

# A Parent's Ride Guide

On a friend's recent trip to Disneyland, the very first ride she took her 3 year old son on was Mr. Toad's Wild Ride. It's a fun, silly car ride through a cartoon landscape. Seems innocent enough, right? Sure, except that all the "crashing" through walls and explosive sound effects frightened the boy enough that he didn't want to go on any more rides. Not a total disaster, but an unlucky choice for the first ride of the visit. Of course, in time he came around, but his understandable reaction demonstrates the importance of knowing what parents need to watch out for.

The first thing you should consider is your child's height. Many rides have minimum height requirements and Disney Cast Members are sticklers for this rule. If your child doesn't reach the minimum height, he or she will not be allowed on the ride. And I've never seen any amount of crying or cajoling change a Cast Member's mind. Prior to going on your trip, measure your child and check the Tear-Free Ride Rating Guide in the next section to see which rides have a minimum height requirement. Even if there are some rides your child is too small to ride, don't worry; there's plenty to see and do.

Once you know which rides your kids are able to go on, it's time to consider which ones they are ready (and want) to go on. Are they afraid of the dark? Do they get anxious around fire or startled by loud noises? Consider your child's temperament and disposition before suggesting a ride. Most parents have a pretty good idea what will trigger fear and anxiety in their child. But in some cases you'll just want to ask.

When my youngest girl was 6, she was game for any ride they'd let her on – even ones that loop-de-loop. For her, the scares were part of the fun. I encourage you to let your children test their own limits (so long as it's safe of course). You might be surprised by how brave they can be. Still, it's not a bad idea to let them know what to expect from the ride and from you. For instance, you can say, "Now, this ride might get dark at times. But I'll be with you the whole time. Okay?" To help you know what you and your child can expect, I've prepared a list of attractions with brief descriptions.

## Tear-Free Ride Rating Guide



A-Okay! Tear-Free fun for virtually everyone.



Maybe. Questionable or a few scary elements.



No Way! Intentionally thrilling and/or scary.



FASTPASS Service (Subject to availability)



Single Rider Line (Subject to availability)

## Disneyland Park

Making its debut in 1955, Disneyland was conceived as a place for parents and their children to enjoy together. But it's so much more than a collection of rides – Disneyland is a truly immersive experience that makes guests feel as if they've stepped out of the regular world and into a place of imagination and magic. It's this magic that makes Disneyland a place families have cherished for generations.

Last time I counted, there were over 50 attractions within Disneyland Park. To be clear, an attraction can be a ride (like the Jungle Cruise), a play area (like Goofy's Playhouse) or a theatrical presentation (like the Enchanted Tiki Room). And, the vast majority of attractions are suitable for young children. Still, it's best to know which attractions you'll want to avoid and which ones you'll most want to go on or see (and in what order) so you can plan a Tear-Free day.

### Main Street, U.S.A.

This welcoming thoroughfare is a charming replica of a "typical" American town in the early 1900s. Here, you'll find guest services, shops and plenty of places to buy sweet treats.

In the morning (particularly during peak seasons) don't be surprised to see one or more Disney characters ready to welcome guests, sign autographs and pose for pictures.

Many of the shops on Main Street, U.S.A. are open for an additional hour after the park has officially closed. They tend to get pretty crowded as people head out of the park, so try not to your leave souvenir shopping to the very last minute.



## **The Disney Gallery**

(All ages)

Part art gallery, part gift shop, visitors can view illustrations, prints, sculptures and paintings that served as inspiration for Disneyland resort attractions and/or the art of Disney movies. New, temporary exhibits appear frequently, so there's often a lot to see that's new. Visitors can purchase prints, books and reproductions of many of the sculptures that appear there.



## **Disneyland Railroad**

(Dark tunnel, dinosaurs, simulated thunder)

This biofuel-powered steam engine train ride, with stops at Main Street, U.S.A., New Orleans Square, Mickey's Toontown and Tomorrowland is a surprisingly fun and relaxing way to get around the park. Stay aboard for the tunnel between Tomorrowland and Main Street Station – you'll see life-size dioramas of the Grand Canyon and even dinosaurs!



## **Main Street Cinema**

(Darkness)

Pretend to take a ticket from Tilly in the ticket booth and step inside this old-fashioned movie house to introduce the kids to some vintage Mickey Mouse cartoons. The theater has 6 screens in a circle playing continuous loops of black and white Mickey Mouse shorts from his early career. Just be advised that there are no seats in this theater, it's always "standing room only."

