

# EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED

The brand new night-time parade at Disneyland Paris will dazzle kids of all ages, and be sure to check out the stunt show for a truly animated experience

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**Y**OU just know when you visit any of the Disney theme parks that you are about to be bombarded with colour, cuteness, queues and commercialism. Disneyland Paris is no exception, and it duly delivers in all these departments. But Fantillusion, the park's latest night-time parade, takes them to new heights.

The parade dazzles visitors with a sensory overload of psychedelic characters on a dozen or more floats. Thrill-seekers should perhaps steer clear, though, as it verges on being a saccharine-sweet stand-and-gape affair. But if you're the type of person who watches Disney's classic cartoons with wonder at the attention to detail, the parade will provide plenty to satisfy your curiosity.

The wow-factor with the new parade comes

courtesy of huge transforming floats in the form of Disney villains, such as the evil queen from *Snow White* and Jaffar the sorcerer from *Aladdin*, which turn into dragons and snakes. These chase after beautiful ballet dancers on the other floats, so while smaller kids might have to hide their faces in their hands during some of the scenes, there's still plenty of eye-candy on offer for their dads. There's a happy ending, surprise, surprise, but the parade doesn't stop there – the soundtrack is

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so catchy you won't be able to get it out of your head for weeks to come.

The parade is a step back to basic Disney vales of good versus evil and is the latest new attraction in Paris since last year's opening of a second Disney theme park next door to the fairytale-inspired original. Following in the footsteps of its bigger brothers in the US, Paris now boasts its own studio theme park dedicated to cinema, animation and television.

Anyone expecting to saunter through soundstages full of movie props will be disappointed, though. Unlike its counterparts in the States, films aren't shot at the Paris park and the closest you get to being on set is at arms-length on a ride in a trailer which tours past props and sets from famous films. Along the way, guests get involved in an earthquake and unexpected deluge of 265,000 litres of water just to remind them that Disney is the master of dramatic effect.

Cinémagique is the best of the sit-down shows. An entertaining trip through the history of film, it has live actors who lunge into the screen and join the action.

The star of the park is its stunt show, a fabulous display of cars, bikes and jet-skis, choreographed and played live in a 3,000-seat amphitheatre. Scenes are planned, filmed and explained in great detail, and if you're lucky you'll even get a chance to take part. The stunts are stunning and car fanatics will go weak at the knees when they learn that Herbie, star of Disney's *Love Bug* films, makes an appearance.

Queuing can be a nightmare here, although Disney has addressed the problem with its Fastpass system. And while the quality of







Magic moments: Fantillusion, the new night-time parade, dazzles visitors (above); film fans can enjoy the Studios Park tram tour (opposite)

food on offer in the parks is better than it used to be, it is still expensive. Worth a try is Rendezvous des Stars, which has some of the best value-for-money dishes in the studios, such as sumptuous salads and sandwiches.

Ironically, it's the toytown-esque Disneyland park that has the most thrilling rides. The truly fearless ride, Space Mountain, is an indoor rollercoaster that propels you from 0 to 60mph in 2.8 seconds. The outdoor Temple of Peril and Big Thunder Mountain are more sedate, but still dramatic enough to make you think you've left your stomach behind.

Of course, there are plenty of cartoon-inspired rides to keep the kids entertained and, after complaints that they were lacking, many of Disney's star characters now roam the park for comedy photo opportunities.

At least a day in each park is the best way to take it all in and with a station right at the gates, you can take the train all the way without the hassle of flying. Around 90% of all visitors arrive overland and the opening of the new UK rail link this autumn cuts 20 minutes off the total journey time from Edinburgh. To make the most of your stay, a Disney hotel is the place to be as you can be out of the train, into the hotel and in the park within 30 minutes.

And don't think you'll be sleeping in a Mickey Mouse bed: Disney's hotels are styled after American regions and the Hotel New York is one of the most traditional. It's an all-American experience from the moment you

pull into the long driveway leading to the covered taxi park for the yellow cabs right down to the skyscraper lamps in the rooms. It is based on an idyllic view of the Big Apple, but its standards are just as high as any other

luxury hotel. The huge, air-conditioned rooms are a delight after a day hotfooting round the parks and even include such trappings as piping the TV sound to the loos and having internet ports in the suites' vast bathrooms.

## FACT FILE DISNEYLAND PARIS

### Five things you must do...

1. Remember that the park's restaurants are at their least busy when the lunchtime and evening parades are on, so get in there early if you're hungry.
2. Get park guides (free at the entrances) for every day of your stay to double check the parade, fireworks and show times, as these vary daily.
3. Ride on the most popular attractions in the morning before the parks fill up.
4. Ride the outdoor rollercoasters at night (if you dare) for a stunning view from the peaks of the illuminated parks with Paris in the distance.
5. Check out the shops in the Studios Park. They are filled with movie memorabilia, rather than the plush merchandise found in the stores in the original park.



**How to get there** ScotRail (08457 55 00 33) offers packages to Paris including return travel to London from all stations on the Glasgow, Edinburgh, Fort William, Inverness and Aberdeen sleeper routes, transfer from Euston to Waterloo by London Underground and transport from London to Paris by Eurostar. Standard class return rates for the package start at £135 and first class from £209. Tickets must be booked seven days in advance and include a Saturday night away or any two nights midweek. From the Eurostar terminal at

Paris Gare du Nord, take the Metro line D in the direction of Melun/Malesherbes, change at Châtelet les Halles for the RER line A and get out at Marne La Vallée/Chessy, Disneyland Paris's dedicated stop. A one-way journey costs €6 (approximately £4) and takes an hour.

**Where to stay** Disneyland Paris has packages this winter starting at £122 per adult and £54 per child including two nights' accommodation at its Santa Fe hotel, continental breakfast and a three-day pass for both parks. It is based on two adults and two children sharing and can be booked by Disney on 08705 030303. The same package costs from £186 at the Hotel New York and from £273 at the Disneyland hotel. The child's price is £54 for all packages.

**Currency** The euro. About €1.4 to the £