



tokyo tales

ipm visited the **tokyo disney** resort as they celebrated their 25th anniversary

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Photography by Eric Sandigo

Though the celebration of the Tokyo Disney Resort's 25th anniversary have come to an end, the parks and attractions are continuing to carry on the excitement and innovation that started back in 1983. It was in that year that Tokyo Disneyland opened. The park is large, and closely resembles Orlando's Magic Kingdom. Pathways are generous and wide, allowing for the Japanese, who value live entertainment, to take in the park's many parades. Guests claim spots on the pavement, bringing mats to sit on, long before each performance.

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The attractions within the park resemble their Florida counterparts. Unlike the Paris park, where designers seemed to take a more whimsical, fantastic approach to each of the park's staples, here the emphasis seems to be on duplicating the success of Orlando and following that standard as closely as possible.

The one notable exception is the relatively new Pooh's Hunny Hunt attraction in Fantasyland. The ride takes the typical Pooh dark ride and throws in trackless cars that zip around from scene



to scene, interacting with other cars, and moving down different paths. The experience is a new way to tell a story and redefines how a classic dark ride can be created.

In July of 2000 the resort added the Ikspiari entertainment complex. The large mall includes shopping, dining and entertainment venues and is both thematically and geographically separate from the two theme parks.

The entire resort is laid out rather oddly. Most visitors arrive via Japan's rail system and find themselves in front of Ikspiari. A short walk away is the entrance to Disneyland. The resort's other major destination, DisneySea, is about a 15 minute walk from the train station, or accessible via the resort's monorail system, which looks more like a Japanese train than a futuristic monorail, and requires a separate admission fee.

The small hassle involved in getting to DisneySea is well worth it, however. Upon entering the park, one is amazed at its level of detail and innate beauty, even if it is all fiberglass and concrete. One gets the feeling that this park where the Imagineers were truly let loose to create and design a park as they wanted to, with seemingly little regard for financial restraint. Attractions are hidden in the park, built into elaborately themed mountains and landscapes.

Even more recent additions like the Tower of Terror fit seamlessly into their environments, as though they had been there all along. The park features an assortment of unique attractions, as well as a handful of imports from other parks, but generally speaking the imports have been improved or enhanced.

The park is so beautiful it can and should be enjoyed as a visual masterpiece, and not merely as a collection of rides. In other words, walk around, explore and see what you can find. Hidden treasures abound for the observant, and the park is even more magical at night. The Tower of Terror, for example, becomes even more eerie in the evening. As each elevator shaft opens, a bolt of green lightning shoots down from the tower's peak, striking the elevator, illuminating the car in green light as it plunges down.



The Tokyo Disney Resort is continuing to grow and expand, and should be a must-see on every park aficionado's to-do list. But be prepared to wait. Our visit, on a weekday in a typically slow season, found a park with wait times of 1-2

hours for many attractions. According to locals, attendance is largely driven by the weather. A beautiful, warm sunny day will encourage many Japanese to pull kids from school, skip work, and spend the day with Disney. The advice seemed to be true

as our second visit, an overcast and slightly rainy day, resulted in a virtually empty park. If there is one thing that is clear, it's that the Japanese love their Disney theme parks, as will everyone who walks through their magical gates. **ipm**

