

PIXIE DUST NEWS

SPRING 2016

Editor: Pat Mancuso

Pixie Dust Tours
(affiliated with Odyssey Travel)
484-686-5164 or 610-489-3861
www.pixiedusttours.com
mancuso_pat@yahoo.com

If you do not wish to continue receiving Pixie Dust News, please send me an email and I will unsubscribe you. Thank you.

DESTINATION: DOWNTON ABBEY

By Viator, January 2016

Britain's favorite period drama *Downton Abbey* took the world by storm, so get your top hats and teacups at the ready, and prepare to get a taste of Edwardian-era England. The real-life Downton Abbey is set at the magnificent 1,000-acre estate of Highclere Castle, a 19th-century historic castle in Hampshire in the picturesque village of Bampton in Oxfordshire. If you're looking to be treated like royalty, you can visit both locations on the private Downton Abbey Film Locations Tour by Private Chauffeur.

Highclere Castle

Thanks to the present day mansion's newfound fame, touring the estate is a popular day trip from London. Take the Downton Abbey and Oxford Tour from London including Highclere Castle option for a day of exploring the impressive estate. Fashioned around an original Georgian structure, the building was designed by Sir Charles Barry and features the spectacular timeless façade that has become so synonymous with the TV show. Belonging to the Earl and Countess of Carnarvon since 1679, the private estate now opens its doors in between filming, offering fans the chance to explore the rooms as seen on screen and wander the exquisite 18th-century parklands, which were designed by legendary landscaper Capability Brown. The Small-Group Downton Abbey and Highclere Castle Tour from London allows fans to perch on a chaise longue in the grand salon where the Dowager Countess regaled the ladies of the house over cups of tea; browse the 5,650-book library where the Earl of Grantham conducted business with his trusty Labrador, Isis, at his heels; walk the grand stairwell where Lady Mary and Matthew first kissed; or marvel at the original Van Dyck painting of King Charles I in the regal dining room where dinnertime chatter revealed more than a few of the show's explosive storylines. It is without a doubt *Downton Abbey's* most iconic landmark, which can mean limited availability for its tours.

Bampton

Another popular spot for fans is the historic Oxfordshire village of Bampton, better known as its on-screen alter-ego, the fictional Downton Village. This village has a lower profile than Highclere Castle but experiences like the Downton Abbey TV Locations Tour of Oxfordshire from London offer the chance to spot the places that Mr. Bates, Tom, and Mrs. Patmore frequented on the show. One of England's oldest villages, dating back to the Iron Age, Bampton features rows of 12th-century cottages as well as the Norman-style St Mary's Church and draws a steady stream of tourists thanks to Downton fame. You also have the option to add another beautiful building to this trip with the Downton Abbey TV Locations and Blenheim Palace Tour from London tour. To really immerse

yourself in southern England history, opt for the 2-Day Best of Southern England from London: Oxford, Stonehenge, Windsor, and Bath, including the Downton Abbey Filming Sites tour.

London

Back in the city, there are a few other ways to get your fix of British period drama. Pay a visit to Angels Fancy Dress of London, who supplied many of the series' elegant gowns and accessories, where you rent out glittering 1920s flapper dresses and long cigarette holders for a Downton-inspired night on the town; or you can brush up on your World War I era history at the Imperial War Museum. Make sure you don't forget the most important tradition of the British aristocracy—traditional English afternoon tea. Head to one of Central London's glitziest venues where you can sip the national brew from fine china teacups, munch on bite-size sandwiches, and stage your very own high-society revival.

MICKEY'S NOT-SO-SCARY HALLOWEEN PARTY RETURNS TO MAGIC KINGDOM PARK THIS FALL

While spring has just bloomed, it's not too early to look ahead toward fall. Today, we're excited to announce the dates for this year's Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party at Magic Kingdom® Park.

This favorite fall event returns to the Walt Disney World® Resort this fall with 29 dates. You can trick-or-treat throughout Magic Kingdom Park, see favorite Disney characters dressed in their very own Halloween costumes, and enjoy special entertainment—including a spook-tastic parade and eerie extravaganza of fireworks. Returning favorites include Mickey's Boo-to-You Halloween Parade, Hocus Pocus Villain Spelltacular, and Happy HalloWishes fireworks.

