

= Hogwarts Express (Universal Orlando Resort) =

The Hogwarts Express is an 1 @, @ 800 mm (5 ft 10 7 ? 8 in) broad gauge funicular railway , people mover , and attraction within the Universal Orlando Resort in Orlando , Florida , United States . The route runs 676 metres (2 @, @ 218 ft) between Hogsmeade station in the Islands of Adventure theme park and King 's Cross station in the London area of the Universal Studios Florida theme park . It provides a connection between the Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade areas which together form The Wizarding World of Harry Potter themed area , based on the Harry Potter film series .

The attraction , which was manufactured by the Doppelmayr Garaventa Group , is operated with two replicas of the Hogwarts Express . The two directions of travel provide two different experiences . Because the trains transport guests between stations in two separate theme parks , riders must have an admission pass valid for both theme parks , with ticket inspectors checking prior to boarding .

The Hogwarts Express soft @-@ opened to the public on 1 July 2014 before officially opening seven days later along with the rest of the Diagon Alley expansion on 8 July 2014 . Within one month of its opening , one million riders had travelled on the trains .

= = History = =

The idea of creating a Hogwarts Express @-@ related attraction came from Mark Woodbury , the president of Universal Creative . After the opening of the Hogsmeade attraction at the Islands of Adventure theme park in 2010 , Universal began considering how to keep attendance balanced between the adjacent parks . At first , the creative team considered putting Diagon Alley within Islands of Adventure . Eventually they decided that the London and Hogsmeade environments should not be visible between one another . As a result , Woodbury proposed building Diagon Alley in Universal Studios Florida and then connecting the two Harry Potter @-@ themed lands with the Hogwarts Express train .

Rumours that Universal Orlando was planning to expand The Wizarding World of Harry Potter began in early 2011 after construction surveying was spotted in the Lost Continent section of Islands of Adventure and the resort began asking visitors about a possible expansion . On 2 December 2011 , the resort announced the Jaws attraction would close on 2 January 2012 to make way for a future attraction . In the same month , speculation arose that an expansion would include the Hogwarts Express to connect Hogsmeade in Islands of Adventure and Diagon Alley in Universal Studios Florida . In June 2012 , theme park enthusiasts discovered that applications for permits had been submitted to the South Florida Water Management District and the City of Orlando suggesting that the resort was planning to build a track connecting the two theme parks , as well as one station building in each park . Almost a year later , WESH , a local news channel , reported that an elevated track system had been installed at Universal Orlando and that the track ran between Hogsmeade in Islands of Adventure and a construction area in Universal Studios Florida ; suggesting the rumours were true .

On 8 May 2013 , Universal Orlando announced the expansion of Wizarding World of Harry Potter , Diagon Alley , along with the Hogwarts Express attraction , to be located on the former site of the Jaws attraction . By the end of August 2013 , all six passenger cars and both tenders had been spotted in the backstage area , waiting to be assembled on the track . The first of the two trains was installed on the track on 24 October 2013 . By the beginning of December 2013 , the second train had been placed on the track . In January , the resort previewed the interior of the Hogwarts Express through a live cast . On 2 December 2013 , Orlando Attractions Magazine , an amusement park website , spotted one of the trains being tested for the first time . In mid @-@ March 2014 , Universal Orlando Resort released further information about the ride , including concept animations . On 24 June 2014 , the resort announced that the Diagon Alley expansion , including the Hogwarts Express , would officially open to the public on 8 July 2014 . A week later , Universal Orlando soft @-@ opened the Hogwarts Express , without any announcement . Within a month of the Hogwarts

Express ' opening , one million riders had ridden the attraction . It had taken approximately two and a half years to develop .

= = Ride experience = =

Theme park guests may use the Hogwarts Express to travel between Hogsmeade and King 's Cross in London , close to Diagon Alley . They can travel in either direction as long as the guest has purchased a Park @-@ to @-@ Park ticket , which gives guests access to both of Universal Orlando 's theme parks within the same day . Two different experiences are provided depending on the destination of the train , both of which are approximately four minutes long .

= = = Hogsmeade to King 's Cross = = =

At the entrance of the queue , ticket inspectors check passengers ' tickets for Universal Studios . The queue then leads into a forested area which later leads into the Hogsmeade station building . Upon climbing a flight of steps , travellers reach the Hogsmeade station platform . Once the arriving passengers on the Hogwarts Express have left the platform , passengers waiting may then board the train and enter one of the twenty @-@ one passenger compartments within the train .