 **Main Street Vehicles**

(Live horses, ringing bells, horns)

Take an old-fashioned one-way trip from Main Street's Town Square to Sleeping Beauty Castle (or back) on a horse-drawn streetcar or carriage, a double-decker Omnibus or a vintage fire engine.

 **Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln**

(All ages)

This theatrical presentation starts with a brief slideshow about America's early struggles and ends with a stirring speech from a remarkably lifelike animatronic Abraham Lincoln. Walt Disney Imagineering (then called WED Enterprises) created the original Mr. Lincoln for the 1964 New York World's Fair. In the pre-show lobby, you'll find a mini-museum with art and artifacts from Disneyland's early days and Walt's office much as he left it.

 **Tear-Free Tip** 

Main Street, U.S.A. is home to the Disneyland First Aid Station and Baby Care Center (perfect for feeding or quiet time with baby). You'll also find an ATM and locker rentals. Guest services (including guided tours and dining reservations) are right inside City Hall.

## Adventureland

Take the first left off Main Street and you'll find yourself in another time and place with exotic jungle-themed adventures around every corner. This is one of Disneyland's original lands – with the Jungle Cruise remaining virtually unchanged since its 1955 premier.

### 😊 Enchanted Tiki Room

(Birds, simulated thunder and lightning)

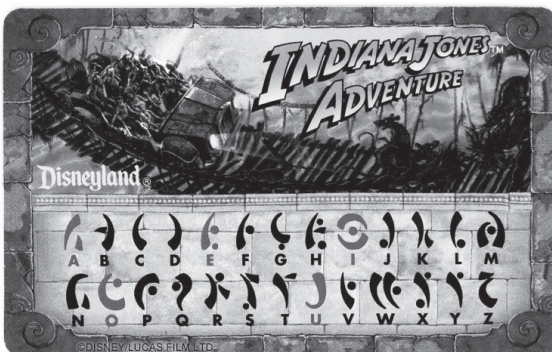
Your family is sure to enjoy this charming musical revue performed by animatronic birds, tiki statues and flowers. The show ends with a crash of thunder, lightning and a simulated rainstorm outside. While waiting for the show to start, we always pick up a Dole Whip pineapple frozen dessert to share.

### 😞 Indiana Jones Adventure



(High speed, darkness, fire, simulated bugs and danger)

This ride is not for the meek. You'll ride a screeching, careening Jeep across rickety bridges, pass by giant snakes and barely escape a rolling boulder. No wonder it's a favorite among older kids and thrill-seeking adults. If the line is long, use the decoder below to read messages carved into the walls. (Minimum height 46" / 117cm.)



 **Jungle Cruise**

(Water, wild animals, simulated gunfire)

Your friendly skipper will take you on a pun-filled and gentle cruise through exotic jungle rivers. Have your camera ready for the animatronic tigers, elephants and apes that appear on the shores. And keep your eyes on the waters—they're teeming with animatronic crocodiles, hippos and piranhas. The cruise seems slightly more sinister in the dark of night, but it's still a lot of fun.

 **Tear-Free Tip** 

By mid-day, Adventureland gets so packed with people that it's difficult to even wend your way through it (especially for strollers and wheelchairs). If the Jungle Cruise or Indiana Jones is on your list of things to do, then visiting this area before noon is your best bet.

 **Tarzan's Treehouse**

(Heights, stairs, animal noises)

Climb the stairs up into Tarzan's jungle home. As you explore, it's easy to see the remains of the ship that brought Tarzan's family to Africa's shores. Near the top, you'll find a growling statue of a jungle cat, but most find this a fun walk through the treetops. Some adults may remember this as Disneyland's Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse. As you exit, be prepared to wait as your kids join in a musical jam session banging on pots, pans and other "percussion instruments."

## Frontierland

Take a trip to the Old West. This is one of Disneyland's smaller "lands," but it's packed with plenty of character. Rustic buildings, desert landscapes, an old-fashioned shooting gallery and live entertainment bring the Old West to life.

Head to the Golden Horseshoe Saloon for live entertainment from musical comedy groups that bring back the rip-snortin' rowdy days of the American frontier.



