

# Disney's California Adventure

## A Brave New Park

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The Walt Disney Company's newest theme park, Disney's California Adventure, held its grand opening on February 8, 2001. Already known as "DCA" among Disneyphiles, the park is a bouquet of contradictions conceived in Fantasyland, starved in utero by corporate Disney, and born into a hostile environment of Disneyland loyalists who believe they've been handed a second-rate theme park. The park is new but full of old technology. Its parts are stunningly beautiful, yet come together awkwardly, failing to comprise a handsome whole. And perhaps most lamentable of all, the California theme is impotent by virtue of being all-encompassing.

The history of the park is another of those convoluted tales found only in Robert Ludlum novels and corporate Disney. Southern California Disney fans began clamoring for a second theme park shortly after Epcot opened at Walt Disney World in 1982. Although there was some element of support within the Walt Disney Company, the Disney loyal had to content themselves with rumors and half-promises for two decades while they watched new Disney parks go up in Tokyo, Paris, and Florida. For years, Disney teasingly floated the "Westcot" concept, a California version of Epcot that was always just about to break ground. Whether a matter of procrastination or simply pursuing better opportunities elsewhere, the Walt Disney Company sat on the sidelines while the sleepy community of Anaheim became a sprawling city and property values skyrocketed. By the time Disney emerged from its Westcot fantasy and began to get serious about a second California park, the price tag—not to mention the complexity of integrating such a development into a mature city—was mind-boggling.

Westcot had been billed as a \$2- to \$3-billion, 100-plus-acre project, so that was what the Disney faithful were expecting when Disney's Califor-

nia Adventure was announced. What they got was a park that cost \$1.4 billion (slashed from an original budget of about \$2.1 billion), built on 55 acres including a sizeable carve-out for the Grand Californian Hotel. It's quite a small park by modern theme-park standards, but \$1.4 billion, when lavished on 55 acres, ought to buy a pretty good park.

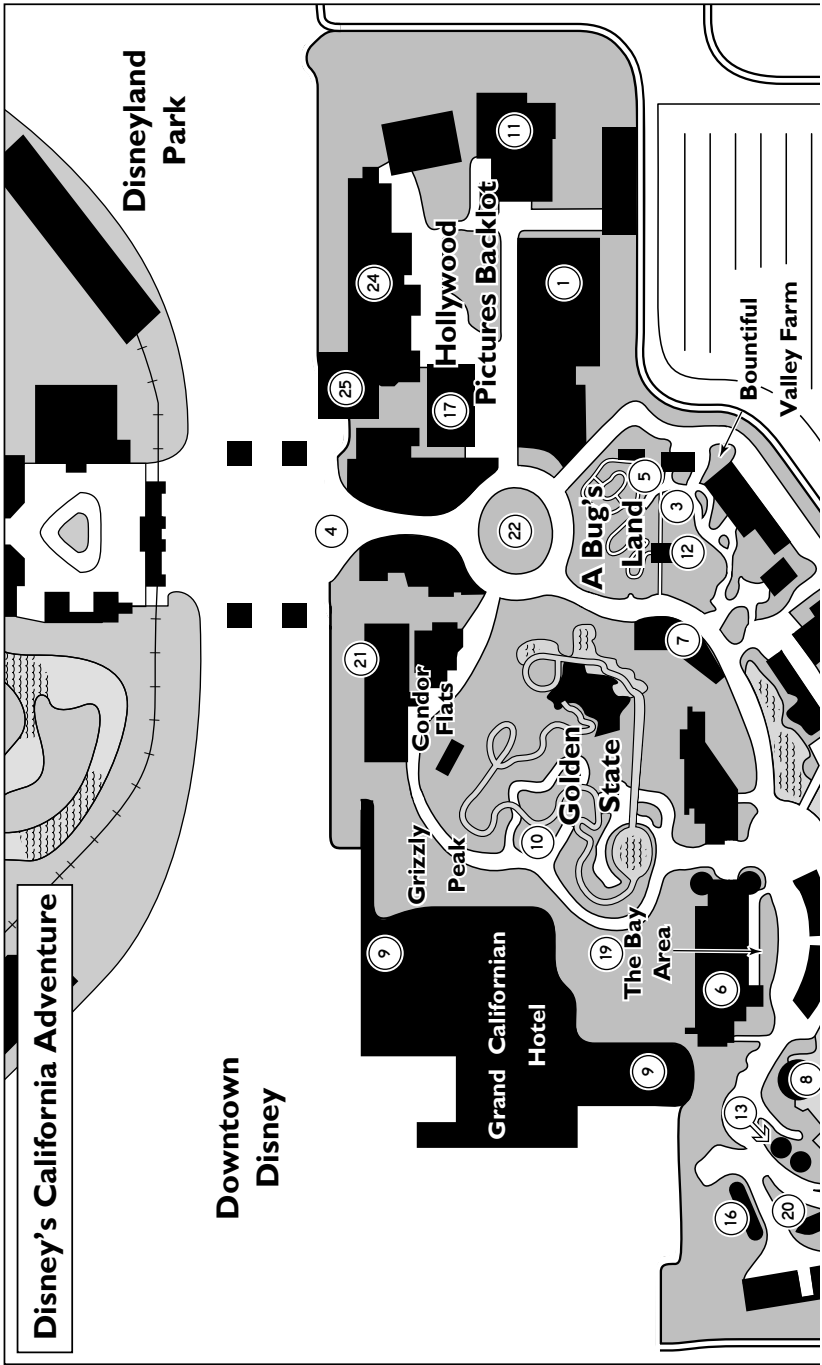
**NOT TO BE MISSED AT  
DISNEY'S CALIFORNIA ADVENTURE**

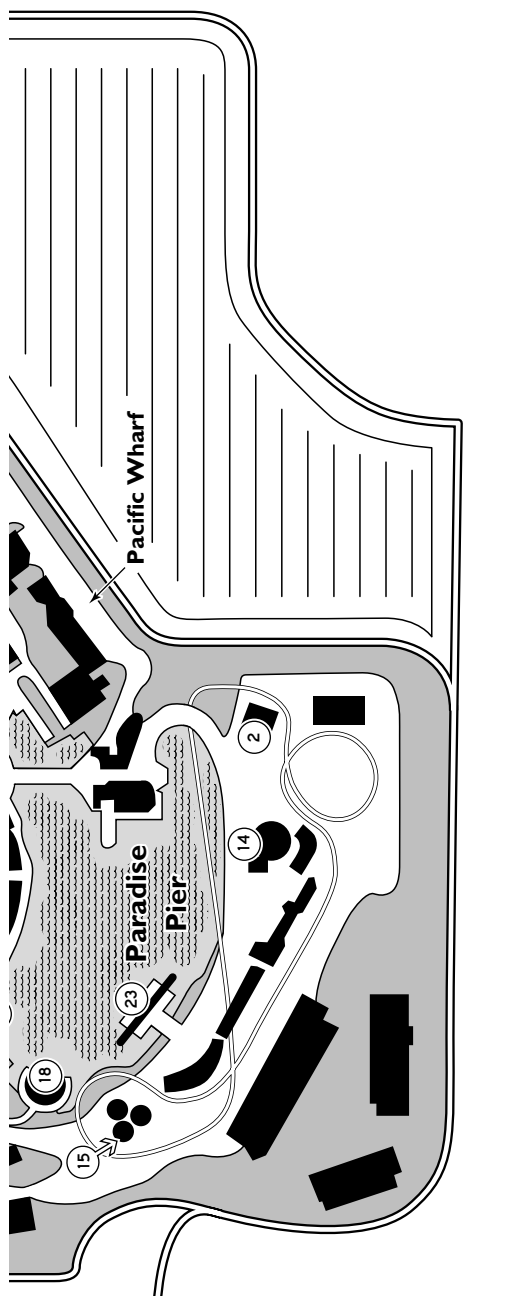
<b>Golden State</b>	Grizzly River Run Soarin' over California
<b>Hollywood Studios Backlot</b>	Hyperion Theater <i>Muppet Vision 3-D</i> Twilight Zone Tower of Terror <i>Disney's Aladdin: A Musical Spectacular</i>
<b>It's a Bug's Land</b>	<i>It's Tough to Be a Bug!</i>
<b>Paradise Pier</b>	California Screamin'

Then there's the park's theme. Although flexible, California Adventure comes off like a default setting, lacking in imagination, weak in concept, and without intrinsic appeal, especially when you stop to consider that two-thirds of Disneyland guests come from Southern California. As further grist for the mill, there's precious little new technology at work in Disney's newest theme park. Of the headliner attractions, only one, Soarin' over California, a simulator ride, breaks new ground. All the rest are recycled, albeit popular, attractions from the Animal Kingdom and Disney-MGM Studios. When you move to the smaller-statured second half of the attraction batting order, it gets worse. Most of these attractions are little more than off-the-shelf midway rides spruced up with a Disney story line and facade.

