

Place: The ride queue for Flight of Passage in Pandora at Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

The first time I ever went through the queue for this ride, every detail took my breath away. I sobbed with tears of reverence and awe. Feelings of belonging took root in my heart as I walked the path laid before me, every detail meticulously designed, and I came to the realization that this is what I was going to do for the rest of my life. I analyzed every detail moving along the concreted path, made to look like a well trodden path up the side of a small mountain that leads into a cave floor. The winding rails to keep people in a line and in an orderly fashion seem to melt away as you leave the light of day outside and move into the caves of the floating island. There are openings in the cave at first connecting the inside and outside so you feel the light of the sun's warmth as you explore the paintings on the walls. The lights are ambient and warm from the lanterns scattered through the lines. Evidence of life and culture surrounds you, in the hand braided ropes fastening the lanterns to the branches on the light poles to the handprints left by Na'vi and humans; as you make your journey towards a cut in the back of the cave that sharply turns to the left, blocking your view of what's beyond, you can't help but to admire the enormous red painting depicting the tale of Toruk and Toruk Makto.

As you turn the sharp corner, it gets dark quickly and looks as though you have stepped into a man made cavern, bored into the earth by machinery. Military precision and cold simplicity replaces the warm, full of life energy as you step through metal doors and into the old RDA facility. Signs around you tell you that the facility and its purpose is scientific, to help bring back habitat and populations of the Ikran. Ikran are sacred to the Na'vi people, specifically the Omaticaya people of Pandora the signs tell you. Unsolicited acts from RDA have destroyed their native habitats and affected the Jungle Na'vi way of life and the scientists at this facility are studying how to reverse the effects of human interference.

Going from sparse to carpeted, the walls and ceiling become enveloped in moss, carpeting plants, and bioluminescent flora. The facility that was so starkly clean and brightly lit, now looks as though it has been abandoned and left to the overgrowth for years. You are very suddenly enveloped in the dark jungles of Pandora at night in sight and sound. Each plant, every texture, every piece, laid perfectly to invoke the feeling that you are on Pandora and walking through the jungle ruin at night. As if you are walking through the home of the Na'vi.

You are led through the jungle to a brightly lit, starkly contrasted wall to the blues, purples, and greens of the jungle's flora and fauna. A bronze slated wall stands before you like a monument and builds excitement for what is on the other side. You walk through the titan sized bronze slats and are snaked around to the left and right until you round out to a fully equipped RDA laboratory. My eyes could not stop darting around the room to all of the details. You can see Dr. Grace Augustine on the monitors as she tells you about the research trip you will be embarking on, the amnio tank bubbles, the computers whirl, videos made by the scientists of the information they have found and footage of the Na'vi play on monitors scattered around the lab. As a massive fan of Avatar, seeing the amnio tank housing a full scale, Na'vi sized Avatar, I exploded in excited wonder. Books, equipment, snacks, and more clutter the lab and make it feel like a space that holds active research. So many details decorate the space around you that

you have to stop many times to take it all in. Your mission, having been prepared by Dr. Grace on the monitors in the lab for your assignment, is to complete a rite of passage with the Omaticaya, a tribe of the Na'vi whose coming of age ceremony is finding and bonding with a sort of dragon-like creature called an Ikran. You are to do this ceremony to connect with the Na'vi and create ties to the people and learn more about their culture, their habitat, and anything that could be valuable in saving these creatures, reporting back to Dr. Grace your findings. (I think this was intentional as this is the place where the queue frequently stops and has longer waits in the same place).

When you exit the lab, it feels as though you are transitioned to a military bunker in a secure facility. In this military bunker, the halls are long, dim, and cemented. Painted with lines to show the path of travel and signage for efficiency of movement. The simplicity and contrast of bright to dim lighting from the lab to now builds excitement, making you feel energized and ready to go. Moving quickly now compared to the leisurely pace of the rest of the queue, a ride attendant takes you from your line in the military hallways to the transition space for the ride itself. A small room designed as an avatar matching sequence. You are paired to an Avatar body and are assigned your seat location to connect to the simulation of your avatar. You are given the instructions for the ride and as soon as the video sequence is over, the doors open up to the room where the ride is. The build up feels as though it is a build up in a symphony. The moment you are seated on the back of the simulated Ikran, the crescendo.