As the train departs towards King 's Cross , Rubeus Hagrid waves riders goodbye outside of the window . Shadows of Harry Potter , Ron Weasley , and Hermione Granger can also be seen walking down the train corridor , looking for an empty compartment . Following this , Buckbeak flies outside the window , while Hogwarts can be seen in the background . Shortly after , the train enters a forest where centaurs are running . Upon exiting the forest , Hogwarts can be seen once again in the background . Fred and George Weasley appear , flying broomsticks and playing with fireworks . The Hogwarts Express then enters a tunnel , after which riders find themselves in the middle of a storm and pass Malfoy Manor . The journey then enters a second tunnel ; Harry , Ron , and Hermione appear again in the train corridor . As a spider crawls up the compartment door , Ron eats it and the trio continue to walk on down the corridor . After the tunnel the journey continues into London passing by an industrial factory and then a residential area . The Knight Bus then appears ; squeezing between buildings and shrinking to pass under a bridge . As the bus drives away , the train enters King 's Cross station , where Alastor Moody greets passengers .

Passengers then disembark onto Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ of King 's Cross and proceed down some stairs into a 2010 @-@ era King 's Cross Station , before arriving at the London waterfront area , adjacent to Diagon Alley .

= = = King 's Cross to Hogsmeade = = =

The King 's Cross station part of the attraction is built on a site that previously held the Jaws attraction . The entrance to the station , which is a quarter @-@ scale replica of the real London King 's Cross railway station , is located in the London area , close to Diagon Alley . Passengers enter the station building and have their admission ticket checked . They then enter a queue which takes them farther into the station building , under a split @-@ flap department board , and past London @-@ related advertisements , several stacks of suitcases and a shop selling food . After ascending a flight of stairs , passengers find themselves between signs for King 's Cross Platform 9 and Platform 10 . They can see those ahead of them walking through the " wall " forming the entrance to Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. This effect uses the Pepper 's ghost illusion . After continuing around several corners , guests arrive on Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ itself to wait for the next train to arrive . After the Hogwarts Express has reversed into Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ and the arriving passengers have disembarked , the next passengers enter one of the twenty @-@ one compartments in the three passenger carriages .

As the train departs King 's Cross , Hedwig the owl flies alongside while passing through the outskirts of London . Hedwig flies away and Dementors arrive from over the nearby buildings . At the same time Harry , Ron , and Hermione pass along the corridor side of the carriage looking for food .

The journey enters a tunnel ; upon its exit , it passes by Malfoy Manor during a stormy night . Next , the train passes through a second tunnel and the lights in the compartments go out as a Dementor enters the train and passes along the corridor ; Harry Potter uses his magic to defeat the Dementor . After exiting the tunnel , riders are greeted by Hagrid flying on a motorbike with Hogwarts in the background . As the train enters a forest , the flying Ford Anglia appears and starts driving through the terrain . The car crashes soon after and the train leaves the forest , passing by Hogwarts once again before arriving at Hogsmeade Station with Hagrid greeting passengers .

Passengers then disembark the train , walk down a ramp past the front of the Hogwarts Express and follow a path leading to Hogsmeade .

= = Characteristics = =

= = = Track = = =

The track of the Hogwarts Express is a single @-@ track funicular elevated railway running over the backlot between the two theme parks , with a two @-@ track passing loop at the midpoint . It is 676 metres (2 @, @ 218 ft) long and has a track gauge of 1 @, @ 800 mm (5 ft 10 7 ? 8 in) . On the track , there is a haul rope and a counter rope , each with a diameter of 46 millimetres (1 @. @ 8 in) . The cable winding motor is located at King 's Cross station and has a rated load of 215 kilowatts (300 hp) and a peak power rating of 636 kilowatts (900 hp) .

= = = Trains = = =

The Hogwarts Express uses two trains that can transport 168 passengers each , giving a total of 336 passengers per cycle . Each train is an articulated cable car formed of five sections : a replica of steam @-@ locomotive and its tender plus a set of three passenger vehicles . Originally each train was planned to have only two passenger carriages ? this was increased following a survey that suggested potential passengers saw the connecting Hogwarts Express as an attraction instead of only as a means of transportation between the parks . The locomotive on the 70 @-@ metre @-@ long (230 ft) trains weigh 13 tonnes (29 @, @ 000 lb) , the tenders weigh 15 tonnes (33 @, @ 000 lb) , and each passenger carriage weighs 27 tonnes (60 @, @ 000 lb) . Since the attraction is set up with a funicular track system , both trains depart and arrive at the end stations at the same time and travel at the same speed of 3 @. @ 4 metres per second (12 km / h ; 7 @. @ 6 mph) .

