

DISNEY'S CALIFORNIA ADVENTURE

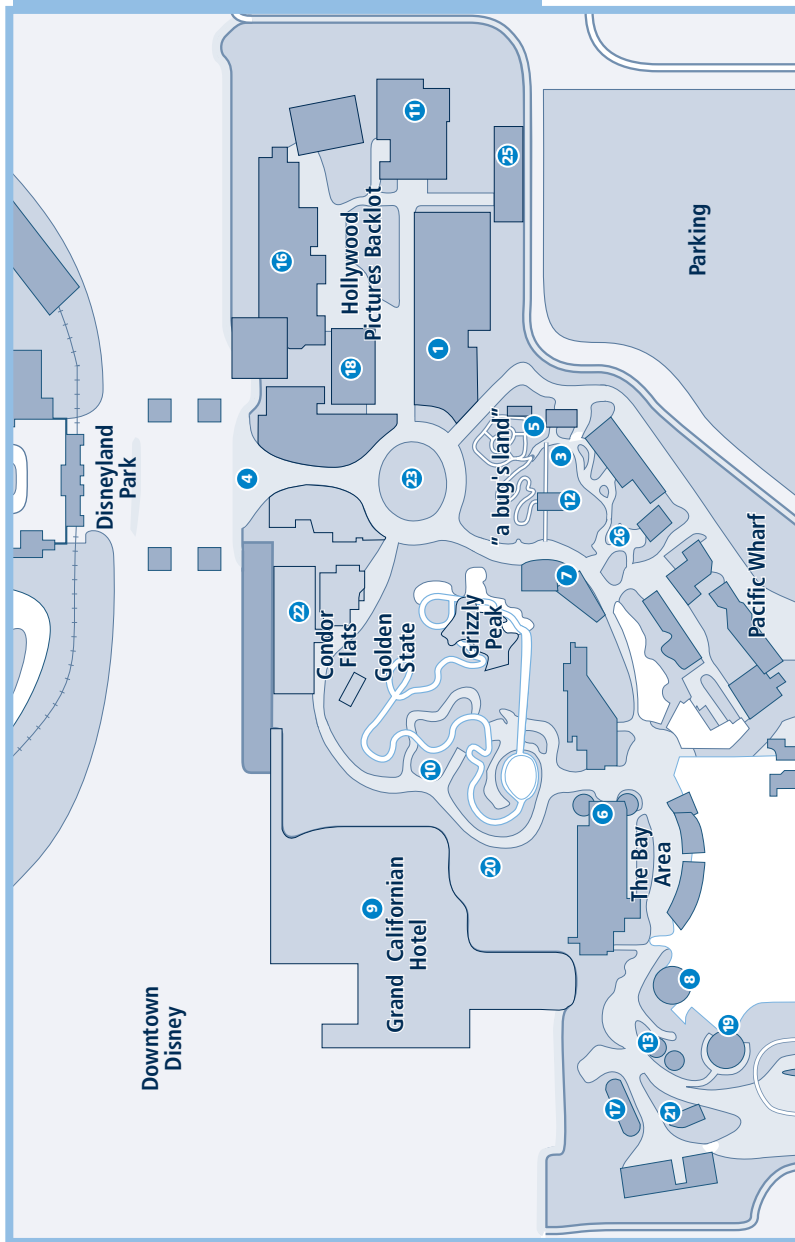
A BRAVE NEW PARK

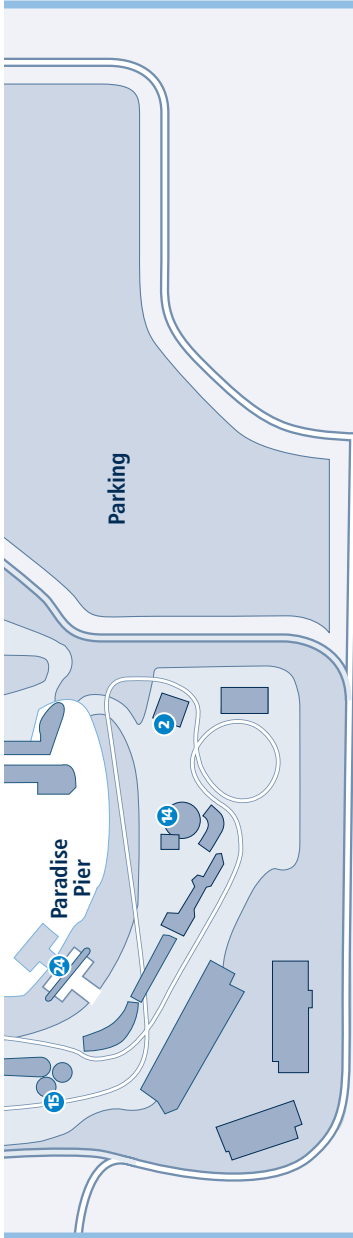
THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY'S newest American theme park, Disney's California Adventure, held its grand opening on February 8, 2001. Already known as "DCA" among Disneyphiles, the park is a bouquet of contradictions conceived in Fantasyland, starved in utero by corporate Disney, and born into a hostile environment 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 compose 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 california adventure





- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Animation Building 1 | Grizzly River Run 10 | Muppet Vision 3-D 18 | Twilight Zone Tower of Terror 25 |
| California Screamin' 2 | Hyperion Theater 11 | Orange Stinger 19 | Ugly Bug Ball 26 |
| Demonstration Farm 3 | <i>It's Tough to Be a Bug!</i> 12 | Redwood Creek | |
| Entrance 4 | Jumpin' Jellyfish 13 | Challenge Trail 20 | |
| Flik's Fun Fair 5 | King Triton's Carousel 14 | Soarin' over California 22 | |
| <i>Golden Dreams</i> 6 | Maliboomer 15 | Sunshine Plaza | |
| Golden Vine Winery 7 | Monster Inc.: Mike and Sulley to the Rescue 16 | (central hub) 23 | |
| Golden Zephyr 8 | Mulholland Madness 17 | Sun Wheel 24 | |
| Grand Californian Hotel 9 | | | |

Disney's California 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 sizable 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

Golden State	Grizzly River Run Soarin' over California
Hollywood Studios Backlot	Hyperion Theater Muppet Vision 3-D Twilight Zone Tower of Terror Disney's Aladdin: A Musical Spectacular
Bug's Land	<i>It's Tough to Be a Bug!</i>
Paradise Pier	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 "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 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. For the Disneyland anniversary celebration in 2005, Block Party Bash, a parade/street show hybrid, and a new dark ride, *Monsters, Inc.*: Mike and Sulley to the Rescue were introduced.

ARRIVING *and* GETTING ORIENTED

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, restrooms, an ATM machine, and phones.

After passing under a whimsical representation of the Golden Gate Bridge, you arrive at the park's central hub. The hub area is called Sunshine Plaza and is dominated by a fountain fronting an arresting metal sculpture of the sun. 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 20th 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. Be aware that DCA usually opens at 10 a.m., one or two hours later than Disneyland Park.

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, soundstages, and a central street with shops and restaurants that depict Hollywood's golden age.

Disney Animation

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL ★★★	GRADE SCHOOL ★★★★★	TEENS ★★★★★
YOUNG ADULTS	★★★★	OVER 30 ★★★★★	SENIORS ★★★★★

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; ★★★★★. **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 to 55 minutes to do all the interactive stuff and see everything. Added to the Disney Animation lineup is Turtle Talk with Crush featuring the 152-year-old sea turtle from the Disney/Pixar film *Finding Nemo*. Originally developed for the Living Seas pavilion at Epcot, Turtle Talk with Crush is the first attraction incorporating the technology of real-time animation. Here Crush answers questions, jokes, and makes conversation with guests in real time. The animation is brilliant, and guests of all ages list Crush as their favorite Animation building feature.

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. Save Turtle Talk with Crush for last. 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

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL ★★★ GRADE SCHOOL ★★★★★ TEENS ★★★★★
 YOUNG ADULTS ★★★★★ OVER 30 ★★★★★ SENIORS ★★★★★

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; ★★★★★. **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 exhibit 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 2005 and may well continue through 2006 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 time, 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 to 20 minutes prior to show time. The tickets differ from FAST-PASSES 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 show times listed, in the park *Times Guide*. 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.

Monsters, Inc.: Mike and Sulley to the Rescue (opens 2006)

APPEAL BY AGE NOT OPEN AT PRESS TIME

Type of attraction Dark ride. **Scope and scale** Major attraction. **When to go** Before 11 a.m. **Author's rating** Not open at press time. **Duration of ride** 3½ minutes. **Average wait in line per 100 people ahead of you** 4 minutes. **Loading speed** Moderate.

DESCRIPTION AND COMMENTS Based on characters and the story from the Disney/Pixar film *Monsters, Inc.*, the ride takes you through child-phobic Monstropolis as Mike and Sulley try to return baby Boo safely to her bedroom. If you haven't seen the film the story line won't make much sense. In a nutshell, a human baby gets loose in a sort of parallel universe populated largely by amusing monsters. Good monsters Mike and Sulley try to return Boo to her home before the bad monsters get their hands on her.

