

Disneyland March 2002

Our trip to Los Angeles, California was planned approximately 1 month in advance. We booked Days Inn Hotel in Whittier, CA, which was very close to Disneyland. Fortunately, it turned out that Mr. Jayesh Mankad (a nagar, gujarati and family relative) was the manager at the same Days Inn. We also purchased our Disneyland and Universal Studio tickets in advance to get some discount. Disneyland is celebrating 100 years of Walt Disney so you can have 3 days for the price of 2. Also as usual we booked Chevrolet Cavalier car from Avis. On Friday (8th March) as we both finished our week, Purvi started making chevdo, sakarpara etc for our trip. On Saturday (9th) I rented the car and got driving directions (maps) from web while Purvi made methi na thepla and chutney for our lunch during 6-hour drive to Los Angeles. We also went to Safeway, Target for last minute food shopping :-)

Day 1: On Sunday (10th March) we started at 9.30 am from our place. After taking a rest area stop at 11.00 am we stopped at 12.30 pm near California border for the lunch (methi na thepla, chutney, yogurt etc). In Arizona, driving speed limit is 75 miles per hour (110 km/hr). I was driving at the speed limit level so when we stopped for lunch we had covered approximately 180 miles. After 30-minute lunch break, I drove continuously for 3 hours (~ 200 miles) to reach Days Inn at 4 pm (Arizona time while it was 3 pm in California). We took some rest for 2 hours and then drove 30 minutes to Newport Beach. We saw the sunset at the beach (for Arizona people beach is something new :-)). We came back to the hotel at 9.30 pm after taking dinner at Subway restaurant.

Day 2: Plan was to leave early for Disneyland so we can spend more time there. Disneyland has 3 main areas - Disney downtown, Disneyland Park and Disney's California Adventure. Disneyland park opens at 9.00 am and closes at 8.00 pm. After taking Macdonald's breakfast we reached Disneyland at 9.30 am. Our car was parked on level 5 (Donald's level) of Mickey and friends parking structure. A special tram takes everybody from parking to the Disney downtown. On one side of the downtown is the Disneyland Park while on the other side is the Disney's California Adventure. Our first impression of the Disneyland is summarized very nicely by a quote, which says, "Disneyland is the biggest people trap ever built by a mouse." We saw thousands of people in those parks.

Entrance to the Disneyland Park had tight security due to recent events here. In the entrance we can see a huge flower arrangement in the shape of Mickey Mouse face. We were given the map of the park with list of shows and rides. Disneyland Park is

divided into 8 sub-parts – Main street, Critter country, Adventure land, Frontier land, New Orleans square, Tomorrow land, Mickey's Toontown and Fantasyland.

We started on Main Street. Our first stop was Disneyland Railroad. It is a train, which takes us around the park and gives an overview of what we can see. As the train passes through the caves, it shows a showcase of Grand Canyon and Dinosaurs. In the Main Street we can see old fire engines, horse-drawn Streetcars and Carriages. People take ride on those vehicles. Main Street has shops and restaurants. We walked thru the Main Street on to the Central Plaza. Central Plaza has a big statue of Walt Disney (founder of the Disneyland) with Mickey Mouse and other small statues of all other characters (like Donald Duck, Minnie Mouse etc).

Now we will describe the rides/shows, which we visited (not in any order). Most of the rides had big long lines which can take anywhere between 15-40 minutes waiting time. We omitted some rides because they were especially for kids.

In Fantasyland...

- * "It's small world": A water boat ride. Ride takes you thru 14 miniature different regions of the world where wooden puppets dance and sing in different languages... educational and fun for all.

- * "Mad Tea Party": A teacup ride. The floor and cups rotate in different directions. The difference from usual was that you can change the speed of the cup by turning the wheel inside the cup - faster you turn, faster the cup rotates... fun.

- * "Matterhorn Bobsleds": A fast roller coaster ride. The ride goes up the mountain and then run down the mountain with sharp turns and falls.... fun if you love fast rides.

- * "Storybook Land": A water boat ride. Ride takes you thru small miniature buildings and towns famous in different storybooks (e.g. Cinderella etc)... nice work of art.

In Mickey's Toontown...

- * "Mickey's House": Mickey Mouse's house. We walk thru his house and meet him in the backyard and take photographs with him. Mickey takes photograph with each and everybody individually.

* "Minnie's House": Minnie Mouse's house. Everybody meets her in the front yard of the house and take photographs with her. Minnie takes photograph with each and everybody individually in style. We also walk thru her house (kitchen, living room etc made specially for kids).

