



# NEVER TOO OLD FOR Disneyland PARIS

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Holidays are a time of happiness. During winter at the end of year, when the warmth of family and friends take us back to childhood, it's also a time of magic. And magic, as everyone knows, is done best by Disney.

I'd known this since my first visit to Disneyland Paris as a 6-year-old. But it was nice to have that faith reaffirmed, 18 years later, on my trip to Disneyland Paris on Christmas Day this winter.

I'd remembered walking into Disneyland with awe all those years ago, amazed at all the colour, movement, music – the sheer magic around me; this time was no different, if not better. Mickey welcomed me with arms wide open, standing atop a bright purple plaque at the gates bearing the Disneyland emblem.

After going through brief but stringent security inspections, I walked into the vast Main Street USA lined on either side by festive-looking shops, arcades, bakeries and ice cream salons. The iconic Mickey-shaped garlands hung covering the street and a thistle-adorned Merry Christmas greeting crowned the entrance.

I'd left Disney village and Disney Studios behind me by then and gone into the park. Gardens making up the shape of Disney characters lay covered in gleaming white snow; fairy lights

and candy-canes sprinkled the sides of streets and statues of Minnie Mouse posed here and there. Every corner rang with cheerful music. The Sleeping Beauty Castle, Eiffel Tower to Disneyland's Paris, rose up in view, making me believe once again that I'd entered a kingdom that manufactured



happiness.

I couldn't wait to enter the castle that told Sleeping Beauty's story with its many rooms, displays, and glass-painted windows. Stopping short at the

entrance, however, I noticed what they'd added to it – a smaller, sinister looking entry-way at the foot of the castle that seemed to lead into darkness. A wooden sign hanging beside it read "La Tanière du Dragon" or "Dragon's Lair". That's right. An underground dragon.

The lair was dank and dark with narrow, twisting passages. Inside it, a gigantic dragon lay behind a pond that glowed green beneath stalactites and stalagmites. With eyes that glowed a

dirty yellow, a head and spiked wings that rose and fell and a mouth that opened ominously (unfortunately not to breathe fire), the dragon sat tied down with the shackles from its defeat at the hands of Prince Philip.

Disneyland Park is divided into 4 lands, each with its own set of themed rides and attractions: Fantasy-land, Adventure-land, Frontier-land and Discovery-land. I went on to explore more of Fantasy-land, full of attractions like Meet Mickey, Alice's Curious Labyrinth, the Princess Pavilion, Mad Hatter's Teacups, Pinocchio's Voyage, Dumbo The Flying Elephant, etc.

Peter Pan's Flight took us on a ride that soared above London's rooftops, amid black skies that genuinely seemed to dance with a thousand stars and through pirate ships with evil jeering men. "It's A Small World", my personal favourite was a boat ride through the oceans of the world, where children (dolls) from every culture and country sang in unison, each with their own instruments and clad in their traditional clothes. The entrance and exit welcomed us and bid us farewell in every language – including "Shagotom" and "Biday" in Bangla. Using a song that we're all familiar with from toys or jingles, and attractions that burst with more colours and shapes than I could've imagined, the ride conveyed a beautiful message – that though in