From a competitive perspective, Disney's California Adventure is an underwhelming shot at Disney's three Southern California competitors. The Hollywood section of DCA takes a hopeful poke at Universal Studios Hollywood, while Paradise Pier offers midway rides à la Six Flags Magic Mountain. Finally, the whole California theme has for years been the eminent domain of Knott's Berry Farm. In short, there's not much originality in DCA, only Disney's now-redundant mantra that "whatever they can do, we can do better."

However, while the Disneyholics churn up cyberspace debating DCA's theme and lamenting what might have been, the rest of us will have some fun getting acquainted with the latest Disney theme park. Our guess is that the park will transcend its bland theme and establish an identity of its own. In any event, the operative word in the new park's name is "Disney," not





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|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Animation Building      | 10. Grizzly River Run              | 18. Orange Stinger                        |
| 2. California Screamin'    | 11. Hyperion Theater               | 19. Redwood Creek Challenge Trail         |
| 3. Demonstration Farm      | 12. <i>It's Tough to Be a Bug!</i> | 20. <i>S.S. Rustworthy</i>                |
| 4. Entrance                | 13. Jumpin' Jellyfish              | 21. Soarin' over California               |
| 5. Flik's Fun Fair         | 14. King Triton's Carousel         | 22. Sun Court (central hub)               |
| 6. <i>Golden Dreams</i>    | 15. Maliboomer                     | 23. Sun Wheel                             |
| 7. Golden Vine Winery      | 16. Mulholland Madness             | 24. Twilight Zone Tower of Terror         |
| 8. Golden Zephyr           | 17. <i>Muppet Vision 3-D</i>       | 25. <i>Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?</i> |
| 9. Grand Californian Hotel |                                    |   |

“California” or “Adventure.” Even if the park was called Disney’s Slag Heap, the faithful would turn out en masse. Even so, Disney is working hard to placate their core market. The year 2002 saw the addition of the game show–based *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* and Flik’s Fun Fair, a modest complex of children’s rides and play areas that incorporated the less than enthralling Bountiful Valley Farm. The year 2004, however, was the year the faithful had been waiting for. In the spring of 2004, DCA unveiled its own version of the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror, the most incredible attraction Disney has yet to produce.

## **Arriving and Getting Oriented**

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The entrance to Disney’s California Adventure faces the entrance to Disneyland Park across a palm-shaded pedestrian plaza called the Esplanade. If you arrive by tram from one of the Disney parking lots, you’ll disembark at the Esplanade. Facing east toward Harbor Boulevard, Disneyland Park will be on your left and DCA will be on your right. In the Esplanade are ticket booths, the group sales office, and resort information.

Seen from overhead, Disney’s California Adventure is roughly arrayed in a fan shape around the park’s central visual icon, Grizzly Peak. At ground level, however, the park’s layout is not so obvious. From the Esplanade you pass through huge block letters spelling “California,” and through the turnstiles. To your left and right you’ll find guest services, as well as some shops and eateries. Among the shops is **Greetings from California**, offering the park’s largest selection of Disney trademark merchandise. A second shop of note, **Engine-Ears Toys**, selling upscale toys, creates the impression of stepping into a model train layout. To your right you’ll find stroller and wheelchair rental, lockers, rest rooms, an ATM machine, and phones.

After passing under a whimsical representation of the Golden Gate Bridge, you arrive at the park’s central hub. Dominated by a fountain fronting an arresting metal sculpture of the sun, the hub area is called Sunshine Plaza. In addition to serving as a point of departure for the various theme areas, Sunshine Plaza is one of the best places in the park to encounter the Disney characters. With the fountain and golden sun in the background, it’s a great photo op.

“Lands” at DCA are called “districts,” and there are four of them. A left turn at the hub leads you to the **Hollywood Pictures Backlot** district of the park, celebrating California’s history as the film capital of the world. The **Golden State** district of the park is to the right or straight. Golden State is a somewhat amorphous combination of separate theme areas that showcase California’s architecture, agriculture, industry, history, and natural resources. Within the Golden State district, you’ll find **Condor Flats** by taking the

first right as you approach the hub. **Grizzly Peak** will likewise be to your right, though you must walk two-thirds of the way around the mountain to reach its attractions. The remaining two Golden State theme areas, **The Bay Area** and the **Pacific Wharf**, are situated along a kidney-shaped lake and can be accessed by following the walkway emanating from the hub at seven o'clock and winding around Grizzly Peak. A third district, **A Bug's Land**, is situated opposite the **Golden Vine Winery** and can be reached by taking the same route. The fourth district, **Paradise Pier**, recalls seaside amusement parks of the first half of the twentieth century. It is situated in the southwest corner of the park, across the lake from The Bay Area.

### **Park Opening Procedures**

Guests are usually held at the turnstiles until official opening time. On especially busy days guests are admitted to Golden Gateway and Condor Flats 30 minutes before official opening time.

## **Hollywood Pictures Backlot**

Hollywood Pictures Backlot offers attractions and shopping inspired by California's (and Disney's) contribution to television and the cinema. Visually, the district is themed as a studio backlot with sets, including an urban street scene, sound stages, and a central street with shops and restaurants that depict Hollywood's golden age.

### **Disney Animation Building**

**What It Is** Behind-the-scenes look at Disney animation

**Scope and Scale** Major attraction

**When to Go** Anytime

**Author's Rating** Quite amusing, though not very educational; ★★★★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★	Teens ★★★★★	Over 30 ★★★★★
Grade school ★★★★★	Young Adults ★★★★★	Seniors ★★★★★

**Duration of Experience** 35–55 minutes

**Probable Waiting Time** 5 minutes

**Description and Comments** The Disney Animation Building houses a total of ten shows, galleries, and interactive exhibits that collectively provide a sort of crash course in animation. Moving from room to room and exhibit to exhibit, you follow the Disney animation process from concept to finished film, with a peek at each of the steps along the way. Throughout, you are surrounded by animation, and sometimes it's even projected above your head and under your feet!

Because DCA's Animation Building is not an actual working studio, the attraction does not showcase artists at work on real features, and the interactive exhibits are more whimsical than educational. In one, for example, you can insert your voice into a

cartoon character. You get the idea. It takes 40–55 minutes to do all the interactive stuff and see everything.

**Touring Tips** On entering the Animation Building, you'll step into a lobby where signs mark the entrances of the various exhibits. Start with the Animation Screening Room, followed by Drawn to Animation. Both feature educational films and will provide a good foundation on the animation process that will enhance your appreciation of the other exhibits. Because the Hollywood Pictures Backlot doesn't see a lot of traffic until 11 a.m. or later, you probably won't experience much waiting for the Disney Animation offerings except on weekends and holidays. Even then, the Animation Building clears out considerably by late afternoon.

## Hyperion Theater

**What It Is** Venue for live shows

**Scope and Scale** Major attraction

**When to Go** After experiencing DCA's rides

**Author's Rating** Great venue, not to be missed; ★★★★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★★★	Teens ★★★★★	Over 30 ★★★★★
Grade school ★★★★★	Young Adults ★★★★★	Seniors ★★★★★

**Duration of Experience** 45 minutes

**Probable Waiting Time** 30 minutes

**Description and Comments** This 2,000-seat theater is DCA's premiere venue for live productions, many of which are based on Disney animated films and feature Disney characters. Shows are Broadway quality in every sense, except duration of the presentation, and alone are arguably worth the price of theme-park admission. *Disney's Aladdin—A Musical Spectacular*, was the Hyperion Theater's feature show in 2004 and may well continue through 2005 or longer. A breezy stage version of the Aladdin story, it's by far Hyperion Theater's most accomplished production to date. We rate it not to be missed. In the evening, Hyperion Theater is often used as a separate-admission concert and special-events stage.

**Touring Tips** The lavish productions hosted by the Hyperion Theater are rightly very popular and commonly sell out on busier days. To reduce waiting, the theater often gives out reserved show tickets at the entrance. The tickets, which work essentially like a FASTPASS, guarantee you a seat at any performance throughout the day as long as you show up 15–20 minutes prior to showtime. The tickets differ from FASTPASSES in that they operate separately from the FASTPASS system and do not affect your eligibility to obtain FASTPASSES for other attractions. The tickets guarantee you a seat, but not an assigned seat. On busier days all of the tickets are distributed by noon or 1 p.m.

Presentations are described, and showtimes listed, in the park handout map. The theater is multilevel. Though all seats provide a good line of sight, we recommend sitting on the ground level relatively close to the entrance doors (if possible) to facilitate an easy exit after the performance. Finally, be forewarned that the sound volume for Hyperion Theater productions would give heavy-metal rock concerts a good run for the money.

## Muppet Vision 3-D

**What It Is** 3-D movie featuring the Muppets

**Scope and Scale** Major attraction

**When to Go** Before noon or after 4 p.m.

**Special Comments** 3-D effects and loud noises frighten many preschoolers

**Author's Rating** Must see; ★★★★★½

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★★★	Teens ★★★★★½	Over 30 ★★★★★½
Grade school ★★★★★½	Young Adults ★★★★★½	Seniors ★★★★★½

**Duration of Presentation** 17 minutes

**Probable Waiting Time** 20 minutes

**Description and Comments** *MuppetVision 3-D* provides a total sensory experience, with wild 3-D action augmented by auditory, visual, and tactile special effects. If you're tired and hot, this zany presentation will make you feel brand-new.