* "Gadget's Go Coaster": A fast roller coaster ride. Not as big or scary as other coaster rides because it is especially for kids... but it is fun for adults also.

* "Jolly Trolley": A small tram moving around in the Toontown. People take ride to see around the Mickey's Toontown.

Toontown is specifically for kids but when you visit Disneyland it is very important to meet Mickey Mouse and have a personal photograph with him :-) so everybody visits Toontown.

In Tomorrow land...

* "Disneyland Monorail": A Monorail. It takes you around the two Disneyland parks and the downtown. When it was built in 1959, it was the first monorail in western hemisphere.

* "Innoventions": A type of show. It shows things is technology which will be used in future e.g. kitchen appliances, computers, televisions, cars etc. It also includes a futuristic car ride sponsored by Chevrolet ... lot of new things.

* "Star Tours": A fast space ride. Few people sit in a room and it gives an effect as if everybody is moving in space (like space simulator). It is fast, bumpy ride ... fun.

In Adventure land...

* "Jungle Cruise": A water boat ride. Boat takes you thru the jungle and you see/listen different animals. The animals look very natural but all were mechanical ... nice ride with good commentary.

* "Indiana Jones": A scary Jeep ride. A ride inside a dark mountain with all kinds of scary things which makes this ride fun ... fun if you like artificial scary animations (like a huge ball is coming towards you and you don't know what will happen - suddenly jeep turns).

In Frontier land...

* "Big Thunder Mountain Railroad": A fast train ride. A train goes thru a mountain with all kinds of ups and downs, sharp turns and high speed.... fun.

In Critter Country and in New Orleans square couple of major rides were closed due to annual maintenance. Also there were couple of big boat rides to enjoy.

We enjoyed all our rides and sometimes we were surprised by the amount of area covered by the ride inside when it looked very small from outside.

At the end of the first day we stopped on the Main Street to see the parade of all Disney characters and the lighting on the buildings.

We left the Disneyland at 8.00 pm first by tram to the parking and then to the hotel by car. We reached hotel at 9.30 pm after taking dinner at Taco Bell (Mexican restaurant).

To be continued for 3rd day (2nd day at Disneyland)....

Continued...

Day 3: On Tuesday (12th March) we wanted to visit Disney's California Adventure. Disney's California Adventure is the new park in Disneyland and was opened in February 2001 to celebrate Walt Disney's 100 years. This park has more rides for adults and also has section on Hollywood. California Adventure opens at 10.00 am and closes at 6.00 pm. After taking Macdonald's breakfast we reached Disneyland at 9.30 am. Again as we reached at the same time as previous day, our car was parked on the same level 5 (Donald's level) of Mickey and friends parking structure. Special tram took everybody from parking to the Disney downtown.

As soon as we entered the park we ran quickly to ride major rides before long lines start building up. In first few hours we set in following rides...

- * "California Screaming": A fast steel roller coaster ride. Only adults are allowed because it has very fast speed, sharp turns/slopes and also turns you upside down. Coaster circles in the Mickey's face. It was first roller coaster experience for Purvi... we both enjoyed it.

- * "Mali Boomer": A fast scary ride. The ride shoots you up suddenly at high-speed approx. 200 feet and then it is a free fall. It swings up down few times before coming down.... very interesting (if Khyati remembers it was something like 'Pitt Fall' but opposite)

- * "Orange Stinger": A fast swing ride. Everybody sits in an individual chair and the ride swings fast in circle. It swings fast enough that you are very high above the ground... nice ride.

- * "Golden Zephyr": A space ship swing ride. Everybody sits in a space ship and the ride swings fast in circle. It swings fast enough that you are very high above the water... nice ride.

- * "Sun Wheel": Famous ferry wheel (Merry-go-round) ride. This was above the lake and the difference was that each cabin was swinging & moving from right to left as the wheel moved... something different and nice.

- * "Mulholland Madness": An interesting roller coaster ride. Small cars moving in sharp turns and fast speed similar to famous Mulholland drive in California... thrilling ride.

* "King Triton's Carousel": Purvi had a nice ride in this famous ride with horses, elephants, fishes etc moving in a fix circle and also moving up and down...

* "Soaring Over California": Imax ride. Everybody sits in a chair and chair lifts up. The front big screen shows all interesting places in California and you feel like you are flying over those places... beautiful flight.

There were small rides, shows and character meetings for kids also.

In Hollywood section...

- * We walked thru Hollywood streets,
- * Saw how animations are made,
- * Saw 3D Muppet show (3D glasses provided) and
- * Saw Goofy's beach party show with Mickey and all.