TOURING TIPS This attraction wasn't open when we went to press, but will undoubtedly draw good crowds simply because it's new. We recommend seeing it before 11 a.m. or late in the afternoon. Because it's near several theater attractions it is subject to experiencing a sudden deluge of guests when the theaters disgorge their audiences.

Muppet Vision 3-D

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL ★★★ GRADE SCHOOL ★★★½ TEENS ★★★
YOUNG ADULTS ★★★½ OVER 30 ★★★½ SENIORS ★★★½

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. **Duration of presentation** 17 minutes. **Probable waiting time** 20 minutes.

DESCRIPTION AND COMMENTS *Muppet Vision 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

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL ★★★★★ GRADE SCHOOL ★★★ TEENS ★★
 YOUNG ADULTS ★★★ OVER 30 ★★ SENIORS ★★★

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; ★★★★★. **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 show time. Once inside, pick a spot on the floor and take a breather until the performance begins.

The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror (FASTPASS)

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL ★★★ GRADE SCHOOL ★★★★★ TEENS ★★★★★
 YOUNG ADULTS ★★★★★ OVER 30 ★★★★★ SENIORS ★★★★★½

What it is Sci-fi-theme indoor thrill ride. **Scope and scale** Super headliner. **When to go** The first 30 minutes the park is open. **Special comments** Must be 40" tall to ride; switching-off option offered. **Author's rating** DCA's best attraction; not to be missed; ★★★★★. **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. It breaks tradition in terms of visually isolating themed areas, and 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 at 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 13th floor 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 hotel lobby and into the library for the preshow. Following the preshow, 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 it, run as fast as you can in the opposite direction. Seriously, avoid assuming this attraction isn't for you. A senior from the United Kingdom tried the Tower of Terror and liked it very much, writing:

I was thankful I read your review of the Tower of Terror, or I would certainly have avoided it. As you say, it is so full of magnificent detail that it is worth riding, even if you don't fancy the drops involved.

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 Soarin' the moment the park opens and ride. Yes, you'll burn a little shoe leather and a few calories too, but you'll save a bundle of time. Next, hoof over to the Tower of Terror and obtain a FASTPASS.

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 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.

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

CURIOSLY, 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

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL ★★½ GRADE SCHOOL ★★★★★ TEENS ★★
YOUNG ADULTS ★★½ OVER 30 ★★★★★ SENIORS ★★★★★

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. **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 show times, 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)

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL – GRADE SCHOOL ★★★★★ TEENS ★★★★★½
YOUNG ADULTS ★★★★★ OVER 30 ★★★★★ SENIORS ★★★★★

What it is Flight-simulation ride. **Scope and scale** Super headliner. **When to go** The first 30 minutes the park is open, or use FASTPASS. **Special comments** May induce motion sickness; 40" minimum-height requirement; switching off available (see page 107). **Author's rating** The park's best ride; ★★★★★½. **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 one of the two truly technologically innovative rides 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 Soarin' the moment the park opens and ride. Next, proceed to the Tower of Terror and obtain a FASTPASS (FASTPASS kiosks open the same time as the attraction). With Tower of Terror FASTPASS in hand, continue to the next attraction on your itinerary.

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

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL —	GRADE SCHOOL ★½	TEENS ★★½
YOUNG ADULTS ★★★	OVER 30	★★★	SENIORS ★★★

What it is Infomercial and exhibit about California wines. **Scope and scale** Minor attraction/exhibit. **When to go** Anytime. **Author's rating** Quite informative; ★★★. **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)

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL —	GRADE SCHOOL ★★½	TEENS ★★★½
YOUNG ADULTS ★★½	OVER 30	★★★½	SENIORS ★★★½

What it is Whitewater raft ride. **Scope and scale** Super headliner. **When to go** First hour the park is open, 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. **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 unpredictable. 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.

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 the first hour the park is open, 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 drier 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 Show

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL ★★★ GRADE SCHOOL ★★★★★ TEENS ★★
YOUNG ADULTS ★★ OVER 30 ★★ SENIORS ★★

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

DESCRIPTION AND COMMENTS An elaborate maze of rope bridges, log towers, and a cave, 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 nonexistent. 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 agribusiness, 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

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL ★★★ GRADE SCHOOL ★★ TEENS ★½
YOUNG ADULTS ★★ OVER 30 ★★ SENIORS ★★½

What it is Farming exhibit and playground. **Scope and scale** Minor attraction/exhibit. **When to go** Anytime. **Author's rating** A bit anemic; ★★. **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

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL	★★★½	GRADE SCHOOL	★★★½	TEENS	—
YOUNG	ADULTS	—	OVER	30	—	SENIORS

What it is Children's rides and play areas. **Scope and scale** Minor attraction. **When to go** Before 11:30 a.m. for the rides; anytime for the play areas. **Author's rating** Preschool heaven: ★★★½. **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!