Here's a full list of this year's dates:

September 2, 8, 11, 13, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 29, and 30

October 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25, 27, 28, 30, and 31

New this year, Disney has revised their costuming guidelines for special events in their theme parks. While costumed attire may be worn, guests ages 14 and older are strongly discouraged from wearing layered costumes or costume props that surround the entire body as they may be subject to additional security screening. Additionally, costumes may not contain any weapons that resemble or could easily be mistaken for an actual weapon. Stay tuned for updates on ticket prices, on-sale dates, entertainment, and events.

CURRENT DISNEY DEALS

Save up to 30% on Rooms at Select Walt Disney World Resort Hotels This Summer!

You can save up to 30%* on rooms at select Walt Disney World® Resort hotels for stays most nights from June 12 to August 25, 2016, when you book by June 10, 2016. Plus, you can receive an exclusive "Awaken Summer" graphic MagicBand when you upgrade to a room and Theme Park package with a minimum 2-day Magic Your Way® Ticket. The MagicBand will activate a surprise sound and lighting feature at select touch points throughout the Walt Disney World Resort.**

Only at our four can't-miss Theme Parks will you discover a summer unlike any other—filled with new and immersive experiences that will soon bring you to worlds you could only imagine. At Disney's Animal Kingdom® Theme Park, the magic of nature will come to life during *Rivers of Light* and other incredible nighttime experiences. At Disney's Hollywood Studios® the Force will be unleashed with the all-new *Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple* and *Star Wars Launch Bay*. At Epcot®, *Frozen*® is arriving with new immersive journeys on *Frozen Ever After* and the Royal Sommerhus. At Disney Springs™, the new eclectic mix of boutiques, eateries, and entertainment is expanding all throughout the summer. With even more new and exciting experiences coming

to Magic Kingdom® Park and Disney's Blizzard Beach® Water Park, this summer has something unforgettable for everyone!

Booking Window:

March 14 to June 10, 2016

Travel Window:

June 12 to August 25, 2016

THE FAMILY MAGIC TOUR AT THE MAGIC KINGDOM: A WALT DISNEY WORLD BACKSTAGE TOUR REVIEW

Jocelyn Tavares, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Walt Disney World is probably the only place you will get a shy girl like me to bark like a dog in public. I mean that in the nicest possible, PG-rated way. But that is exactly what you may do, or see, on the Family Magic Tour at the Magic Kingdom. This is also one of the few tours at Walt Disney World that younger children can take part in. It is a reasonably priced tour (especially by Disney standards), at \$39 per person (tax not included), a ticket required for ages 3 and up. The tour does require valid park admission, and it meets every morning at 10:00 am.

We met our small group and tour guide at the Chamber of Commerce, but currently tours are meeting at the Town Square Theater. With a name tag and a bottle of water, we were appropriately marked and started on our way. Our guide informed us that Mickey had thrown a party the night before, and Donald "borrowed" Mickey's Sorcerer hat. Donald couldn't handle the magic of the hat, so, of course, chaos ensued, and before Mickey knew it, all kinds of important things were hidden all over the Magic Kingdom. If our group couldn't find all of these items, Captain Hook would be able to take over the park. We had to find them before Captain Hook did, so we could save the Magic Kingdom .

To get warmed up, the kids tried their aim at a bean bag toss. It served as an icebreaker, getting the kids more comfortable with each other and at ease with the interactivity of the scavenger hunt. At the end of the bean toss, we all found the first clue, with a little rhyme to lead us to the next location. At each location, we found another clue and one of the lost items that we needed to collect before Captain Hook found them.

The clues took us all over the park: the barbershop, locations in trees outside the Jungle Cruise, through Frontierland, the Main Street Confectionery, and bushes in Liberty Square, and we even ran a little bit through the Tomorrowland Terrace (among more!). Some of the clues were trickier than others and required a whole lot of searching. Some of the clues were easily seen. With a break at the Cheshire Café, the whole scavenger hunt took approximately two hours.

