

# Fantasyland

## From Mickey Mouse to blastoff, Florida's sights are like a dream

By Iris Sanderson Jones  
special writer

Sometimes you can't tell where fantasy ends and reality begins in Florida. I went from Space Mountain at Disney World to the space shuttle at Kennedy Space Center, with stops along flying dolphins and waz models of Hollywood figures along the way.

While riding from Mickey Mouse to Shamu on a tourist bus, I read an article in the Orlando Sentinel Star entitled "I rode the tourist wave and I lived," which is exactly how I felt after seeing the height-of-season lineups at many local entertainment spots. It was great fun however; here is my first-timer's diary.

You can tell you are in Orlando as soon as the plane lands. You step into the same long marble halls, but here you see grown women carrying huge stuffed animals and a party of six, in Mickey Mouse hats, singing their way down the halls.

Expressways run everywhere through the natural landscape of scrub pine. I was naive enough to think that people came to Florida to relax, but here

are the billboards in what was a wilderness 10 years ago: Stars Hall of Fame, Sea World, Disney World, Circus World, Camping World.

A sign reads "For Walt Disney information dial 1010" to the phone that has 14-line pit passes to the Disney World parking lot. Signs lead straight ahead to the hotels, left to the kennel club where you must leave your pet, past bushes carved like animals to the spot where a monorail and a ferry will take you to the Magic Kingdom.

The ferry is chilly on this windy spring day, but there are long lines on the monorail. The ferry is a five-eights scale model of the 1938 Staten Island ferry, built at their own dry dock facilities here in Disney World.

DISNEY WORLD IS the busiest attraction in the world, with 14 million customers a year visiting the Magic Kingdom theme park, as well as the hotels, shopping areas, campgrounds and other things available on the rest of the 21,000-acre property.

The twice-a-day parade is already on its way down Main Street, and soon we are bopping along, singing that song, and being kissed by everybody from Pluto to Mickey Mouse.

Kids of the Kingdom, an inside singing group, are beginning to gather on the forecourt of Cinderella's Castle. All the roads in the Magic Kingdom lead here to the golden turrets of the castle, which gleam against the blue Florida sky.

Disney World was created for families, so there are lots of young kids here too in their Mickey Mouse shirts. They converge on the castle by tram, on foot and by double-decker bus, from Frontier Land, Tomorrow Land, Liberty Square and the terrifying precipices of Space Mountain.

They sit on the ground in front of the castle or on stone benches around the town square, carrying red Mickey Mouse shopping bags and speaking French, German, Spanish and English.

We rode the train, sailed through the Pirates of the Caribbean, screamed on the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad, squealed through the Haunted Mansion, rode the Disney People Mover over Tomorrowland, and watched the most thrilling travel film I've ever seen at Circle-Vision 360.

"We didn't have time to go on Space Mountain. Too bad," I said, smiling to myself. I'm no dummy. You won't catch me scaring myself to death in the dark unless I have to.

THE MOST INTERESTING and unexpected part of Disney World was in what they call "the property." The Magic Kingdom is only spot on the corner of the Disney World Map. Beyond is Lake Buena Vista, hotels, Disney World Village with its shops and restaurants, the water slides of River Country, and especially the camping facilities at Fort Wilderness.

At Fort Wilderness you can bring your own tent or trailer, or you can rent a trailer, within sight of the theme park. You can then take a regular tram through the camping area, and bus or ferry to the Magic Kingdom.

At Fort Wilderness, you can enjoy a wild west revue with a barbecue dinner for \$15 in Pioneer Hall, ride one of the 41 saddle horses along the trails or watch the ponies being trained to pull the train through the Magic Kingdom, pet the animals in the children's zoo, ride the water slides, adjacent River Country, and take advantage of the top name performances available in the nearby hotels.

This is a day after fantasy land, so you will not be surprised if you take you on a quick trip across 60 miles of central Florida to the Kennedy Space Center, where the space shuttle is being readied for its first flight.

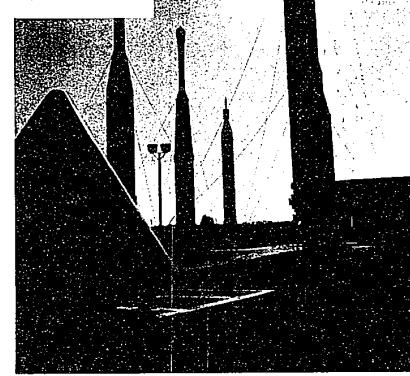
We approach the J.F. Kennedy Space Center over a long causeway. The Atlantic gleams on either side under a blue Florida sky.

"See that huge building ahead? That's where they keep the rockets," Scotty said. Scotty is our driver guide. "Seven Empire State buildings would go in there. It's so big they have weather; it rains inside that building."

Somebody in the back seat of the van mutters: "Fantasyland! We're still in Fantasyland."



Children delight in the larger-than-life animals at Walt Disney World near Orlando.



IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Rockets (above) stand on display at the Kennedy Space Center near Cape Canaveral.

SEVERAL THOUSAND people a year get lost going to the center because they can't tell the difference between Cape Canaveral, Cape Kennedy and the Kennedy Space Center.

The expressway going east out of Orlando splits at an intersection called "the crossroads." Signs lead left to the Kennedy Space Center right to Cape Canaveral. About 5,000 people a month get lost because they turn right. Just to confuse things further, there is a Port Canaveral and a Cape Canaveral City.

Keep your mind on the space shuttle, and turn left to Kennedy Space Center. The shuttle has been the main topic of conversation at the center for a long time, and will be a main attraction for tourists for a long time to come. It is out there beyond the building where it rains inside.

Dozens of rockets are parked near the check-in and exhibit building, where some rockets are on display behind the exhibit building and the museum. The center is a four-hour tourist experience, two hours in the exhibit area and another two hours on the tour. All the tours are free.

This is not another attraction like Disney World and Sea World; it is a working space center. A tour bus takes you past the huge building where it rains and along a parallel pair of gravel roads where the huge transports carry 18,000 pounds of rocket to the launching pads.

On one side of the road is a distant view of the shuttle. On the other side is a motorboat with its motor tipped up, beside a sparkling waterway, as if waiting for a fisherman. Nearby are three small silver tanks designed for rescue, and distant views of pads A and B, where the moon flights were launched.

A tour also includes the flight crew training area and the industrial area of the center.

WE DRIVE UP one side and down the other side

of the shuttle, hidden in its casing, ready for flight. The center is closed to tourists during a manned launch, but they can usually watch an unmanned launch.

The last tour of the center will be at 2:00 p.m. on the day before the space shuttle goes up. After the first launch or three launches, however, you will be able to watch the space shuttle take off and land.

It's a 4½-hour drive to the center from Miami, 90 minutes from Orlando. Shuttles aren't the only things that move here. There are deer, alligator, armadillo and more than 200 species of birds, counted every year on Christmas week by the Audubon Society.

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