**Touring Tips** Although extremely popular, this attraction handles crowds exceedingly well. Your wait should not exceed 20 minutes except on days when the park is jam-packed. Special effects and loud noises may frighten some preschoolers.

## Playhouse Disney: Live on Stage

**What It Is** Live show for children

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction

**When to Go** Per the daily entertainment schedule

**Author's Rating** A must for families with preschoolers; ★★★★★

**Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★★★	Teens ★★	Over 30 ★★
Grade school ★★★★★½	Young Adults ★★	Seniors ★★

**Duration of Presentation** 20 minutes

**Special Comments** Audience sits on the floor

**Probable Waiting Time** 10 minutes

**Description and Comments** The show features characters from the Disney Channel's *Rolie Polie Olie*, *The Book of Pooh*, *Bear in the Big Blue House*, and *Stanley*. A simple plot serves as the platform for singing, dancing, some great puppetry, and a great deal of audience participation. The characters, who ooze love and goodness, rally throngs of tots and preschoolers to sing and dance along with them. All the jumping, squirming, and high-stepping is facilitated by having the audience sit on the floor so that kids can spontaneously erupt into motion when the mood strikes. Even for adults without children, it's a treat to watch the tykes rev up. If you have a younger child in your party, all the better: just stand back and let the video roll.

For preschoolers, *Playhouse Disney* will be the highlight of their day, as a Thomasville, North Carolina, mom attests:

*Playhouse Disney at MGM was fantastic! My three-year-old loved it. The children danced, sang, and had a great time.*



**Touring Tips** The show is headquartered in what was formerly the ABC Soap Opera Bistro restaurant to the right of the entrance to the Hollywood Studios District. Because the tykes just can't get enough, it has become a hot ticket. Show up at least 20 minutes before showtime. Once inside, pick a spot on the floor and take a breather until the performance begins.

## **Superstar Limo**

**Description and Comments** Superstar Limo ran out of gas and was scrapped in the spring of 2003. As of press time, Disney was still dithering over its replacement.

## **The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror (FASTPASS)**

**What It Is** Sci-fi-theme indoor thrill ride

**Scope and Scale** Super headliner

**When to Go** Before 9:30 a.m. and after 6 p.m.

**Special Comments** Must be 40" tall to ride; switching-off option offered.

**Author's Rating** DCA's best attraction; not to be missed; ★★★★★

**Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★	Teens ★★★★★	Over 30 ★★★★★
Grade school ★★★★★	Young Adults ★★★★★	Seniors ★★★★★½

**Duration of Ride** About 4 minutes plus preshow

**Average Wait in Line per 100 People ahead of You** 4 minutes

**Assumes** All elevators operating

**Loading Speed** Moderate

**Description and Comments** The Tower of Terror, opened in the spring of 2004, is a new species of Disney thrill ride, though it borrows elements of The Haunted Mansion at Disneyland Park. The story is that you're touring a once-famous Hollywood hotel gone to ruin. As at Star Tours, the queuing area integrates guests into the adventure as they pass through the hotel's once-opulent public rooms. From the lobby, guests are escorted into the hotel's library, where Rod Serling, speaking on an old black-and-white television, greets the guests and introduces the plot.

The Tower of Terror is a whopper at 13-plus-stories tall. Breaking tradition in terms of visually isolating themed areas, you can see the entire Studios from atop the tower, but you have to look quick.

The ride vehicle, one of the hotel's service elevators, takes guests to see the haunted hostelry. The tour begins innocuously, but about the fifth floor things get pretty weird. You have entered the Twilight Zone. Guests are subjected to a full range of special effects as they encounter unexpected horrors and optical illusions. The climax of the adventure occurs when the elevator reaches the top floor (the 13th, of course) and the cable snaps.

The big question before DCA's Tower of Terror opened was how will it compare to the Walt Disney World version. As it turns out, the attractions are very similar but definitely not clones. The adventure begins the same way. You pass through the lobby of the hotel and then into the library for the pre-show. Following the pre-show you enter the boarding area. Once you're on the elevator, however, the

two attractions part company. In the Disney World version, the elevator stops at a couple of floors to reveal some eerie visuals, but then actually moves out of the shaft onto one of the floors. The effects during this brief sojourn are remarkable, and more remarkable still is that you don't know that you've reentered the shaft until the elevator speeds skyward. In the DCA Tower of Terror the elevator never leaves the shaft. The visuals and special effects are equally compelling, but there's never that feeling of disorientation that distinguishes the Florida attraction. The DCA Tower of Terror is more straightforward, therefore, and consequently a little less mysterious. Once the elevator dropping ensues, both versions are about the same. Regardless which version you try, however, you won't be disappointed.

The Tower has great potential for terrifying young children and rattling more mature visitors. If you have teenagers in your party, use them as experimental probes. If they report back that they really, really liked the Tower of Terror, run as fast as you can in the opposite direction.

**Touring Tips** This one ride is worth your admission to DCA. Because of its height, the Tower is a veritable beacon, visible from outside the park and luring curious guests as soon as they enter. Because of its popularity with school kids, teens, and young adults, you can count on a footrace to the attraction when the park opens. For the foreseeable future, expect the Tower to be mobbed most of the day. If both the Tower of Terror and Soarin' Over California are on your must-see list, race to the Tower of Terror the moment the park opens and obtain a FASTPASS (FASTPASS kiosks open the same time as the attraction). With FASTPASS in hand head for Soarin' and ride. Yes, you'll burn a little shoe leather and a few calories too, but you'll save a bundle of time.

To access the Tower of Terror, bear left from the park entrance into the Hollywood Pictures Backlot. Continue straight to the Hyperion Theater and then turn right to the Tower of Terror.

To save time, when you enter the library waiting area, stand in the far back corner across from the door where you entered and at the opposite end of the room from the TV. When the doors to the loading area open, you'll be one of the first admitted.

If you have children (or anyone) who are apprehensive about this attraction, ask the attendant about switching off (page TKTK).

## Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? (FASTPASS)

**What It Is** Look-alike version of the TV game show

**Scope and Scale** Major attraction

**When to Go** Before 11 a.m. or after 5 p.m.

**Special Comments** Contestants play for points, not dollars

**Author's Rating** No Regs, but good fun; ★★★★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group\***

Preschool ★★	Teens ★★★★★	Over 30 ★★★★★
Grade school ★★★★★	Young Adults ★★★★★	Seniors ★★★★★

\*Ratings based on the Disney-MGM Studios version of the same attraction.

**Duration of Presentation** 25 minutes

**Preshow Entertainment** Video of Regis

**Loading Speed** Moderate

**Description and Comments** It's the familiar ABC television game show sans Regis, played on a replica of the real set, including all the snazzy lighting and creepy sound effects. Contestants, selected from among the audience, play for points and prizes.

**Touring Tips** Each member of the audience has a small electronic display and keypad to use for recording answers. The keypad has a key for each letter, A, B, C, and D, with each letter representing one of the four multiple-choice answers to a given question. When the keypad lights up, typically just as the last choice (D) is revealed, that's your cue to enter your answer. The faster you enter the answer, the better your score. Most people hold their fingers ready and push the letter key designating their answer as soon and as fast as humanly possible. You can't change your answer, so once you push the key, you're committed. Getting an answer right but taking longer is better than registering a wrong answer. Your score is tabulated electronically with points awarded for both being fast and right.

If there is no one from a previous round continuing, the game will start with a "fastest-finger" round where the audience member who posts the fastest correct answer goes to the hot seat as a contestant. If the contestant wins the ultimate goal of 1 million points, decides to leave, or loses, the audience member with the highest score at that time will be the next contestant. Audience scores are displayed from time to time as the contestant reaches plateaus at 1,000 and 32,000 points. Unlike the real version where Regis gives contestants almost unlimited time to answer, you must answer in less than 30 seconds in the theme park version. As a contestant, you get three "lifelines." As in the real game, you can consult the audience or have two wrong choices deleted. You can also phone someone, but in the Disney version the person on the other end of the line will be a stranger, someone else in the park. Prizes include pins, hats, polo shirts, and the like.

The first ten questions are fairly easy, and a number of them are Disney-related. If the show ends while you are a contestant, you may or may not be invited to continue during the next show.

*Unofficial Guide* friend Susan Turner was on hand for a number of shows. Here's her advice for putting yourself in the hot seat:

- 1. Answer correctly.** If you blow a question you can pretty much forget it.
- 2. Answer quickly.** This is a very close second to answering correctly. If you don't have quick reflexes, it doesn't matter if you answer everything correctly. For the first questions (at least up until the 1,000-point question), this is most critical, as most of the audience will answer correctly.
- 3. How to answer quickly:** The keypad consists of four buttons in a row marked 'A B C D,' with lights above each one. This panel will remain unlit until the D answer is put on the screen. This means you really have to have the answer figured out before knowing what the D answer is. I quickly learned to avert my eyes from the screen to the answer panel while the C answer was read. By this time, I had chosen my answer and had my finger on the correct button. In this way, I could watch for the panel to light, and hit the button immediately. If you wait until they finish reading the D answer, or even watch for the D answer to show up on the screen, it is too late. This also means that if the answer is D, you need to have this figured out by eliminating A–C. I found (and this was corroborated by others' experiences) that I scored higher when

there was a question with D as the answer, perhaps because most guests aren't ready to answer until the correct answer is read. In some ways, the game is a bit more difficult as an audience member than as the one in the hot seat. Obviously, you don't have the three lifelines, but also, you really don't have time to think through the answers.