It was a great way to experience the park and to see well-known details that can be easy to overlook while at the World. Our group also took many paths that we might not normally take on the usual rush-around-the-Magic Kingdom day. There was also the added benefit of seeing the clues and the park through the help of younger eyes. It wasn't all hard work, though. There were also a few surprises. A ride was thrown in for good measure. When I was researching this tour for my family's trip, the Peter Pan ride was the usual ride included for the tour, but at the time of our visit, the queue was being reimaged. We were honored to ride Winnie the Pooh in its place. It was a nice perk of the tour to get an extra ride in our Magic Kingdom Day.

Another wonderful surprise was meeting Peter Pan and having him all to ourselves. He was the best face character I have ever seen at Walt Disney World. This Pan was the embodiment of the boy who never grew up. He had the cocky assuredness and swagger that we see in the Disney film, and he looked just like Peter. Meeting Peter Pan alone, watching the kids play with him, and posing for photos with him was one of the big highlights for my family.

There is another wonderful surprise—which I will leave as a surprise. I'm sure you can figure it out if you Google enough about the Family Magic Tour. But I don't want to be the one to spoil it all. However, I'll tell you this much: We did get to meet another character and posed for pictures. And it was wonderful.

The Family Magic Tour is a great tour if you are a family that goes to Walt Disney World often, and you are looking for a different twist on your vacation. If you only visit once every few years, or this is your only trip in the near future, it may not be the best use of your time. It was a great way to see the park from a different perspective and slow down and enjoy some of the individual elements of the Magic Kingdom. That aspect may be appealing to families wherever they are in their Disney World visits. It was a lot of fun.

I can't emphasize this fact enough: The price for each member of the family is amazing, considering you are enjoying a tour at Walt Disney World. The children and parents in our group enjoyed it so much—the moms were raving and glowing by the end of the tour. It was so gratifying to see the kids work together and to see the parents act like goofs. Our tour guide was very warm, friendly, and inclusive and tried to get all of the kids involved in finding clues, as well as nudging parents to gallop like horses, bark like dogs, or whatever silly thing we had to do to have a laugh in the August heat. Lastly, Disney never fails at making you feel special when you take part in these events. They didn't fail here, either.

Our tour guide told me that the clues don't vary, but each tour guide comes up with their own story on how those clues and items get strewn around the park. In a typical twist of Disney magic, our tour guide grew up a few towns over from the town where our daughter was born. (I should mention that she was 10 at the time of the tour. The age in ranges in our tour was 3 through 11 or 12.) It's these little sprinkles of pixie dust that make our Disney weeks magical, preserve our memories, and keep us coming back.

BEST TIMES TO BEAT THE CROWDS: DISNEY WORLD TRIP PLANNING

Posted by: [Chad N](#) in [Planning](#), [Save Your Time](#)

Making the decision to go to Walt Disney World is the easy part. Deciding *when* to go can be a little more complicated. While there are a lot of things to consider in making this decision, the factor most people ask about are crowds. The reason Disney World has a reputation for being crowded is simple. It IS crowded. But hey, it's the most popular tourist destination in the world. What do you expect? But that doesn't mean the worst of the crowds can't be avoided.

First of all, the bad news. The days of the off-season when the parks are empty and every ride is a walk on are long gone. There is no such thing as a slow time at Disney World any more. Disney has done an amazing job of using special events, festivals, and strategic room deals to fill in those traditionally slow periods. Nowadays, the parks are either busy, crazy busy, or "you have to be kidding me, what were we thinking" busy.

If you want to avoid crowds no matter what, then holidays are out. The week before Christmas through the weekend after New Year's is the busiest time of the year for Disney World. Magic Kingdom typically closes to new guests before lunch and you may see gate closures at some of the other parks as well. We've been to Magic Kingdom on Christmas several times and there is no doubt about it, it's the thickest crowd we've ever been in. We've seen lines of an hour plus to get on the ferry boat or monorail from the parking lot to the front gate. It's an awesome time way to spend a holiday but be aware of what you're getting into.