Later in the afternoon we went into Disney downtown to do some shopping. After spending some time and money we went back into the Disneyland Park (which we went previous day). We enjoyed few more small rides and took pictures of parade of Disney characters. We left Disneyland at 8.00 pm to end our two day visit to Disneyland and we enjoyed every minute of it.

Day 4: On Wednesday (13th March) we had to visit Universal Studio, Hollywood. Universal Studio was little far compared to Disneyland from our Days Inn. We had to cross Los Angeles downtown and go on other side. It was approx. 30 miles from Days Inn. Universal Studio is open for public between 10.00 am and 6.00 pm. We left Days Inn at 9.00 am. As we were going towards the LA downtown during office hours, the drive was slow due to heavy traffic. We reached after 1-hour drive. Hollywood is a hilly region so it was very windy.

After parking our car, we walked thru Universal studio city walk to reach Universal studio theme park. We saw shops, restaurants and cinemas in Universal studio city. As soon as we reached Universal Studio theme park we first went to take famous studio tour. We were given the map of the park so it was not difficult to find the place from where studio tour departed. The park had just opened but still line for studio tour was very long. They have few trams for tour and each tram takes few hundred visitors so within 15-20 minutes we boarded the tram to take the tour.

* Tour takes us thru different stages where famous film shootings were done. Tour passes thru the outdoor shooting area, which has all kinds of fake buildings and

streets. Tour also shows Hollywood bungalows in which famous people use to live (e.g. Alfred Hitchcock). Tour takes everybody thru sets where special effect scenes are made e.g. whole tram goes into a set and you are given a feel of a fake earthquake and the destruction, also tram brings us face-to-face with fake Jaws -the shark. Tram also passes over a bridge and you feel like bridge is falling... but it is just an effect.... 45 minutes tour was fun and gives us an idea of how film special effects are made (even artificial rain, flood and thunderstorms).

After taking the studio tour we visited and enjoyed few rides and shows related to famous Universal studio movies...

- * "Jurassic Park Ride": A wet water boat ride. The boat passes thru the park and different Dinosaurs try to scare you. After few minutes finally a big Dino attacks you and to save you from Dino the boat falls of a hill into the water. A big splash of water wets everybody. We had to buy the raincoat to avoid getting wet.... fun ride.

- * "E.T. (Extra Terrestrial)": A ride based on E.T. movie. The bicycle ride takes us from this planet to E.T's planet showing different special effects ... interesting ride.

- * "Back to the Future Ride": A fast car ride. 5-6 people sit in a car and fly thru space to catch the other car. Ride takes us on to a volcano, sea, mountain and even inside Dinosaur's mouth... nice bumpy and fast ride.

- * "The Mummy Returns": Based on the movie. A dark walking trail scares you as you walk thru with skeletons and scary faces... very dark scary walk... not much fun.

- * "Waterworld Show": A live show based on the movie. 2000 people sit in a stadium and few actors act a fight scene in water from the movie... entertaining 20 minute show.

- * "Terminator-2 3D Show": 3D show based on the movie. Fights of heroes with futuristic machines tries to scare you with 3D effects (3D glasses provided)... nice show.

One show was based on live music band and couple of other shows are shown only during weekends. The winds were picking-up and it was getting very chilly. We left theme park at 5.30 pm and walked thru the Universal studio city area before leaving Universal Studio, Hollywood at 6.00 pm.

We drove 2-3 hours in the Los Angeles downtown to get a feel of the big city. It was difficult to drive because of tough downtown driving rules (one ways, parking problems etc). We left Los Angeles and ate dinner before reaching our Days Inn around 9.30 pm.

Day 5: Thursday 14th March we took some time to wake-up and had nice relaxing breakfast. We had to checkout the Days Inn at 11.00 am. We met Jayeshbhai for few minutes and talked with him. We asked him about any near-by Indian shop/area. The little Indian area was near-by so we said thanks and bye to Jayeshbhai and left the Days Inn. We went to Indian grocery shop and bought some groceries, which were little cheaper, compared to Arizona. There was 'Woodlands' restaurant also but we already had a big breakfast so we did not eat there. We left that area at 1.00 pm for Tempe, Arizona.

With 2-3 rest area/coffee stops we reached Tempe at 8.30 pm (7.30 pm California time). We had our dinner at South Indian restaurant here before coming back home at 10.00 pm.

So.... our trip ended after 5 very interesting and fun filled days. We use to remember Bhai and Mummy (with Vidyutkaka and Darshanakaki) because they visited these places 22 years ago and also Manushi and Hirav because all parks had lot of fun things for kids.

Hope you all enjoyed loooooong description of our trip. We also enjoyed remembering those places again and again and again and again... have fun.