At the two-point plateaus, i.e. the 1,000- and 32,000-point levels, they pause and show the top-ten best scores, using seat numbers for identification. The top-ten scores are also shown when they need to refill the hot seat and at the end of a game. I found if I employed this strategy, i.e. immediate and correct answer, I was in the top ten about half of the time at the 1,000-point level, and maybe three-quarters of the time at the 32,000 level. If you are not in the top ten, you will not know your score. I wish they had little LEDs by each of the answer panels so you could keep up with your score.

4. **Go to an early (or maybe late) show.** The earliest show was reported to be less than half full. I imagine this will be a VERY popular show and full at most, if not all, shows, but if there is a show that isn't at capacity, I would imagine it would be the [first show of the day]. Fewer people raises your probability of getting in. Unfortunately this didn't occur to me until after I had left! If it had, I would most definitely have been at the first show.
5. **A note about the fastest-fingers question:** This will only occur at the start of a game if no one returns from the last game. At the end of the game if a contestant is in the hot seat and answers the last question correctly, they have the opportunity to return for the next show. For the fastest-finger questions, they will read the question and put it onto the screen, then all four answers will appear at once. The problem I had with this the first time I played was having to recheck to see if B was to the right of or below A. I saw a couple of kids win this and I'm not sure if they were quick and smart or if they just pushed buttons rapidly and randomly. There is a 1-in-24 chance of answering correctly, so one could imagine with enough people employing this strategy, someone is bound to get it right. Here again, speed is very important. Some of these questions were Disney-related while others were not, e.g. 'Put these members of the whale family in order of size starting with the smallest: bottlenose dolphin, killer whale, gray whale, blue whale.'
6. **One final note about seating:** It does not matter where you sit—all seats are equipped with an answer pad. Because the studio is a near replica of the TV studio, they include the ten "fastest fingers" seats on the floor (the ones with the screens). Guests sitting at these seats have no real advantage over guests in the stands. Also, there is a section of seats on the floor that is largely used as disabled seating. I wondered at first if they had answer keypads as well, and I found that indeed they do—though in the front row you have to hold the keypad (in the stands the keypads are on the back of the chair in front of you).

We recommend catching a *Millionaire* show after you've experienced all of the park's rides. DCA hopes that *Millionaire* will lure some guests into the Hollywood Pictures Backlot, thereby more equally distributing guests throughout the park. If you encounter a long wait, use FASTPASS.

## Golden State

This district celebrates California's cultural, musical, natural, and industrial diversity. The centerpiece of the district is Grizzly Peak—one of the sub-districts within Golden State, and yet another of Disney's famed "mountains" (with "Boulder Bear" at its summit). Surrounding Grizzly Peak are The Bay Area, Golden Vine Winery, Condor Flats, and Pacific Wharf. We've grouped those with attractions below.

### The Bay Area

Curiously, in DCA's Golden State the landmark chosen to represent the Bay Area is the Palace of Fine Arts built for the 1915 Panama Pacific International Expo. Inside you'll find artists and craftsmen busy at their trade, and, of course, ready to sell their creations. The theme area's only attraction is the film *Golden Dreams*.

### Golden Dreams

**What It Is** Film about the history of California

**Scope and Scale** Major attraction

**When to Go** After experiencing the rides, the *Muppets*, and *Bugs*

**Author's Rating** Moving; ★★½

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★½	Grade School ★★★★★	Teens ★★★
Young Adults ★★½	Over 30 ★★★★★	Seniors ★★★★★

**Duration of Presentation** 17 minutes

**Probable Waiting Time** 15 minutes

**Description and Comments** Narrated by Whoopi Goldberg, *Golden Dreams* is a nostalgic film about the history of California, recognizing the many different races, ethnicities, and people who contributed to the state's settlement and development. Originally designed to be a multimedia production with moving sets and animatronics similar to *American Adventure* at Epcot, the attraction was hammered by budget cuts and ultimately premiered with only a small (for Disney) arsenal of special effects.

A little heavy on schmaltz (which we *Unofficials* kinda like), *Golden Dreams* is a very sweet brotherhood-of-man flick. For once, Disney refrained from rewriting or overly sanitizing the historic content, and there's enough lightheartedness and humor to make the presentation fun. As a kaleidoscopic overview, it's debatable how much you'll learn about California's past, but you'll feel better (at least we did) for the film's uplifting message.

**Touring Tips** *Golden Dreams'* isolated location makes it a good choice for midday touring. Check it out after the rides, the *Muppets*, and *Bugs*. *Golden Dreams* was designed to run continuous back-to-back performances. On slow days, however, only a few shows a day are scheduled, and showtimes, unfortunately, are not listed in the park handout map. To determine performance times it's necessary to actually go to the theater and eyeball an inconspicuous little sign.

### Condor Flats

Situated just to the right of the central hub, Condor Flats pays homage to California aviation. The pedestrian walkway is marked like a runway and

all of the buildings look like airplane hangars. Condor Flats is the home of one of the park's super headliner attractions, Soarin' over California.

### Soarin' over California (FASTPASS)

**What It Is** Flight simulation ride

**Scope and Scale** Super headliner

**When to Go** Make it your first stop of the day, or use FASTPASS

**Special Comments** May induce motion sickness; 40" minimum height requirement; switching off available (see page TKTK).

**Author's Rating** The park's best ride; ★★★★★½

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool —	Teens ★★★★★½	Over 30 ★★★★★
Grade school ★★★★★	Young Adults ★★★★★	Seniors ★★★★★

**Duration of Ride** 4½ minutes

**Loading Speed** Moderate

**Description and Comments** Once you enter the main theater, you are secured in a seat not unlike those used on inverted roller coasters (where the coaster is suspended from above). Once everyone is in place, the floor drops away and you are suspended with your legs dangling. Thus hung out to dry, you embark on a hang glider tour of California with IMAX-quality images projected below you, and with the simulator moving your seat in sync with the movie. The IMAX images are well-chosen and slap-dab beautiful. Special effects include wind, sound, and even olfactory stimulation. The ride itself is thrilling but perfectly smooth, exciting and relaxing simultaneously. We think Soarin' over California is a must-see for guests of any age who meet the 40" minimum height requirement. And yes, seniors we interviewed were crazy about it.

**Touring Tips** Aside from being the one truly technologically innovative ride in the park, Soarin' over California also happens to be located near the entrance of the park, thus ensuring heavy traffic all day. It should be your very first attraction in the morning, or alternatively use FASTPASS. If you are among the first through the turnstiles at park opening, sprint to Soarin' over California as fast as your little feet can carry you. If you arrive later and elect to use FASTPASS, obtain your FASTPASS before noon. Later than noon you're likely to get a return period in the hour before the park closes, or worse, find that the day's supply of FASTPASSes is gone. If both Soarin' over California and the Tower of Terror are on your itinerary, sprint to the Tower of Terror the moment the park opens and obtain a FASTPASS (FASTPASS kiosks open the same time as the attraction). With Tower of Terror FASTPASS in hand, ride Soarin'. Because Tower out-draws Soarin' first thing in the morning, your wait to board Soarin' will be very short.

### Golden Vine Winery

This diminutive winery situated at the base of Grizzly Peak and across from A Bug's Land is the smallest of the Golden State theme areas. It would be a stretch to call it an attraction, much less a theme area.

### Golden Vine Winery

**What It Is** Infomercial and exhibit about California wines

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction/exhibit

Motion  
Sickness



**When to Go** Anytime**Author's Rating** Quite informative; ★★★**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

<b>Preschool</b> —	<b>Grade School</b> ★½	<b>Teens</b> ★★½
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Young Adults ★★★	Over 30 ★★★	Seniors ★★★
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**Duration of Film** 7½ minutes**Probable Waiting Time** 15 minutes for film

**Description and Comments** This mission-style complex, squeezed into the side of Grizzly Peak, offers a demonstration vineyard and a short film that is basically an infomercial about wine making. The rest of the facility, predictably, is occupied by shops, a tasting room, and a restaurant.

**Touring Tips** Save the winery for the end of the day. If there's much of a wait to see the film, leave it for another visit.

## Grizzly Peak

Grizzly Peak, a huge mountain shaped like the head of a bear, is home to Grizzly River Run, a whitewater raft ride, and the Redwood Creek Challenge Trail, an outdoor playground for children that resembles an obstacle course.