It's not just the major holidays of Christmas, New Year, and Thanksgiving that pack the parks. Crowds swell around any holiday that closes schools and businesses, no matter how minor. Whether trying to save on

vacation days or avoiding extra days out of school for the kids, planning a vacation around a three or four-day weekend is very popular. The lines reflect that.

Summer and spring break times also bring much higher crowd levels for obvious reasons. Many parents are reluctant to pull kids out of school or don't have the option so times of extended school breaks are peak seasons in Orlando. Jersey Week falls into this category as well. While the weeks following Labor Day through Thanksgiving tend to have lower crowd levels, the first week of November is an exception to the rule. New Jersey closes its schools for teachers' conventions and everyone who isn't a teacher heads to Florida.

Finally, special events can impact crowd levels. Two events in particular, Marathon Weekend and the Food and Wine Festival, will impact your visit. Marathon Weekend is always the second weekend in January and brings 150,000-plus extra people to the parks. That's enough to bump wait times over normal January levels and make traffic heavy on Saturday and a complete mess on Sunday. The Food and Wine Festival has made fall a popular time to visit, but the impact is mostly contained to Epcot.

So when are the slowest times to visit? Zig when everyone else is zagging. The key to avoiding crowds is to go when it's most inconvenient for the greatest number of people to travel. That gets us back to school schedules. Since families with school-age children are the core of Disney's audience, visit during the times when it is most difficult for those families to visit. Here are the periods that historically see the lowest crowd levels:

- The week following New Year's Day through the first few days of February. With the exception of Marathon Weekend and the weekend/Monday of the MLK holiday, January is a great time to visit. Besides low crowds, it's also the coolest time of the year when we have our winter (brrrrrrrr). Don't worry, with the exception of a few random days, people who don't live in Florida call this spring or early summer, or just paradise. Expect temps in the upper 60s or low 70s.
- The last two weeks of February are generally slower.
- April through the first week of May. Spring breakers have left and schools and colleges won't begin letting out until mid-May. This is also a great time weather-wise to visit. Temps will have warmed into the 80s so pools and water parks are in full swing. However, the oppressive summer heat and humidity that Florida is famous for is still a few months away.
- The second half of August through the end of September is a time for some of the lowest crowd levels of the year. Schools are back in session and even if parents are willing to pull the kids out of school later in the year, they are usually unwilling to do so during the first month.
- Be aware the first couple weeks of October get a little busier due to some events and some fall breaks. The crowds are nothing like summer or holidays, but they are noticeably heavier. The second half of October up to Thanksgiving week is generally slower. Don't forget to avoid Jersey Week. Again, not as heavy as summer or holidays, but slightly busier.
- Finally, the week following Thanksgiving through the first half of December are very good times to visit from a crowd perspective. Also, the humidity will have moved out but temperatures are usually still in the low to mid 80s so it's still great pool weather.

Again, we must warn you to set your expectations correctly. Empty parks are a thing of the past. No matter when you choose to visit, the parks will be busy, there will be lines, and you will want to get Fast Passes. Over the last couple decades, Disney has done a brilliant job creating events, festivals, and facilities to draw crowds during traditionally slow times. However, try to visit during the periods listed above and avoid the times we've warned you about and you will miss the worst of it. Have fun planning and enjoy your trip!

7 REASONS FOR ADULTS TO VISIT DISNEY WORLD WITHOUT THE KIDS

Posted by: [Cindy N](#) in [Planning](#)

Many people believe, and rightly so, that Walt Disney World is a great place for families with kids to vacation. While it certainly does appeal to kids, there are a number of reasons why adults should go to Disney World without the kids! For our 10th anniversary, my husband and I enjoyed a fabulous seven days at Disney kid-free! To our children's dismay, we left them behind with Grandma. While it was a little weird that they were not there, we had a great time experiencing Disney in a way that only adults can. Here are seven amazing reasons for adults to visit Disney World without the kids!

7. Visit Without the Crowds

If you are looking to enjoy wall-to-wall people and overwhelming crowds, plan your trip around school holidays. If you'd prefer shorter lines, easier dining reservations, and less stress, you may want to schedule your trip when most kids are in school. This is a great reason for an adults-only trip. We like September and early October and January through the first part of February for the lowest crowds.

