

## Explore Tokyo DisneySea | Simonseeks

Only in Japan would somebody spend over JY338 billion to build an ocean-themed park on land that used to be water. But very aptly Disney's first ever sea-themed park, Tokyo DisneySea (TDS) , occupies 71.4 hectares of reclaimed land adjacent to the original Tokyo Disney Land.

The park features 9.2 hectares of water, one million plants, 6000 trees, seven themed "ports" of attractions- Mediterranean Harbor, American Waterfront, Port Discovery, Lost River Delta, Arabian Coast, Mermaid Lagoon and Mysterious Island- and a flame-spewing volcano that dwarfs poor Cindy's enchanted castle next door. Full of stunning trompe l'oeil work -- the artists were imported from Italy -- and details that extend to steam rising from manholes in the New York waterfront area, the park is filled with things to discover.

### Mickey grows up

One innovation that is sure to appeal to adult visitors is the introduction of wine and beer to the park's restaurants and bars. With the availability of prix fixe French, American and Mediterranean menus and a complete wine list at Magellan's, Disney's most expensive restaurant to date, the surrounding resort hotels face stiff competition. Magellan's, S.S. Columbia Dining Room and The Teddy Roosevelt Lounge are the three flagship dining outlets that mark the biggest change in the food and beverage policy of the park. While fast food and cafeteria-style fare are still available, such high-end dining and the widespread availability of alcohol indicate that one of TDS's main target groups is adult couples.

The Hotel MiraCosta, the first Disney hotel to be built inside of one of the resort's parks, is a further example of the desire to move things up-market. With around 500 rooms that include a suite at JY500,000 per night, four restaurants, swimming pools, banquet facilities and a wedding chapel, the MiraCosta gives the surrounding resort hotels, such as the Hilton Tokyo Bay and Sheraton, some serious competition. Rooms overlooking the park obviously go for a premium due to their bird's eye view of the shows on the lagoon and firework display. Non-residents, or those in less swanky rooms, can take advantage of the views offered by the hotel's restaurants, which also have balconies. It is advisable to stop by the desk outside the hotel in the park early in the day and make a reservation for dinner around the time of the show as space is limited.

In comparison to its neighbor, TDS is lacking in cute character-themed attractions. The two official characters for the park, Ariel from The Little Mermaid and the Genie from Aladdin, appear in only an attraction apiece, while Mickey et al are consigned to meet-and-greet activities and a few musical shows. The remaining attractions draw inspiration from either live-action Disney productions, such as 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea or from the theme of the port, in the case of Stormrider. The only area clearly aimed at kids is the Mermaid Lagoon, but even there, the 700-seater Mermaid Lagoon Theater houses a 14-minute show of aerial (no pun intended) choreography, effects and advanced oversized puppets that will equally entertain adults.

### Ticket to ride

Linked by a snaking "sea" composed of 155 million liters -- at nine hectares it's the largest body of water in a Disney park -- the seven ports provide plenty of oceanic attractions. The longest lines are for Journey to the Center of the Earth, The Tower Of Terror and Raging Spirits, which are the most thrilling rides in the park. Inspired by the stories of Jules Verne, Journey may start off at a leisurely pace, but it concludes with the most roller coaster-ish finale in the park. While it's worth the potentially long wait, taking advantage of the FastPass system that allows you to register for admission at a specific time slot is highly recommended. As the actual ride is only three minutes in duration, a lot of additional attention has been devoted to styling the waiting areas with scientific specimens, such as giant mushrooms and paraphernalia belonging to Captain Nemo, who uses Mysterious Island as the base for exploration. Less thrilling for grown-ups -- who won't be conned into believing they're really submerged -- but still enjoyable is the adjacent 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea ride.