## Grizzly River Run (FASTPASS)

**What It Is** Whitewater raft ride**Scope and Scale** Super headliner**When to Go** Before 10:15 a.m. or use FASTPASS

**Special Comments** You are guaranteed to get wet, and possibly soaked; 42" minimum height requirement.

**Author's Rating** Not to be missed; ★★★★★½**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool —	Teens ★★★★★½	Over 30 ★★★★★½
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Grade school ★★★★★½	Young Adults ★★★★★½	Seniors ★★★★★½
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**Duration of Ride** 5½ minutes**Average Wait in Line per 100 People Ahead of You** 5 minutes**Loading Speed** Moderate

**Description and Comments** Whitewater raft rides have been a hot-weather favorite of theme-park patrons for almost 20 years. The ride consists of an unguided trip down a man-made river in a circular rubber raft, with a platform mounted on top seating six to eight people. The raft essentially floats free in the current and is washed downstream through rapids and waves. Because the river is fairly wide with numerous currents, eddies, and obstacles, there is no telling exactly where the raft will go. Thus, each trip is different and exciting. The rafts are circular and a little smaller than those used on most rides of the genre. Because the current can buffet the smaller rafts more effectively, the ride is wilder and wetter. At the end of the ride, a conveyor belt hauls the raft up to be unloaded.

What distinguishes Grizzly River Run from other theme-park raft rides is Disney's trademark attention to visual detail. Where many raft rides essentially plunge down a

concrete ditch, Grizzly River Run winds around and through Grizzly Peak, the park's foremost visual icon, with the great rock bear at the summit. Featuring a 50-foot climb and two drops—including a 22-footer where the raft spins as it descends—the ride flows en route into dark caverns and along the mountain's precipitous side before looping over itself just prior to the final plunge. Although the mountain is visually arresting, Grizzly River Run is pretty much devoid of the animatronics and special effects that embellish Big Thunder Mountain and Splash Mountain.

When Disney opened the Kali River Rapids raft ride at the Animal Kingdom theme park at Walt Disney World, it was roundly criticized (and rightly so) for being a weenie ride. Well, we're here to tell you that Disney learned its lesson. Grizzly River Run is a heart-thumper, one of the best of its genre anywhere. And at five-and-a-half minutes from load to unload, it's also one of the longest. The visuals are outstanding, and the ride is about as good as it gets on a man-made river. While it's true that theme-park raft rides have been around a long time, Grizzly River Run has set a new standard, one we don't expect to be equaled for some time.

**Touring Tips** This attraction is hugely popular, especially on hot summer days. Ride before 10:30 a.m., after 4:30 p.m., or use FASTPASS. Make no mistake, you will certainly get wet on this ride. Our recommendation is to wear shorts to the park and bring along a jumbo-sized trash bag, as well as a smaller plastic bag. Before boarding the raft, take off your socks and punch a hole in your jumbo bag for your head. Though you can also cut holes for your arms, you will probably stay dryer with your arms inside the bag. Use the smaller plastic bag to wrap around your shoes. If you are worried about mussing your hairdo, bring a third bag for your head.

A Shaker Heights, Ohio, family who adopted our garbage bag attire, however, discovered that staying dry on a similar attraction at Walt Disney World is not without social consequences:

*I must tell you that the Disney cast members and the other people in our raft looked at us like we had just beamed down from Mars. Plus, we didn't cut arm holes in our trash bags because we thought we'd stay drier. Only problem was once we sat down we couldn't fasten our seat belts. The Disney person was quite put out and asked sarcastically whether we needed wetsuits and snorkels. After a lot of wiggling and adjusting and helping each other we finally got belted in and off we went looking like sacks of fertilizer with little heads perched on top. It was very embarrassing, but I must admit that we stayed nice and dry.*

If you forgot your plastic bag, ponchos are available at the adjacent Rushin' River Outfitters.

## Redwood Creek Challenge Trail and Magic of Brother Bear

**What It Is** Elaborate playground and obstacle course

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction

**When to Go** Anytime

**Special Comments** 42" minimum height requirement

**Author's Rating** Very well done; ★★★★★½

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★★★	Teens ★★★★★½	Over 30 —
Grade school ★★★★★★	Young Adults —	Seniors —



**Duration of Experience** About 20 minutes, though some kids could stay all day

**Description and Comments** An elaborate maze of rope bridges and log towers, the Redwood Creek Challenge Trail is a scout-camp combination of elements from Tarzan's Treehouse and Tom Sawyer Island. Built into and around Grizzly Peak, the Challenge Trail has eye-popping appeal for young adventurers.

The *Magic of Brother Bear* is a sweet children's show about nature, starring the characters Koda and Kenai from the *Brother Bear* film. The show is pretty corny, but the kids eat it up. There's enough subtle humor to keep adults chuckling but the real attraction is watching the younger children interact with the characters. The signage to the tiny amphitheater is non-existent. To get there, enter the Redwood Challenge Trail and descend the steps on the front left. At the bottom, turn left to the amphitheater.

**Touring Tips** The largest of several children's play areas in the park, and the only one that is both dry (mostly) and offers some shade, the Challenge Trail is the perfect place to let your kids cut loose for a while. Though the Challenge Trail will be crowded, you shouldn't have to wait to get in. Experience it after checking out the better rides and shows. Be aware, however, that the playground is quite large, and that you will not be able to keep your children in sight unless you tag along with them.

## A Bug's Land

This district is Disney's response to complaints that DCA lacked appeal for younger children. A Bug's Land incorporates the vestiges of Bountiful Valley Farm, celebrating California's agri-business, into a bug's eye world of giant objects, children's rides, and the *It's Tough to Be a Bug!* attraction.

### Bountiful Valley Demonstration Farm

**What It Is** Farming exhibit and playground

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction/exhibit

**When to Go** Anytime

**Author's Rating** A bit anemic; ★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★	Teens ★½	Over 30 ★★
Grade school ★★	Young Adults ★★	Seniors ★★½

**Touring Time** About 10 minutes for a comprehensive look

**Description and Comments** This area features demonstration crops, including an orange grove. Sponsored by Caterpillar, the farm includes an exhibit tracing the evolution of land cultivation from primitive methods to today's wonderful, large, Caterpillar tractors. Other features include the opportunity to sit on a Caterpillar tractor, to see a Caterpillar skid-steer loader, and, of course, to purchase "select Caterpillar merchandise and toys." Give me a break. There's also a kid's water-maze play area fashioned from leaking irrigation pipes and sprinklers (I promise I'm not making this up).

**Touring Tips** Check out the farm at your leisure and try not to step on the radishes. If you buy a tractor, have it sent to Package Pick-up to be retrieved when you leave the park.

## Flik's Fun Fair

**What It Is** Children's rides and play areas

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction

**When to Go** Before 11 a.m. for the rides; anytime for the play areas

**Author's Rating** Preschool heaven: ★★½

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★★★½	Teens —	Over 30 —
Grade school ★★★★★½	Young Adults —	Seniors —

**Touring Time** About 50 minutes for a comprehensive visit

**Description and Comments** Flik's Fun Fair is a children's park as seen through the eyes of an insect. Children can wander among 20-foot-tall blades of grass, tunnel-sized garden hoses, an enormous anthill, and the like. Kiddie rides include: Flik's Flyers with a balloon ride theme; a drive-it-yourself car ride called Tuck & Roll's Drive 'Em Buggies; Heimlich's Chew Chew Train, a miniature train ride; and a mini Mad Tea Party ride titled Francis's Ladybug Boogie, where you can spin your own "ladybug."

**Touring Tips** Though colorful and magnetically alluring to the under-eight crowd, all of the rides are low capacity, slow loading, and offer ridiculously brief rides. Our advice is to ride them sequentially before 11 a.m. if you visit on a weekend or during the summer. The play areas, of course, can be enjoyed anytime, but then you're faced with the prospect of the kids caterwauling to get on the rides.

Following is the relevant data on the kiddie rides (note that waiting times are per 50 people ahead of you as opposed to the usual 100 people):

**Heimlich's Chew Chew Train (train ride)**

**Special Comments** Adults as well as children can ride

**Ride Time** Almost 2 minutes

**Average Wait in Line Per 50 People Ahead of You** 5 minutes

**Tuck and Roll's Drive'em Buggies (bumper cars)**

**Special Comments** Adults as well as children can ride. Cars are much slower than on normal bumper-car rides.

**Ride Time** Almost 2 minutes

**Average Wait in Line Per 50 People Ahead of You** 12 minutes

**Flik's Flyers (suspended "baskets" swing around a central axis)**

**Ride Time** Almost 1½ minutes

**Average Wait in Line Per 50 People Ahead of You** 6 minutes

**Francis' Ladybug Boogie (children's version of the Mad Tea Party)**

**Ride Time** 1 minute

**Average Wait in Line Per 50 People Ahead of You** 8 minutes

## It's Tough to Be a Bug!

**What It Is** 3-D movie

**Scope and Scale** Major attraction

**When to Go** After experiencing DCA's better rides

**Special Comments** 3-D effects and loud noises frighten many preschoolers

**Author's Rating ★★★★★****Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★★★	Teens ★★★★★½	Over 30 ★★★★★½
Grade school ★★★★★½	Young Adults ★★★★★½	Seniors ★★★★★½

**Duration of Presentation** 8½ minutes**Probable Waiting Time** 20 minutes

**Description and Comments** *It's Tough to Be a Bug!* is an uproarious 3-D film about the difficulties of being a very small creature, and features some of the characters from the Disney/Pixar film, *A Bug's Life*. *It's Tough to Be a Bug!* is similar to *Honey, I Shrunk the Audience* at Disneyland Park in that it combines a 3-D film with an arsenal of tactile and visual special effects. In our view, the special effects are a bit overdone and the film somewhat disjointed. Even so, we rate the Bugs as not to be missed.

