



King of the jungle

The Lion King is at the heart of a new jungle festival taking over Disneyland Paris this summer. **Benjamin Coren** reports

filing in to the recently renovated Frontierland Theatre at Disneyland Paris, there was a buzz among guests about to be the first to see new show *The Lion King: Rhythms of the Pride Lands*.

Singers, dancers and acrobats took to the stage with inventive routines and colourful costumes, all set to a selection of music from the film and the West End show, including *Circle of Life*, *Hakuna Matata*, *He Lives in You* and *I Just Can't Wait to be King*.

I've got fond memories of the original 1994 film – although some clients might be more taken by the remake, which came out in cinemas this summer – and enjoyed a hit of nostalgia at this adaptation of the stage musical which, despite its 30-minute runtime, never felt rushed.

With Tim Rice and Elton John's music impressively

reimagined, and the high-flying acrobatics and dancing well realised, it stood out as one of the best shows I have seen at a theme park.

I suspect the standing ovation we gave at the end of the performance has been replicated by audiences after every performance this season – and it's well-deserved.

Show director Christophe Leclercq says: "The Lion King: Rhythms of the Pride Lands is really based on the rhythmic aspect. With composer Steve Sidwell, we wanted to put African traditions in the spotlight, while bringing a touch of modernity through new rhythms and new tempos, but always with the utmost respect. We also have four live percussionists on stage, who add an extra dimension to the music."

The show, which runs daily and is also performed >



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:

The Lion King: Rhythms of the Pride Lands; Main Street USA; Lion King-themed snacks; Jungle Book Jive

OPPOSITE PAGE:

Ben with Baloo and King Louie

PICTURES: Bertrand Guay; Valentin Desjardins

new routine Timon's MataDance.

Outside the Frontierland theatre, the new Djembe Joy village, which is open daily until 2pm, offers an interactive experience. Visitors get the chance to learn musical instruments and meet more of the Jungle Festival characters.

Disneyland Paris is also offering a Lion King signature experience as part of the celebrations. The Pride Lands Experience, which can be added to stays until September 20, includes a premium seat for The Lion King show, an interactive music session, private meet-and-greet with Minnie Mouse, a character lunch with Rafiki and Mickey at the Hakuna Matata restaurant, a Lion King souvenir mug, a €15 gift card and a surprise message from Simba.

WHAT'S NEW AT DISNEY?

Aside from the Jungle Festival experiences, there is plenty going



on at Disneyland Paris. Guests enjoy access to both Disneyland Park and Walt Disney Studios next door.

In Disneyland Park, Phantom Manor recently underwent a renovation to update the entrance areas to the ride, as has Space Mountain, which features a Star Wars theme.

Work is under way at Walt

Disney Studios on a Marvel Avengers-themed area. Details are thin on the ground, but Disney has said guests will be able to 'suit up' alongside Spider-Man. A new attraction, offering riders the chance to team up with Iron Man and their favourite Avengers on a 'hyper-kinetic adventure', is also set to join the park's roster. TW

GETTING THERE



Eurostar operates a daily direct service between Disneyland Paris and St Pancras International during school holidays (outside school holidays, it runs daily except Tuesdays and Saturdays). One-way fares start at £38 for adults and £27 for children aged between four and 11; under-fours travel free. The journey from London takes two hours and 47 minutes.

MUST-TRY RIDES

Big Thunder Mountain: Take a thrilling spin on the runaway mine train. The family-friendly rollercoaster features both indoor and outdoor sections.

Ratatouille: The Adventure: This indoor ride shrinks guests to the size of a rat as they zip about the kitchen avoiding the chefs. The ride mixes 3D and physical effects to create an experience that's different each time you ride.

Crush's Coaster: Grab some shell and twist and turn along the east Australian current on this *Finding Nemo*-themed rollercoaster, combining the characters from the film with a journey on a spinning turtle shell.

Star Tours: No two rides are the same on this 3D *Star Wars*-themed simulator. Guests are taken on a journey to a galaxy far far away, where they will encounter the films' heroes and villains.

in sign language every weekend, is part of The Lion King & Jungle Festival summer season, alongside the new Jungle Book Jive Parade and plenty of other Lion King experiences, set to run until September 22.

MEET THE STARS

Visitors will want to find a good position on the Main Street USA parade route for Jungle Book Jive, which proceeds along the central plaza in front of Sleeping Beauty Castle. They'll meet stars of *The Jungle Book*, including Baloo and King Louie, along with classic Disney characters such as Mickey, Minnie, Donald Duck and Goofy. The colourful display also features Indian dancing and music, and a colourful powder paint finale, reminiscent of the Hindu festival of Holi.

Farida Chakouki, producer of *The Lion King & Jungle Festival*, says: "Jungle Book Jive is a colourful and unique journey of discovery in the Indian jungle. It is a grandiose musical show that revives the rhythm of the jungle in a totally

"The Jungle Book Jive parade features Indian dancing and music, and a colourful powder paint finale, reminiscent of Holi

new way. We want to immerse our visitors in a celebration of India and *The Jungle Book*."

Additionally, there are plenty of roaming experiences around the park, as part of the festival. Timon and Pumbaa, the warthog and meerkat duo from *The Lion King*, can be found with their own dance troupe in Adventureland, where guests can learn and join in with



NEWPORT BAY CLUB HOTEL

Disney's Newport Bay Club Hotel is modelled on a New England yacht club and has a nautical theme throughout. Within the Disneyland Paris resort complex, it's a 15-minute walk or short shuttle ride from the park gates. Facilities include two restaurants, a swimming pool, sauna and steam bath, and a fitness centre. Suite guests have unlimited access to Fastpass lanes, while Compass Club Room guests get one additional Fastpass per day.

Book it: A two-night package for two adults and two children sharing a Standard Room with two double beds, three-day park hopper tickets and return Eurostar travel in standard class starts at £1,895, departing August 23. disneylandparis.co.uk

WAITING FOR YOU!

SESAME STREET STREET MISSION

PortAventura WORLD PARKS & RESORT

1 HOUR FROM BARCELONA

BRAND NEW 2019

<p>FERRARI LAND</p> <p>70,000 m² of fun, 16 fantastic rides and games, an incredible theming inspired by the real Italy and shows, shops, restaurants... and much more!</p>	<p>PORTAVENTURA PARK</p> <p>6 theme areas: Mediterranean, Polynesia, China, Mexico, Far West and SesameAventura. With 40 rides to suit all tastes and up to 40 daily shows. Family restaurants and shops.</p>	<p>CARIBE AQUATIC PARK</p> <p>An intricately themed setting that will transport you to the Caribbean. Fantastic attractions and refreshing slides, exotic pools where you can relax and have fun.</p>	<p>PORTAVENTURA HOTELS</p> <p>Five 4-star hotels and an exclusive 5-star hotel with unlimited access to PortAventura Park and 1 day in Ferrari Land (according to opening times and dates of the parks).</p>
---	--	--	---

www.portaventuraworld.com