Based on a similar ride at the Anaheim park, Indiana Jones and The Temple of the Crystal Skull is packed with state-of-the-art effects (watch out for one particularly stunning smoke effect) and plenty of excitement. Visitors travel through the Central American pyramid, which supposedly contains the Fountain of Youth, guarded by the vengeful Crystal Skull, in battered jeeps. Following Indy into the temple, visitors encounter plenty of booby traps, insects and the obligatory old rope bridge as well as a couple of set-piece moments from the movie series. The spot where superior SFX make you swear you're moving backwards is the ride's brainteaser.

Raging Spirits - a roller coaster-type ride that features a 360 loop -- and The Tower of Terror with its sheer drop, offer further thrills for adrenaline junkies. As these were added relatively recently, lines are consistently long for both attractions and so using a FastPass is advised as the wait times can climb over the 2 hour mark at peak periods. (Although lines for all of the thrill rides do seem to get progressively shorter especially in the evening.)

The sleeper hit of the park is set to be the futuristic Stormrider, a simulator that takes visitors on a journey to the eye of a hurricane. The ride that has given the engineers the most headaches, Stormrider's state-of-the-art cabins are packed with special effects-some big surprises await-and it makes Star Tours at neighboring Disney Land look prehistoric. At five and a half minutes, the ride is one of the longest -- after the It's a Small World-esque Sinbad's Seven Voyages, which clocks in at seven minutes and thirty seconds, which is often about the wait time to get in!

Although several of the ports lack ride-type attractions, there are a plethora of live shows to entertain visitors. The Mediterranean Harbor's 40-minute extravaganza Porto Paradiso Water Carnival (from 2:30pm daily) is the don't-miss-it event, featuring a 200-strong cast who perform throughout the harbor. At night the port plays host to a further spectacular show that combines water, pyrotechnics and effects. Mickey makes a further appearance over in the American Waterfront in Sail Away! (four shows daily). The 20-minute outdoor production is themed around the maiden voyage of the S.S. Columbia-the ship actually houses offices and cast dressing rooms in addition to a restaurant and bar-and features a crew of dancers and Disney favorites. The Waterfront is also home of the 1500-seat Broadway Musical Theater where the review Encore! is performed. The 35-minute show (performed five times daily) includes excerpts from 21 Broadway shows and is the main attraction in the New York-themed port.

Tokyo DisneySea has cleverly reworked the Disney magic to provide a fresh and more mature theme park that really has cross-generational appeal - created a Disney attraction that is unique to Tokyo. Mickey may in his 70s, but Tokyo DisneySea shows that sometimes you can teach an old mouse new tricks.

### **Official Disney Hotel include:**

The Disney Ambassador Hotel which is adjacent to the Ikspiari shopping mall and new Cirque De Soleil Theater. It is the cheapest of the Disney brand hotels.

The MiraCosta is situated on the far side of the resort and connects directly to Tokyo DisneySea. Rooms with balconies overlooking the park are sought after for their views of the shows on the main lagoon and evening fireworks. They come at a premium price though! Non-residents can take advantage of the restaurants, some of which offer similar views of the show.

The Tokyo Disneyland Hotel is the newest and largest of the three hotels and is directly in front of Tokyo Disneyland. The hotel offers many family-friendly features including the Bibbity Bobbity Boutique, which offers princess makeovers.

## TokyoDisney Resort Hotels

### Sunroute Plaza Tokyo

1-6 Maihama Urayasu-shi, Chiba 279-0031 (Tel: 047-355-1111)

### Tokyo Bay Maihama Hotel

1-34 Maihama Urayasu-shi,, Chiba 279-0031 T(el: 047-355-1222)

### Tokyo Bay Hotel Tokyu

1-7 Maihama Urayasu-shi,,Chiba 279-0031 (Tel: 047-355-2411)

### Hilton Tokyo Bay

1-8 Maihama Urayasu-shi, Chiba 279-0031 (Tel: 047-355-5000)

### Hotel Okura Tokyo Bay

1-8 Maihama Urayasu-shi, Chiba 279-8585 (Tel: 047-355-3333)

### Sheraton Grande Tokyo Bay Hotel

1-9 Maihama Urayasu-shi, Chiba 279-0031 (Tel: 047-355-5555)

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