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL ★★★★★ GRADE SCHOOL ★★★★★½ TEENS ★★★★★½
YOUNG ADULTS ★★★★★½ OVER 30 ★★★★★½ SENIORS ★★★★★½

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** ★★★★★. **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 Shrank 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 *Bug* as not to be missed.

TOURING TIPS Because it's situated in one of the sleepier theme areas, *Bug* 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 3-½-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 Shrank the Audience but mostly funny. The bugs are cartoon-like 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

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL ★★★	GRADE SCHOOL ★★★	TEENS ★★
YOUNG ADULTS ★★★	OVER 30 ★★★	SENIORS ★★★	

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. **Duration of presentation** 17 minutes plus auto-graphing 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 20th 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, carnary 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, carnary games (stacked against you), and beer.

California Screamin' (FASTPASS)

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL –	GRADE SCHOOL ★★★★★	TEENS ★★★★★½
YOUNG ADULTS ★★★	OVER 30 ★★★	SENIORS †	

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

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 107). **Author's rating** Long and smooth; ★★☆☆. **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 you will experience 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 camelbacks 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

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL ★★☆☆½ GRADE SCHOOL ★★☆☆½ TEENS ★★
YOUNG ADULTS ★½ **OVER 30** ★½ **SENIORS** ★½

What it is Zephyrs spinning around a central tower. **Scope and scale** Minor attraction. **When to go** The first 90 minutes the park is open or just before closing. **Special comments** Can't operate on breezy days. **Author's rating** Totally redundant; ★★. **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 centrifugal 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-and-a-half the park is open or be prepared for a long wait.



Jumpin' Jellyfish

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL ★★★	GRADE SCHOOL ★★★	TEENS ★½
YOUNG ADULTS ★★	OVER 30 ★★	SENIORS ★★	

What it is Parachute ride. **Scope and scale** Minor attraction. **When to go** The first 90 minutes the park is open or just before closing. **Special comments** Can't operate on breezy days; 40" minimum-height requirement. **Author's rating** All sizzle, no meat; ★★. **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

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL ★★★★★	GRADE SCHOOL ★★★	TEENS —
YOUNG ADULTS —	OVER 30 —	SENIORS —	

What it is Merry-go-round. **Scope and scale** Minor attraction. **When to go** Before noon. **Author's rating** Beautimus; ★★★★★. **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

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL –	GRADE SCHOOL ★★★½	TEENS ★★★★★
YOUNG ADULTS	★★★½	OVER 30 ★★★	SENIORS †

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

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 107). **Author's rating** Overrated; ★★★½. **Duration of ride** 50 seconds. **Loading speed** Slow.

DESCRIPTION AND COMMENTS Maliboomer consists of three towers that 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)

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL †	GRADE SCHOOL ★★★½	TEENS ★★★★★
YOUNG ADULTS	★★★	OVER 30 ★★★	SENIORS †

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



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 107). **Author's rating** Space Mountain with the lights on; ★★★. **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 in which 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

APPEAL BY AGE PRESCHOOL ★★★ GRADE SCHOOL ★★★ TEENS ★½
YOUNG ADULTS ★★★ OVER 30 ★★ SENIORS ★★

What it is Swings rotating around a central tower. **Scope and scale** Minor attraction. **When to go** The first 90 minutes the park is open or just before closing. **Special comments** 48" minimum-height requirement. **Author's rating** Simple but fun; ★★★. **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 has 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 48" minimum-height restriction 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

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL ★★★	GRADE SCHOOL ★★★	TEENS ★★½
YOUNG ADULTS ★★½	OVER 30 ★★½	SENIORS ★★	

What it is Ferris wheel. **Scope and scale** Major attraction. **When to go** The first 90 minutes the park is open or just before closing. **Special comments** May induce motion sickness. **Author's rating** The world's largest chicken coop; ★★★. **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 are 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 the first hour the park is open or in the hour before the park closes.

S. S. Rustworthy

APPEAL BY AGE	PRESCHOOL ★★★	GRADE SCHOOL ★★★	TEENS –
YOUNG ADULTS –	OVER 30 –	SENIORS –	

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; ★★★.

