



Oui, Mickey, you're so fine

At Disneyland Paris, the magic and croissants never end

The clue is in the name, but Disneyland Paris is most definitely French Disney. It's all the magic with added croissants. And lots of French rules.

I'm not taking the mickey, Disneyland Paris is marvellous fun, just like all the other Disney parks – and if you are a Francophile like me, combining the American entertainment dream with French food is perfect. It wasn't until I left Disneyland Paris that I realised, ironically, I had seen no sign of French fries my whole trip – or much junk food at all.

Even the buffets in the Disney hotels featured quality food and the only snacks we could find on Main Street were in a boulangerie. Bien sur.

But it was the kids' menu in Captain Jack's restaurant that made me take note – there's no such thing as "children's food" in France, they eat what adults eat, salad, cheese course and all, from toddlers. And so the junior menu, presented with a flourish, featured a starter of tuna roulade, followed by chicken and rice or mahi-mahi fish and mousse. So civilised. So not very Disney.

For theme park fans – or even if you're not, but happen to be in France – building in a side trip to Disneyland Paris is definitely worthwhile. It's such a joyful place. You can't be stressed out when you're spinning in a giant tea cup or flying on Dumbo. It's simply not permitted.

You can visit for a day if you are in Paris, but it's worth staying longer if you are coming from elsewhere in France

or, as we did, on the Eurostar from London. There are trains that go direct from St Pancras to Disneyland, which is super-easy, environmentally friendly and no matter how often you do it, it never ceases to be exhilarating that the train goes under the sea and pops out in another country.

There are two parks in Disneyland Paris, Disneyland and Walt Disney Studios. In both there are rides and attractions for every age, from the very young to adults. Our party featured a wide age range and the favourites ranged from It's a Small World and Peter Pan's Flight for the littlies, Pirates of the Caribbean for the middlies and Big Thunder Mountain Railroad and Star Wars Hyperspace Mountain for the oldest. I have to take their word for the latter as my days of roller-coasters that do loop-the-loops are frankly over.

It was all about *Frozen* during our pre-pandemic visit; *Frozen* shows ran throughout the day and a big parade that featured floats with all the Disney characters and



From top: Disneyland Paris lights up; the 30th anniversary daytime show, *Dream ... and Shine Brighter*; Disneyland Paris app.

princesses absolutely enchanted my two daughters. The admission was worth the looks on their faces alone. The park is celebrating its 30th anniversary throughout 2022, celebrating with new shows. Mickey and his friends are even getting shiny new costumes for the occasion.

While the admission to the parks themselves is not that steep – 54 euros (\$80) for a day ticket for one park – you do have to reconcile yourself to emptying your savings account and throwing it all at the trip as meals and gifts are pricey. If staying for a few days, I'd recommend buying a hotel and food package upfront as, like most family attractions, there's little point trying to budget when there. (Although special mention goes to the tourists spotted stealthily making up sandwiches from the breakfast buffet and sneaking them in their bags.)



Having moved back to the UK from Australia, Kerry Parnell is still thrilled you can catch the Eurostar to France – and Disneyland – like a Croissant Express.



JOY TO THE WORLD
You can't be stressed out when you're spinning in a giant teacup or flying on Dumbo. It's simply not permitted

Clockwise from above: Disneyland Hotel, which is under renovation; Disney's Hotel New York; welcome to Disneyland; fly on the Toy Soldiers Parachute Drop.

Combining the American entertainment dream with French food is perfect

And you need to know the rules before you go. They like a rule in France – such as you should book all your meals before you get there, as you can't walk into a restaurant, like in the normal world, even in your hotel.

You'll queue for everything – from coffee to the rides. There are queues to get into the restaurants even when you've booked and if you miss your slot, tough. I tried to alter one booking by 15 minutes and got a severe "Non, madame" in response. The other tip is to send someone around the park when you first arrive to get free timed, fast pass tickets for the most popular rides. That way you can walk on at your allotted time. It makes it a lot easier.

But even though it costs a gazillion dollars, it's absolutely worth it. It's magical and marvellous and makes you feel like a child. I guess, at Disneyland, at least, money can buy happiness.

Escape route

Getting there

Disneyland Paris is next to Marne-la-Vallée Chessy station. From central Paris you can take a train or shuttle bus to the park, or the Eurostar from London St Pancras. eurostar.com

Staying there

There is a range of Disney hotels from the new Disney's Hotel New York to the comfortable Newport Bay Club in the Disney Village. The Disneyland Hotel within the park is currently being renovated. It is worth pre-booking hotel, park and food packages. If on a budget, choose a non-affiliated hotel outside.

disneylandparis.com



Go to escape.com.au/disney to discover 18 secrets about Walt Disney World



Europe's best theme parks

Parc Asterix, France

Also outside of Paris is Parc Asterix, where the comic books come to life with rides like the unusual Discobelix. parcasterix.fr

Peppa Pig World, UK

The cutest theme park in the UK, especially for those with small children. Part of Paultons Park near Southampton, it is Peppatastic with miniature rides perfect for preschoolers.

paultonspark.co.uk

Efteling, The Netherlands

This crazy theme park is full of dragons, fairies and an enchanted forest with a perilous wooden rollercoaster. Definitely one of a kind. efteling.com



Port Aventura World, Spain

South of Barcelona is this popular, high-voltage park, above, which has 43 rides. The resort also includes Ferrari Land and a water park. portaventuraworld.com

Europa-Park, Germany

On the border of Germany, France and Switzerland is the impressive Europa-Park with huge rollercoasters, storybook rides and a new indoor water world Rulantica. europapark.de

Tivoli Gardens, Denmark

If planning a visit to Copenhagen, build in a trip to the Tivoli Gardens. With vintage rides and high-adrenaline ones, it's especially charming at Christmas.

tivoligardens.com