6. Special Tours for Adults Only (16+)

While there are many special backstage tours available to adults and children alike, there are a few tours that are only available to those over age of 16. The tours for adults are Keys to the Kingdom Tour at Magic Kingdom, Backstage Magic Tour at all four parks, Disney's Holiday, D-Lights at Epcot (November and December), the UnDISCOVERed Future World at Epcot, and Wilderness Back Trail Adventure at Fort Wilderness Resort. These tours show backstage areas and secrets that would spoil the experience for young kids, so a trip without the kids is a perfect time to experience one of these special tours.

5. Recreation and Spas

There are so many different recreation opportunities at Disney World. Check out our top-six recreation activities that would be a great option for couples to do on their own. Recreation and Spa activities can be expensive so if you'll be at Disney without the kids, it's a great time to try them out.

4. Sleep In and Stay Up Late

Children, especially young children, often wake up very early and do best when kept on their normal schedule. While this may be a nice way to "force" you to get up early, a benefit of traveling without children is that it is much easier to set the schedule that you want. You can sleep in and stay up late and enjoy the freedom that you might not otherwise have.

3. Lounge Around

There are many great lounges at Disney World where adults can enjoy some great drinks, food, and conversation without the kids. At the top of the list are two relatively new lounges—[Jock Lindsay's Hangar Bar](#) and [Trader Sam's](#). Many adults enjoy a Monorail Pub Crawl at the Magic Kingdom resorts utilizing the resort monorail. We enjoyed starting early at Trader Sam's, then visiting Mizner's at Grand Floridian Resort and Spa, and finally ending at the California Grill bar at Disney's Contemporary Resort. We spread it out over many hours and enjoyed drinks and appetizers along the way. It was a fantastic evening. If you are really ambitious, you can continue the lounge crawl by taking a boat from the Contemporary over to Wilderness Lodge and then end at Davy Crockett's lounge at Fort Wilderness Campground and Resort.

2. Food & Wine Festival, Fall, Epcot

There are [five great reasons to visit Disney World in the fall](#). The number one reason to visit in the fall is to experience the Food and Wine Festival. The Food and Wine Festival brings out over 30 global marketplaces

where you can taste the best food and drink from around the world. While this can be enjoyed by the whole family, the festival is the perfect date experience for couples!

1. Fine/Signature Dining

Disney World offers many amazing dining experiences that would probably be wasted on the children. Visiting without the kids is a perfect opportunity for couples to experience the best restaurants Disney has to offer without worrying if mac and cheese or chicken strips are on the menu. Also, since these offerings tend to be a little more expensive, it's easier to keep the bill under control. California Grill, Victoria & Albert's, Artists' Pointe, the Hollywood Brown Derby, Le Cellier Steakhouse, Narcoosee's, Yachtsman Steakhouse, Monsieur Paul, the Boathouse, and Morimoto Asia all are classified as fine dining. My husband and I have enjoyed visiting each of these places without the kids. While we of course love time with our kids, we love saving these restaurants for just the two of us.

If you think Disney World is just for kids, think again. These are just seven of the best reasons to plan an adults-only trip. Whether it's a getaway for mom and dad, a sisters' weekend, or any other combination of adults, Disney World will set the stage for an experience you'll never forget.

7 AWESOME THINGS ABOUT THE BACKSTAGE MAGIC TOUR AT DISNEY WORLD

Posted by: [Paula Kennedy](#) in [Around the World](#), [Special Experiences & Entertainment](#)

Official tours are a fantastic way to learn more about what goes on behind the scenes at Walt Disney World. There are plenty of tours to choose from. All cost extra, and they may have restrictions. Some of the fun tours offered are [Behind the Seeds](#), [Disney's Family Magic Tour](#), [Disney's Keys to the Kingdom Tour](#), [Epcot Seas Aqua Tour](#), and [Wild Africa Trek](#). The ultimate behind the scenes tour is the Backstage Magic Tour.