**Touring Tips** Because it's situated in one of the sleepier theme areas, Bugs is not usually under attack from the hordes until late morning. This should make *It's Tough to Be a Bug!* the easiest of the park's top attractions to see.

Be advised that *It's Tough to Be a Bug!* is very intense and that the special effects will do a number on young children as well as anyone who is squeamish about insects. Check out the following comments from readers who saw *It's Tough to Be a Bug!* at Walt Disney World. First, from a mother of two from Mobile, Alabama:

*It's Tough to Be a Bug! was too intense for any kids. Our boys are five and seven and they were scared to death. They love bugs, and they hated this movie. All of the kids in the theater were screaming and crying. I felt like a terrible mother for taking them into this movie. It is billed as a bug movie for kids, but nothing about it is for kids.*

But a Williamsville, New York, woman had it even worse:

*We almost lost the girls to any further Disney magic due to the 3-D movie It's Tough to Be a Bug! It was their first Disney experience, and almost their last. The story line was nebulous and difficult to follow—all they were aware of was the torture of sitting in a darkened theater being overrun with bugs. Total chaos, the likes of which I've never experienced, was breaking out around us. The 11-year-old refused to talk for 20 minutes after the fiasco, and the 3½-year-old wanted to go home—not back to the hotel, but home.*

Most readers, however, loved the Bugs, including this mom from Brentwood, Tennessee:

*Comments from your readers make It's Tough to Be a Bug! sound worse than Alien Encounter. It's not. It's intense like Honey, I Shrunk the Audience but mostly funny. The bugs are cartoonlike instead of realistic and icky, so I can't understand what all the fuss is about. Disney has conditioned us to think of rodents as cute, so kids think nothing of walking up to a mouse the size of a port-a-john, but go nuts over some cartoon bugs. Get a grip!*

## Ugly Bug Ball

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**What It Is** Musical stage show about insects

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction

**When to Go** Anytime as per the daily entertainment schedule

**Author's Rating** A very pleasant surprise; ★★★½

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★	Teens ★★	Over 30 ★★★
Grade school ★★★★★	Young Adults ★★★	Seniors ★★★

**Duration of Presentation** 17 minutes plus autographing session

**Description and Comments** Madame Butterfly offers dancing lessons to prepare the insects and kids for the gala *Ugly Bug Ball* while a curmudgeonly spider gets in the way. Dances the kids learn include the Heimlich Maneuver and the Tarantula Tango. A very clever and witty show, the *Ugly Bug Ball* is as much fun for adults as for kids. In fact, we recommend it to adults without children in their party.

**Touring Tips** The tiny outdoor theater with bench seats is located between the demonstration gardens and Bountiful Valley Farmers Market counter-service restaurant. Shade is limited.

## Paradise Pier

Wrapped around the southern shore of the kidney-shaped lake, Paradise Pier is Disney's version of a seaside amusement park from the first five decades of the twentieth century. It covers about one-third of Disney's California Adventure and contains around half of the attractions. Paradise Pier's presence at DCA is ironic, and in a perverse way brings the story of Walt Disney and Disneyland full circle. Walt, you see, created Disneyland Park as an alternative to parks such as this; parks with a carnival atmosphere, simple midway rides, carny games, and amply available wine, beer, and liquor. Amazingly, corporate Disney has made just such a place the centerpiece of Disneyland's sister park, slaughtering in effect one of the last of Walt's sacred cows. Fancy names and window dressing aside, what you'll find on Paradise Pier is a merry-go-round, a Ferris wheel, a roller coaster, a wild mouse, carny games (stacked against you), and beer.

### California Screamin' (FASTPASS)

**What It Is** Big, bad roller coaster

**Scope and Scale** Super headliner

**When to Go** Ride first thing in the morning, or use FASTPASS

**Special Comments** May induce motion sickness; 48" minimum height requirement; switching off available (see page TKTK)

**Author's Rating** Long and smooth; ★★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool —	Teens ★★★½	Over 30 ★★★★★
Grade school ★★★★★	Young Adults ★★★★★	Seniors *

\*The number of riding seniors surveyed was too small to derive a rating.

**Duration of Ride** 2½ minutes

**Loading Speed** Moderate to fast



**Description and Comments** This apparently antiquated wooden monster is actually a modern steel coaster, and at 6,800 feet, the second longest in the U.S. California Screamin' gets off to a 0–55 mph start by launching you up the first hill like a jet fighter plane off the deck of a carrier (albeit with different technology). From here it's tight turns followed by a second launch sending you over the crest of a 110-foot hill with a 107-foot drop on the far side. Next, you bank and complete an elliptical loop inside the giant Mickey head visible all over the park. A diving turn followed by a series of camel-backs brings you back to the station. Speakers play a synchronized soundtrack complete with recorded canned screaming.

We were impressed by the length of the course and the smoothness of the ride. From beginning to end, the ride is about 2½ minutes, with 2 minutes of actual ride time. En route the coaster slows enough on curves and on transition hills to let you take in the nice view. On the scary-o-meter, Screamin' is certainly worse than Space Mountain but doesn't really compare with some of the steel coasters at nearby Magic Mountain. What Screamin' loses in fright potential, however, it makes up in variety. Along its course, Disney has placed every known curve, hill, dip, and loop in roller-coaster design.

**Touring Tips** California Screamin' is a serious coaster, a coaster that makes Space Mountain look like Dumbo. Secure any hats, cameras, eyeglasses, or anything else that might be ripped from your person during the ride. Stay away completely if you're prone to motion sickness.

Engineered to run several trains at once, California Screamin' does a better job than any roller coaster we've seen at handling crowds, at least when the attraction is running at full capacity. Recently, presumably because of maintenance and staffing problems, several trains were sidetracked. This turned a well-designed coaster into a mammoth bottleneck. The coaster was sometimes shut down two or more times a day for technical problems. Early in the morning, however, it's usually easy to get two or three rides under your belt in about 15 minutes. Ride in the first hour the park is open or use FASTPASS.

## Golden Zephyr

**What It Is** Zephyrs spinning around a central tower

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction

**When to Go** Before 11 a.m. or just before closing

**Special Comments** Can't operate on breezy days

**Author's Rating** Totally redundant; ★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★½	Teens ★★	Over 30 ★½
Grade school ★★★½	Young Adults ★½	Seniors ★½

**Duration of Ride** About 2½ minutes

**Loading Speed** Slow

**Description and Comments** First, a zephyr is a term often associated with blimps. On this attraction, the zephyrs look like open-cockpit rockets. In any event, each zephyr holds about a dozen guests and spins around a central axis with enough cen-



trifugal force to lay the zephyr partially on its side. As it turns out, the Golden Zephyrs are very touchy, as zephyrs go: they can't fly in a wind exceeding about 5 mph. Needless to say, the attraction is shut down much of the time.

**Touring Tips** A colorful, beautiful attraction, it is another slow-loading cycle ride. Go during the first hour the park is open or be prepared for a long wait.

## Jumpin' Jellyfish

**What It Is** Parachute ride

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction

**When to Go** Before 10:30 a.m. or just before closing

**Special Comments** Can't operate on breezy days; 40" minimum height

**Author's Rating** All sizzle, no meat; ★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★	Teens ★½	Over 30 ★★
Grade school ★★★	Young Adults ★★	Seniors ★★

**Duration of Ride** About 45 seconds

**Loading Speed** Slow

**Description and Comments** On this ride, you're raised on a cable to the top of the tower and then released to gently parachute back to earth. Mostly a children's ride, Jumpin' Jellyfish is paradoxically off limits to those who would most enjoy it because of its 40" minimum height restriction. For adults, the attraction is a real snore. Oops, make that a real bore...the paltry 45 seconds duration of the ride is not long enough to fall asleep.

**Touring Tips** The Jellyfish, so called because of a floating jellyfish's resemblance to an open parachute, is another slow-loading ride of very low capacity. Get on early in the morning or be prepared for a long wait.

## King Triton's Carousel

**What It Is** Merry-go-round

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction

**When to Go** Before noon

**Author's Rating** Beautimus; ★★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★★★	Teens —	Over 30 —
Grade school ★★★	Young Adults —	Seniors —

**Duration of Ride** A little less than 2 minutes

**Loading Speed** Slow

**Description and Comments** On this elaborate and stunningly crafted carousel, dolphins, sea horses, seals, and the like replace the standard prancing horses.

**Touring Tips** Worth a look even if there are no children in your party. If you have kids who want to ride, try to get them on before noon.