On both trains , the locomotive faces towards Hogsmeade station ; it is not possible for the trains to face Kings Cross . The Hogwarts Express enters King 's Cross in reverse but forwards at Hogsmeade ; the train departs Kings Cross forwards and in reverse at Hogsmeade . As a result , the trains are only designed to be seen from one side as the locomotives ' false driving wheels and specific detailing only exist on one side .

The trains were built in Goldau , Switzerland . CWA Constructions designed both the exterior and interior of the trains to make them look as faithful as possible to the Hogwarts Express seen in the Harry Potter film franchise . They are based on the steam locomotive GWR 4900 Class 5972 Olton Hall (as 5972 Hogwarts Castle) and were built from aluminum and glass @-@ reinforced plastics . Afterwards , an artificial weathering process was applied to give the appearance of a historic train .

Frey AG was responsible for wiring the trains ; specifically for the video and sounds components . The company also installed other technical equipment that allow the trains to be controlled by a computer system .

= = = = Media = = = =

Each compartment has a curved screen where the window would be . There are two different experiences , depending on the destination of the train . The special effects in both video components were designed by Double Negative .

The London Symphony Orchestra recorded the music played throughout the journey at Abbey Road Studios on 25 March 2014 . The music for the northbound journey is called " Connector Train ? Hogsmeade to London " .

= = Reception = =

The ride received mostly positive reviews upon its July 2014 opening . Lance Hart from Screamscape was impressed with the fact that the King 's Cross entrance was hidden from the rest of the Diagon Alley area . He also credited Universal for making the train look as realistic as possible : " Clearly they went to great lengths to create these cars to be replicas of what you see in the films , both on the outside as well as on the inside as you move down the hallway towards your cabin to take your seat " . In terms of the overall experience Hart said , " Universal has managed to turn what would simply be a method of transporting guests between their two parks into yet another must @-@ see attraction ... tying together the overall story and theme of visiting Hogwarts at Islands of Adventure and Diagon Alley inside Universal Studios Florida " .

Robert Niles from Theme Park Insider mentioned how the attraction " broke walls " ; including the separation of the Wizarding and Muggle worlds , how Universal made the audience the performers (in the part of the King 's Cross queue where guests walk through the wall leading to Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$) , and how , " It 's become convention for theme park attractions to drop you off at or very near the same point where you boarded the ride , so it 's a bit disorienting when you exit the Hogwarts Express and find that you 're not only in a different train station ? you 're in a different theme park . "

Arthur Levine from About.com was disappointed that Universal had not tried to re @-@ create the magical aspect of guests entering Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$, " When it 's time to make their own way to the platform , however , it appears to would @-@ be wizards that they are merely entering a darkened corridor . Aside from an audible " whoosh " sound , there is , regrettably , no attempt to reproduce the magical , molecule @-@ shifting phenomenon " . He also found it awkward that the Hogwarts Express reverses into Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ at King 's Cross ? although in Hogsmeade the train arrives facing forwards . Overall Levine said that the attraction does more than just making it a ride , " By making it an integral and compelling part of The Wizarding World , most guests would want to ride it to get the complete Potter experience . By making it an inter @-@ park ride and requiring a two @-@ park ticket to board it , Universal will surely help up @-@ sell a lot more more customers to higher @-@ priced passes , encourage multi @-@ day visits , increase demand for its on @-@ property hotels , and drive business at its CityWalk dining / shopping / entertainment district " .

In 2014 , attendance at Universal Studios Florida increased to 8 @. @ 3 million visitors , compared to 7 @. @ 1 million in the previous year . However , attendance at Islands of Adventure did not change . According to vice president of AECOM 's economics , Brian Sands , the attendance increase at the Studios was likely due to the Diagon Alley expansion . Sands also mentioned attendance at Islands of Adventure remained the same since " visitors go to the new thing " , though the Hogwarts Express likely prevented attendance from decreasing at the park .