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 has been usurped during the Disneyland anniversary celebration by the Block Party Bash described below. The evening parade is a reincarnation of the Main Street Electrical Parade from Disneyland Park.

The good news is that both the Block Party Bash and evening parades are good shows. The afternoon event 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. Featuring 26 characters from Disney/Pixar films *Toy*

Story, *Monsters Inc.*, *A Bug's Life*, and *The Incredibles*, the Block Party Bash is three parts interactive shows and one part parade. Usually starting at Paradise Pier with the improbable gang of green army men, giant marching orange highway cones, alphabet blocks (the “block” party part), 60 dancers, 16 acrobats, 12 pairs of “jumping” stilts, three large floats, and the Pixar characters, the Bash stops for three 11-minute shows along its route. Each time it cranks up, pretty much everyone within 50 yards is sucked into the mayhem (when's the last time you danced with a highway cone?). Of the three performance stops, Golden State Park across from Paradise Pier and Sunshine Plaza near the park's entrance offer the best viewing and most elbow room. The third stop is at the entrance to A Bug's Land.

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 show times.

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.

“THE MAGIC OF BROTHER BEAR” TOTEM CEREMONY 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 and Atta 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 Ariel's Grotto restaurant at Paradise Pier offers character dining featuring Captain Mickey and friends.

TRAFFIC PATTERNS AT DISNEY'S CALIFORNIA ADVENTURE

ONE OF THE PROBLEMS Disney had at DCA early on 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 2005 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 midmorning. 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. 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 even 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 and the Tower of Terror.

DISNEY'S CALIFORNIA ADVENTURE ONE-DAY TOURING PLAN

Before You Go

1. Buy your admission in advance (see page 17).
2. Call ☎ 714-781-7290 the day before your visit for the park's official opening time.

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. Bear right after entering the park to Condor Flats. Ride Soarin'. Do not use FASTPASS.
3. Retracing your steps toward the park entrance, enter the Hollywood Studios Backlot and proceed to the Tower of Terror. Obtain FASTPASSES. The FASTPASSES will be honored from the beginning of the return window until park closing.
4. In the Hollywood Studios Backlot, ride *Monsters, Inc.: Mike and Sulley to the Rescue* (opens 2006).
5. Proceed back through Condor Flats and beyond to the Grizzly River Run. Either ride or obtain a FASTPASS. Usually Grizzly River Run's FASTPASS machines are not hooked up to the park's FASTPASS system. This means that you will be issued a FASTPASS even though you're currently holding one for the Tower of Terror.
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.
7. Bear left on exiting and continue around the lake to Mulholland Madness. Do not use FASTPASS.
8. Across the plaza from Mulholland Madness, ride the Sun Wheel.
9. Backtracking with the lake on your right, proceed next to the Orange Stinger and ride.
10. Continuing back toward the roller coaster, ride the Golden Zephyr.
11. If your party includes small children, ride King Triton's Carousel.
12. Departing Paradise Pier, stop in the San Francisco area and check out the show times for *Golden Dreams* starring Whoopi Goldberg. Interrupt the touring plan to return and see the show if it's on your do-list.
13. You may remember from our coverage of FASTPASS that you can obtain a second FASTPASS anytime after the return window on your first FASTPASS begins. So head back to Grizzly River Run if you elected to skip it earlier. Go ahead and ride if the wait is 30 minutes or less. Otherwise obtain FASTPASSES.
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*.
15. Also in A Bug's Land, try the kiddie rides at Flik's Fun Fair, if there are small children in your party. Check the *Times Guide* for scheduled performances of *Ugly Bug Ball*.

16. Turn right on exiting A Bug's Land and return to the Hollywood Studios Backlot. Ride *Monsters, Inc.* From this point on, feel free to interrupt the touring plan for lunch or a snack.
17. There are three excellent shows in the Hollywood Pictures Backlot district: *Playhouse Disney: Live on Stage*, whatever the current show is at the Hyperion Theater, and *Muppet Vision 3-D*. *Muppet Vision 3-D* runs back-to-back shows all day, but the other presentations offer a limited number of performances with show times listed in the park *Times Guide*. The Hyperion Theater 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 *Times Guide*, 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 to 30 minutes prior to show time. Between arriving early, getting seated, seeing the 40-minute show, and exiting, allocate about an hour and 15 minutes altogether for this activity.

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 to 35 minutes for *Muppet Vision* and 45 to 55 minutes for *Playhouse Disney*. You don't have to worry about arriving early for the *Muppets* because the show runs continuously back-to-back.

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 Tower of Terror and 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.

18. 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.
19. 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.
20. 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.