

# Into the Woods

Disneyland Paris is bringing back old favourites for its newest show, finds Laura French

**W**hat do you get when you cross Cirque du Soleil-style acrobatics with all-time Disney classics and a muscly Tarzan with a mythical tree-man? Disneyland Paris's brand new musical, that's what.

Aptly named *The Forest of Enchantment*, this 20-minute show is based on the idea of a pop-up book. It starts with a silent, mythical world where woodland creatures quietly skulk around, before characters from *Pocahontas*, *The Jungle Book*, *Brave* and beyond rev things up with familiar songs that get the audience clapping along and reliving all those childhood favourites.

In true Disney style, the visuals and sound are spectacular, and I left with

an ear-to-ear grin that wouldn't quite wear off. The Rapunzel section was a real highlight, with romantic lighting, twinkling gold lanterns and cloud-like puffs of mist, while Baloo got everyone singing along like a bunch of crazed monkeys to the tune of "oo-oo-oo, I wanna be like you-oo-oo".

But what's most interesting is the fresh approach the team has taken. From acrobatic-inspired choreography to exceptionally creative costumes, director Christophe Leclercq says they were aiming for something less typically Disney and more Broadway than previous hits, and it shows. "We wanted to do something different artistically," he says. "That's why we're using only acrobats →

## TOP TIP

Disneyland Paris has up to 30% off and free half-board at some Disney hotels for bookings by March 29



**RIGHT:** Rock 'n' Roller Coaster

**FAR RIGHT:** Jedi Training Academy



➔ and no dancers, which isn't something we've done before."

The 20-minute performances will run five times a day in the Chaparral Theatre in Frontierland from February 10 until May 8. And the songs have been modified too, with new arrangements by Grammy award-winner Gordon Goodwin, creating versions that feel familiar but original all at once.

### ▶ RIDING HIGH

Not that there's anything wrong with the familiar. After the show I headed to Space Mountain and as I embarked on the disorientating, whirlwind blast through pitch-black, twisted tunnels and bright, dotted lights, I felt the same sense of terror as when I first braved it aged 13.

Over in Walt Disney Studios, the Rock 'n' Roller Coaster Starring Aerosmith provides a similar thrill, with blaring music, flashing lights and speedy plunges making it feel like a rock concert gone wild. Ratatouille: L'Aventure Totalement Toquée de Rémy provides a good antidote; a more sedate, family affair, it's a 3D extravaganza where riders circle around in carts, feeling shrunk to the size of a rat and experiencing surprises along the way.

Our enjoyment was all but guaranteed thanks to a VIP guide – with prices starting at €230 an hour, it's not cheap, but does come with queue jumps, insider tips and an unbeatable sense of direction. A more affordable alternative is the free Fastpass system, or take advantage



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of Single Rider lines – Space Mountain has just added one – where clients can skip the queues if they're brave enough to go it alone.

### ▶ GEARING UP

That addition formed part of Space Mountain's recent six-month renovation, one of 10 attractions being updated for the park's 25th anniversary next year. Others include Pirates of the Caribbean, It's a Small World and Big Thunder Mountain, with a new 'explosive' finale set to appear when it reopens later in the year.

Star Wars simulator Star Tours is also taking its last flight next week, making way for a new Star Wars experience, but the force will remain thanks to a new Jedi Training Academy show at Videopolis.

It's one of several shows opening in the year ahead, including a *Frozen* sing-along, which returns from June 4, and *Mickey and the Magician*, a new spectacle launching on July 2 with mind-blowing trickery and theatrical effects. And from September 23 to 25, a runDisney half marathon will be coming to the park for the first time.

### ▶ LIVE THE DREAM

If clients don't want to wait, there's plenty to experience now, not least the daily Disney Magic on Parade. However, it was Disney Dreams! that proved most mesmerising. Multi-coloured projections, pyrotechnics, lasers, fountains and fireworks light up Sleeping Beauty Castle in a breathtaking spectacle that had me stunned to silence – a rare occurrence. I came away feeling that unique sense of child-like contentment that Disney inspires every time. **TW**



A three-day stay at Disney's Sequoia Lodge, including park hopper tickets and return travel by Eurostar, starts at £1,179 for two adults and two children under seven, departing April 10. [disneylandparis.com](http://disneylandparis.com)

**Do Something Different** offers a one-day, two-park hopper ticket from £49 per adult and £44 per child, with two, three and four-day options also available. [dosomethingdifferent.com](http://dosomethingdifferent.com)

## ✔ Tried & Tested

### SEQUOIA LODGE, DISNEYLAND PARIS

Inspired by *Bambi*, Sequoia Lodge takes a woodland theme and runs with it; think forest-style decor, cute animal carvings and a log fireplace in the bar. Rooms are comfortable, and as one of the park's mid-range properties, it's an ideal family choice.

The Hunter's Grill restaurant has a good kids' menu and a large buffet selection at breakfast, while the indoor pool, set among stone surroundings, feels like stumbling upon a natural spring in a forest glade.

The hotel is only a 10-minute walk from the park, but those feeling the effects of several days on foot can hop on a free shuttle bus and make the most of the early entry that staying in one of the park's hotels permits.