**Maliboomer****What It Is** Vertical launch and free-fall thrill ride**Scope and Scale** Major attraction**When to Go** The first hour the park's open**Special Comments** May induce motion sickness; 52" minimum height requirement; switching off available (see page TKTK).**Author's Rating** Overrated; ★★½**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool —	Teens ★★★★★	Over 30 ★★★
Grade school ★★★★★½	Young Adults ★★★★★½	Seniors *

\*The number of riding seniors surveyed was too small to derive a rating.

**Duration of Ride** 50 seconds**Loading Speed** Slow

**Description and Comments** Maliboomer consists of three towers which are easy to recognize since they're the tallest structures in the park. It's themed to resemble a giant rendition of the midway test-of-strength booth where you try to ring a bell high atop a pole by hitting a plate on the ground with a sledgehammer. When you hit the plate, a metal projectile is launched vertically up the shaft towards the bell. Well, on this attraction, you take the place of the metal projectile and are launched up the tower and allowed to free-fall during part of your trip back toward the ground. Naturally, this might leave you feeling like your own bell's been rung.

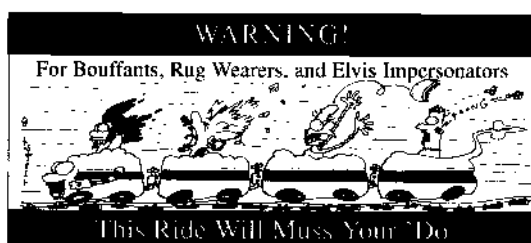
As it turns out, Maliboomer looks much scarier than it actually is. The launch speed is really quite civilized, though everyone screams for appearance's sake. In fact, there's so much high-decibel screaming on this attraction that Disney installed clear plastic "scream guards" to prevent all the hollering from being broadcast across Anaheim (I promise I'm not making this up). If the launch is so-so, the free-fall wins the big-weenie award. The only real adrenaline rush comes from waiting anxiously to be launched. In short, there's not enough bite for a real thrill-ride enthusiast to justify the wait. If you've never experienced similar attractions at other parks, however, Maliboomer will provide a gentle introduction to the genre.

**Touring Tips** Though great fun for those with strong stomachs, this type of ride is an infamously slow loader. Try to ride during the first hour the park is open. Bins are provided to store purses, glasses, and other loose items while you ride. If the wait is long, split up your group and use the singles line.

**Mulholland Madness (FASTPASS)****What It Is** Disney version of a wild (or mad) mouse ride**Scope and Scale** Major attraction**When to Go** During the first hour the park's open**Special Comments** May induce motion sickness; 42" minimum height requirement; switching off available (see page TKTK).**Author's Rating** Space Mountain with the lights on; ★★★**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool *	Teens ★★★★★½	Over 30 ★★★
Grade school ★★★★★★	Young Adults ★★★★★	Seniors *

Motion  
SicknessMotion  
Sickness



\*The number of riding preschoolers and seniors surveyed was too small to derive a rating.

**Duration of Ride** About 1½ minutes

**Loading Speed** Slow to moderate

**Description and Comments** Themed as a wild drive on the California freeways, Mulholland Madness is a designer wild mouse (sometimes also called “mad mouse”). If you’re not familiar with the genre, it’s a small, convoluted roller coaster where the track dips and turns unexpectedly, presumably reminding its inventor of a mouse tearing through a maze. To define it more in Disney terms, the ride is similar to Space Mountain, only outdoors and therefore in the light. Mulholland Madness is an off-the-shelf midway ride that Disney has invested next to nothing in spiffing up. In other words, fun but nothing special.

**Touring Tips** A fun ride, but also a slow-loading one, and one that breaks down frequently. Ride during the first hour the park is open or use FASTPASS.

## Orange Stinger

**What It Is** Swings rotating around a central tower

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction

**When to Go** Before 10:30 a.m. or just before closing

**Special Comments** 48" minimum-height requirement

**Author’s Rating** Simple but fun; ★★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★	Teens ★½	Over 30 ★★
Grade school ★★★	Young Adults ★★★	Seniors ★★

Motion  
Sickness



**Duration of Ride** Less than 1½ minutes

**Loading Speed** Slow

**Description and Comments** On the Orange Stinger you ride swings that look like giant bees. The bees swing in a circle around a central tower and inside of what looks like a partially peeled orange. Ride junkies state that the Orange Stinger will have good “footchop,” which essentially means that your feet come very close to the enclosing orange. In addition to the footchop, the ride is augmented by loud buzzing (really!). In the scary department, it’s a wilder ride than Dumbo, but footchop and frenetic buzzing notwithstanding, the Orange Stinger is still just swings going in circles. Lamentably, the 41" minimum height precludes those who would most enjoy the attraction from riding.

**Touring Tips** This is a fun and visually appealing ride, but one that loads slowly and occasions long waits unless you wrangle your bee during the first hour or so the park



is open. Be aware that it's possible for the swing chairs to collide when the ride comes to a stop. The author picked up a nice bruise when an empty swing smacked him during touchdown.

## Sun Wheel

**What It Is** Ferris wheel

**Scope and Scale** Major attraction

**When to Go** Before 10:30 a.m. or just before closing

**Special Comments** May induce motion sickness

**Author's Rating** The world's largest chicken coop; ★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★	Teens ★★½	Over 30 ★★½
Grade school ★★★	Young Adults ★★½	Seniors ★★

**Duration of Ride** 2 minutes

**Loading Speed** Slow

**Description and Comments** Higher than the Matterhorn attraction at Disneyland Park, this whopper of a Ferris wheel tops out at 150 feet. Absolutely spectacular in appearance, with an enormous sun emblem in the middle of its wheel, the aptly-named Sun Wheel offers stunning views in all directions. Unfortunately, however, the view is severely compromised by the steel mesh that completely encloses the passenger compartment. In essence, Disney has created the world's largest revolving chicken coop. As concerns the ride itself, some of the passenger buckets move laterally from side to side across the Sun Wheel in addition to rotating around with the wheel. Because it feels like your bucket has become unattached from the main structure, this lateral movement can be a little disconcerting if you aren't expecting it.

**Touring Tips** Ferris wheels are the most slow-loading of all cycle rides. Thus, we were very curious to see how the loading and unloading of the Sun Wheel is engineered. The Sun Wheel has a platform that allows three compartments to be loaded at once. The lateral sliding buckets are loaded from the two outside platforms, while the stationary compartments are loaded from the middle platform. Loading the entire wheel takes about 6½ minutes, following which the Sun Wheel rotates for a two-minute ride. And speaking of the ride, the Sun Wheel rotates so slowly that the wonderful rising and falling sensations of the garden-variety Ferris Wheel is completely absent. For our money, the Sun Wheel is beautiful to behold but terribly boring to ride. If you decide to give it a whirl, ride before 10:30 a.m. or in the hour before the park closes. Our advice, as with most of the Paradise Pier attractions, is to ride during the first hour the park is open.

## S. S. Rustworthy

**What It Is** Wet play area

**Scope and Scale** Minor attraction

**When to Go** Anytime

**Special Comments** Children will get drenched

**Author's Rating** Small but effective; ★★★

**Overall Appeal by Age Group**

Preschool ★★★	Teens —	Over 30 —
Grade school ★★★	Young Adults —	Seniors —

Motion  
Sickness



**Description and Comments** A rusty shipwreck (supposedly on the bottom of the sea) surrounded by giant starfish, clams, and other sea creatures, as well as by fountains that randomly erupt, squirt, and spray. Children pretend to avoid being squirted while contriving to get as wet as possible without drowning.

**Touring Tips** Your kids will want to cavort on the *S. S. Rustworthy* even if the weather is cool. Be prepared to set some limits or alternatively to carry some dry clothes.

## Parades and Live Entertainment

**Afternoon and Evening Parades** The Afternoon Parade features surf music, floats celebrating California, and the Disney characters. It is only staged at busier times of year. The evening parade is a reincarnation of the Main Street Electrical Parade from Disneyland Park.

The good news is that both the afternoon and evening parades are good ones. The afternoon parade makes up in color and enthusiasm what it lacks in coherence. And the evening Electrical Parade? Well, it's been a surefire winner for decades, featuring billions of itty-bitty lights, lots of floats, and a battalion of Disney characters. The parade route runs from a gate to the left of the Pizza Oom Mow Mow restaurant at Paradise Pier, through The Bay Area, around A Bug's Land side of Grizzly Peak, and on to Sunshine Plaza, where it takes a lap around the fountain and then disappears backstage near Playhouse Disney. On days when the crowds are light, any place along the parade route will suffice. On days of heavy attendance, try to score a viewing spot on the elevated courtyard or steps of the Golden Vine Winery.

The parade route jams pedestrian traffic throughout the park, essentially trapping you in place until the parade passes. If you don't intend to watch the parade, get situated wherever you want to be before it starts. Disney cast members will be able to tell you in which direction the parade will run.

**Block Party Bash** This street festivity is DCA's main event in the Disneyland 50th anniversary celebration. The Bash consists of highly orchestrated "spontaneous" street parties that erupt around the park. Each party includes music (some live), dancing, and novel street entertainment. The Block Party Bash cranks up on May 5, 2005 along with the other Disneyland anniversary events. You don't have to worry about finding the Bash or working it into your itinerary. Chances are it will find you.