### **Big Thunder Mountain Railroad**



(High speeds, steep drops, darkness, explosion effects)  
Hold on to your hats and glasses – this high-speed roller coaster not only has spine-tingling dips and hair-raising turns, it also goes through a dark, rumbling cave with flame and explosion effects that some kids may find frightening. (Minimum height 40" / 102cm.)



### **Big Thunder Ranch**

(Live animals)

Follow the paved trail along the far side of Big Thunder Mountain Railroad and you'll come across Big Thunder Ranch. In this shady and naturalistic setting, you'll meet and have the chance to pet a cute collection of barnyard animals including goats, sheep and pigs. This is also the site of many holiday-themed festivals, carnivals and live entertainment events.



### **Fantasmic!**



(Disney villains, flame effects, loud noises, cannon fire)  
This live, nighttime performance is viewed from the riverbanks along New Orleans Square. It's full of fun and fantasy but also contains more than its share of scary el-



ements and startling effects. Villains are a major part of the story but there are also lighter moments with princesses, Peter Pan and others. But the highlight of the spectacle has to be the two-story tall fire breathing dragon. FASTPASS tickets are required to access the show's viewing area. Free tickets available along Big Thunder Trail or with selected dining packages.

### **Frontierland Shootin' Exposition**

(Simulated gunfire)

This is an old-fashioned shooting gallery using infrared beams of light instead of buckshot to hit the targets. Targets, such as tombstones and buildings in a miniature frontier town, light up or become animated when hit. This is one of Disneyland's few attractions that cost extra money to play.

### **Mark Twain Riverboat/Sailing Ship Columbia**

(All ages)

A great way to escape the heat and crowds, these calm and enjoyable ships take travelers on a trip around the Rivers of America. The recorded voices of river guides point out special landmarks and discuss the historical significance of the ships. Some special animatronic scenes on the banks of the rivers can only be seen from these boats.

### **Pirate's Lair on Tom Sawyer Island**

(All ages)

Take a short raft ride across the river and prepare to let the kids run and play. There are trails, pontoon bridges, climbing areas and spooky caves for adventurous kids of all ages.

## 🐻 Tear-Free Tip 🐻

As you depart Frontierland, walk towards the Rivers of America. You'll soon spot the remains of a huge petrified tree. This ancient artifact is believed to be between 55 and 70 million years old!

## New Orleans Square

The first stop of the Disneyland Railroad, New Orleans Square is a beautiful and festive area bristling with the spirit of the "Big Easy." I don't know if it's the architectural detail, the shady spots to rest or the lively jazz music, but New Orleans Square is one of my favorite places to just sit and people watch. Stroll down shop-lined alleys and stop for a bite of gumbo (or a sweet beignet). Some of the attractions might not be suitable for small children, but if your kids are hoping to meet a pirate, there's usually one or two lurking about.



### **Haunted Mansion**

(Darkness, screams, spooky images)

Knowing how your child reacts to the spookier aspects of Halloween should give you a good idea if they're ready for the Haunted Mansion. Though it's dark throughout, the singing ghosts in this haunted house keep things from getting too scary. That's not to say it's completely scare-free. There are plenty of ghosts, cobwebs, coffins and spooky sounds (even my own mother wouldn't ride on it). One of the scariest bits may be the

elevator ride down. At the end of the introduction, the lights go out and guests tend to scream. Prepare your child and have them scream along so they're part of the spooky fun. From mid-September through New Years, Jack Skellington takes over and transforms this attraction into a twisted Nightmare Before Christmas.



### **Pirates of the Caribbean**

(Darkness, steep drops, simulated fire/gunfire)

While the pirates do partake in a bit of skullduggery (including sword and gunplay), this attraction is mostly harmless fun. But be prepared, the boat will go over a few short, dark waterfalls. Some children may find the realistic-looking flame effects distressing. Keep an eye open for Captain Jack Sparrow – he makes several appearances throughout the attraction.

### Tear-Free Tip

New Orleans Square is the viewing area for the popular evening show, "Fantasmic!" This makes it almost impossible to get through the area prior to or during performances. Check the schedule to see if you should avoid New Orleans Square and Critter Country after dark.

## Critter Country

Just past New Orleans Square is Critter Country. There aren't many attractions in this charming woodland area, but here you're almost sure to meet Winnie the Pooh, Eeyore, Tigger and their friends.