There are a couple of things that you will need to know ahead of time if you're taking the Backstage Magic Tour. You must wear shoes with closed toes and heels. (Most sneakers are fine.) Anything else won't be allowed. Spots are limited to a maximum of 40 guests per tour. All guests must be at least 16 in order to participate, and it is wheelchair/scooter accessible. There is no photography or video recording allowed in the behind-the-scenes areas. If you need to cancel, do it at least two days ahead of time or else your money won't be refunded.

If you'd like more information or want to schedule a tour, call 407-WDW-TOUR (407-939-8687). If you're an Annual Passholder, Disney Vacation Club Member, or Disney Visa Cardholder, ask about discounts. Here are some awesome things about the Backstage Magic Tour, without giving too much away.

7. It Lasts for Seven Hours

Although the Backstage Magic Tour is expensive, you will get your money's worth. The tour lasts for 7 hours! You will check in before Epcot opens, and the tour ends with the parade at the Magic Kingdom . Don't worry about being on your feet all day. While there is a lot of walking, you'll also travel in style aboard a Disney bus. Bottled water will be provided for the duration of the tour so you won't get dehydrated.

6. The Tour Covers All Four Theme Parks

If you've ever wanted to see all four theme parks in one day, this is your chance! You'll start at Epcot, where you'll learn about Audio-Animatronics at the American Adventure. You'll also see an almost empty park, since World Showcase will not be open while you're there. At Disney's Animal Kingdom you'll learn from a Wild Africa Trek Guide. Disney's Hollywood Studios is where you'll learn about costuming. You will also see the behind-the-scenes areas of the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror. The final park is the Magic Kingdom . While you will be able to

enter all four parks during the tour, you will not be able to stay after it is over unless you have a theme park ticket.

5. Full Lunch Is Included

Don't worry about grabbing a bite to eat while on the Backstage Magic Tour. Your full lunch is included. Currently lunch is held at Whispering Canyon Cafe, but that is subject to change. The tip is included in the price as well. If you have special dietary restrictions, let them be known before your tour.

4. Even Disney Experts Will Learn

Think you're a Disney expert? The Backstage Magic Tour will make you truly wonder how much you know about Walt Disney World. You'll meet many friendly Cast Members and have plenty of opportunities to ask questions. Even Disney experts will realize that there is always more to learn about Walt Disney World.

3. You Will Learn the Small Details

Small details that most people will never notice are extremely important at Walt Disney World, and you'll learn all about them. You will find out about Disney's use of forced perspective, how Disney trademarks costume colors, and how Disney tests carpets. They are little things that you would never think about, but someone has put a lot of thought into them. It will give you a new respect for the people who create the magic.

2. You Will Visit Other Areas

There are a couple of other incredible areas that you will get to visit that have not yet been mentioned. On the tour you will stop by Central Shops. There is a lot that goes on in this exciting area. This is where they repaint ride vehicles, repair parts of rides, and a lot more. You'll meet the craftspeople who are responsible for keeping things running smoothly. You'll also stop by the Walt Disney World Nursery & Tree Farm, where you'll have a chance to learn about the plants, trees, and topiaries that keep Walt Disney World colorful and beautiful. The tour will sometimes include a stop at the Christmas Warehouse, where the decorations are refurbished and stored until the holidays roll around. These are areas that most Disney fans will never be able to see.

1. The Tour Includes the Utilidors

The ground that the Magic Kingdom sits on is not what it seems. Because the water level in Florida is so high, basements aren't possible. The park is actually on what is the equivalent of a second floor. The ground level is a series of what most refer to as tunnels. They're called utilidors, and they help Cast Members to get from one place to another without having to go through the park. The utilidors were important to Walt Disney, because he didn't want to ruin the illusion of Tomorrowland by having someone in a Frontierland costume walk through. The utilidors also aid in trash removal, emergency services, food services, and more. There are two ways to see the utilidors at the Magic Kingdom. The first is to work there. The second is to take a behind-the-scenes tour. On the Backstage Magic Tour, you'll have a chance to visit something that most Disney fanatics only dream about seeing.

HAVE A WONDERFUL SPRING!