from the U.K. to no end. Elderly English ladies lined up to have their picture taken with me. One screamed when she saw me, grabbed her friend, and yelled, "Is that really your name?" Being a good Disney cast member, I lied and said yes. The friend said, "You know, we love a good randy man back home." But lady, even I'm not that good a cast member.

To get onstage, dress the part.

A few attractions choose audience volunteers to be part of the show, but the selection process is far from random. Typically, you need to be a certain gender, size, and age for each of the different roles. You might even need to be wearing a specific item of clothing. On my off days from work, I used to go over to Universal Studios, and I would get picked all the time to play "Mother" in the old Alfred Hitchcock show. They needed a guy my height and weight who happened to be wearing the same type of plain white tennis shoes I always wore. Also helpful for getting picked: cuteness and enthusiasm. Curious kids who ask nicely and look excited often get extra attention, along with thrilling perks like riding up front and introducing shows.

Stroller relocation program

Disney's a family place, but the people who work there come to loathe strollers. It's part of a cast member's job to keep strollers in nice, orderly lines and to make sure they're only left in designated areas. But park visitors keep their strollers in an appalling condition, loaded up with dirty diapers, rotting bottles of milk, and half-eaten PB&J sandwiches. Others see no problem with parking their strollers right in front of an attraction's exit or entrance. Sometimes thoughtless individuals like this incur the wrath of the stroller police, and their precious Bugaboos and

Maclarens are intentionally relocated to a place “far, far away”—at the very back of the area cordoned off for strollers.



Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of (confiscated) rum
On special Grad Nites, when Disney hosts loads of freshly graduated high school kids, the park puts extra staffers inside Pirates of the Caribbean and other rides as lookouts to monitor less-than-legal activities. Our focus was mostly on what the kids were consuming. Booze, cigarettes—you name it, and a Disney cast member has confiscated it from a 17-year-old at one time or another. One clever kid, forced to hand over his bottle, noted the irony of getting busted in the middle of a ride that celebrates a drunken pirate orgy. “Hey, don’t the pirates have enough?” he asked. “They need mine, too?”

Please keep your happiness to yourself.
This attraction has been camera monitored for your safety. That’s the spiel Disney broadcasts over its loudspeakers for many rides. But the cameras are also meant to protect you from yourself. One night, while most parkgoers were watching the fireworks display, a couple strolled over to Pirates of the Caribbean, where I was working. They not only had a boat to themselves, but empty boats all around them. The real fireworks display, it turned out, was visible on the security cameras to all of us working that night. Let’s just say the show the couple put on wasn’t exactly G-rated.

If you enjoyed the above stories, you might want to [read the article in its entirety here](#), along with other theme park insider info.