**Hyperion Theater** A state-of-the-art theater that is the venue for the best of DCA's live shows, as well as for special concerts and events. Check the daily entertainment schedule in the handout park map to see what's playing and for showtimes.

**Hollywood Backlot Stage** This open-air stage features top-notch improv comedy. It's one of our favorite venues in the park.

**Pacific Wharf Stage** A small outdoor stage that features live rock, country, and pop music. Check the daily entertainment schedule to see who's playing.

**Ahwahnee Camp Circle Story Theater** Storytelling at the Redwood Creek Challenge Trail across from Grizzly Mountain.

**Street Entertainment** Mobile rock bands (on flatbed trailers and woody wagons), acrobats, and comedy sketches on the Hollywood Pictures Backlot are part of the scheduled street entertainment. Unlike at Disneyland Park where street entertainers appear on a more or less impromptu basis, most of DCA's street acts operate according to a specific performance schedule listed on the back of the park handout map.

**Disney Characters** Character appearances are listed in the daily entertainment schedule. In addition, Flik can usually be found at A Bug's Land, Chip 'n' Dale hang out around the Redwood Challenge Trail, Cruella De Vil makes appearances in the Hollywood Pictures Backlot, and the Avalon Cove restaurant at Paradise Pier offers character dining featuring Ariel, Goofy, and Minnie.

## **Traffic Patterns at Disney's California Adventure**

One of the problems Disney had at DCA in 2002 and much of 2003 was that there was no traffic to create patterns. Attendance figures were far less than projected, though guests on hand did stack up daily at Soarin' over California and Grizzly River Run. On the relatively few crowded days (mostly weekends), the park didn't handle crowds particularly well. If Disney's gate projections had panned out, the park would have been in gridlock much of the time. The year 2004 was better, thanks primarily to the new Twilight Zone Tower of Terror.

If you happen to hit DCA on a day of high attendance, here's what to expect. A high percentage of the early morning arrivals will beat feet directly to the Tower of Terror and/or Soarin' over California and then continue (on warmer days) to Grizzly River Run. When the Tower of Terror opened in 2004 it instantly became the park's biggest draw and relieved much of the pressure on Soarin' over California and Grizzly River Run. Other than the Tower of Terror, the Hollywood Pictures Backlot is deserted, as are Golden State Winery, Pacific Wharf, A Bug's Land, and The Bay Area until mid-morning. As the lines build at Tower, Soarin' and Grizzly, and as guests begin opting for FASTPASSES at these attractions, the crowd begins working its way into Paradise Pier. California Screamin' sees its share of traffic as locals in the know arrive to beat the crowd at the coaster and at the slow-loading cycle rides at Paradise Pier. By late morning on a busy day, you'll find sizable lines at most of DCA's rides. By noon or earlier, the ride queues are substantial and the crowds redistribute to the

park's shows. *Millionaire*, Playhouse Disney, *Muppet Vision*, and the Hyperion Theater draw good-sized crowds. By 2 p.m. the whole park is fairly socked in with guests, and minor attractions and displays like the sourdough bread and tortilla baking demonstrations build lines. Park departures increase significantly after 3 p.m., with lots of Park Hopper and Annual Pass holders heading over to Disneyland Park. By the dinner hour, crowds at DCA have thinned appreciably. As closing time approaches, long lines are found only at the park's premier attractions. During our research visits there was no daily capstone event at DCA comparable to *Fantasmic!* and the fireworks at Disneyland Park. When DCA offers a capstone event, the bulk of the evening crowd will depart at the conclusion of the show. During our visits, the largest wave of departing guests occurred following the Electrical Parade. Just before closing, crowd levels are thin except, of course, at Soarin' over California.

## Disney's California Adventure One-Day Touring Plan

### Before You Go

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1. Buy your admission in advance (see page 18).
  2. Call (714) 781-7290 the day before your visit for the park's official opening time.
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### At the Park

This touring plan assumes a willingness to experience all rides and shows. If the plan calls for you to experience an attraction that does not interest you, simply skip it and proceed with the plan. Height and age requirements apply to many attractions. If you have children who are not eligible to ride, avail yourself of the switching-off option. This touring plan includes most of the amusement park rides on Paradise Pier. If you're short on time or wish to allocate more of the day to DCA's theater attractions, consider foregoing a few of the slow loading rides

1. Arrive at the entrance turnstiles with admission in-hand 30 minutes before official opening time.
  2. Turn left from the park entrance into the Hollywood Studios Backlot, and then right at the Hyperion Theater and proceed to the Tower of Terror. Obtain FASTPASSES but do not ride.
  3. Retrace your steps back toward the park entrance, bearing left just before the turnstile area into the Condor Flats section of the Golden State district. Ride Soarin' Over California.
  4. Using your FASTPASS, return to the Tower of Terror and ride.
  5. Backtrack past Soarin' to the Grizzly River Run and obtain FASTPASSES.
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6. Continue on to the California Screamin' roller coaster on the far side of the lake in the Paradise Pier section of the park. Ride. Feel free to ride the coaster a second or third time if the waiting times are short.

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7. Bear left on exiting and continue around the lake to Mulholland Madness. Do not use FASTPASS.

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8. Across the plaza from Mulholland Madness, ride the Golden Zephyr.

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9. Backtracking with the lake on your left, proceed next to the Orange Stinger and ride.

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10. Continuing back toward the roller coaster, ride the Sun Wheel.

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11. If your party includes small children, ride King Triton's Carousel.

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12. Departing Paradise Pier, stop in the San Francisco area and check out the showtimes for Whoopi Goldberg starring in *Golden Dreams*. Interrupt the touring plan to return and see the show if it's on your do-list.

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13. Return to Grizzly River Run and ride using your FASTPASSES.

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14. Head back toward the lake and turn left keeping Grizzly Peak on your left side. Proceed to A Bug's Land. See *It's Tough To Be A Bug*.

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15. Also in A Bug's Land, try the kiddie rides at Flik's Fun Fair, if there are small children in your party.

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16. Turn right on exiting A Bug's Land and return to the Hollywood Studios Backlot. If a new attraction has been installed to replace Superstar Limo, go ahead and ride.

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17. From this point on, feel free to interrupt the touring plan for lunch or a snack.

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18. There are five excellent shows in the Hollywood Pictures Backlot district: *Playhouse Disney: Live on Stage*, the current show at the Hyperion Theater; *Muppet Vision 3-D*, the improv comedy show *D.U.H.* and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. *Muppet Vision 3-D* runs back-to-back shows all day, but the other presentations offer a limited number of performances with showtimes listed in the park handout map. The Hyperion Theater, *D.U.H.* and *Millionaire* should be on everyone's itinerary. *Playhouse Disney: Live on Stage* is an absolute must for families with children seven years and younger, but is expendable for groups of adults or older children.

What you want to do at this point, using the entertainment schedule in the park handout map, is to work out a plan for seeing the shows that interest you. We suggest making the excellent Hyperion Theater production your top priority. Find the next scheduled performance and plan to be there, arriving 20–30 minutes prior to showtime. Between arriving early, getting seated, seeing the 40-minute show, and exiting, allocate about an hour and 15 minutes altogether.

Once you determine the specific Hyperion Theater performance you'll attend (and know what time you have to be there and when you'll be done), you can develop a schedule for seeing the other presentations. As concerns the other shows, allocate 30–35 minutes for *Muppet Vision*, 45–55 minutes for *Playhouse Disney*, 30 minutes for *D.U.H.* at the Hollywood Back-

lot Stage, and 50–60 minutes for *Millionaire*. Our time allocations include arriving 20 minutes before the show for *Playhouse Disney* and *Millionaire*. You don't have to worry about arriving early for the *Muppets* because the show runs continuously back-to-back. You can arrive at the Hollywood Backlot Stage for *D.U.H.* anytime, even when the show is in progress. If *Millionaire* is on your must-see list, stop by and pick up FASTPASSES. Remember, *Millionaire* is not connected to the parkwide FASTPASS system, so it won't know whether you're holding FASTPASSES to other attractions.

If you have time gaps in your schedule (once you've got everything sorted out), you can use the gaps to tour the Animation Building. If you have a big gap, say 45 minutes, you can use it to ride Grizzly River Run utilizing the FASTPASSES you obtained earlier. Remember that the return window printed on the FASTPASS is only a preferred time. The FASTPASS is good from the beginning of the time window until park closing.

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19. Return to Golden State and visit any of the minor attractions, including the film about winemaking at the winery, and tortilla and bread making demonstrations on Pacific Wharf. See *Golden Dreams* in the San Francisco area if you missed it earlier.
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20. If you have children, let them take a crack at the Redwood Creek Challenge Trail near Grizzly River Run and the fountain playground nearby in Paradise Pier.
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21. This concludes the touring plan. Check your daily entertainment schedule for parades, live performances, fireworks, and special events. Adjust the remainder of your visit accordingly. Drop by the Animation Building in Hollywood on your way out of the park if you missed some of the exhibits earlier in the day.
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