



EAST

meets

WEST

BY COURTNEY
POTTER

SHANGHAI.

“THE PARIS OF THE EAST.”

BY FUSING THE
BEST OF DISNEY
WITH THE RICH
CULTURAL
HERITAGE OF
MAINLAND
CHINA,
SHANGHAI
DISNEY RESORT
AIMS TO
SURROUND
GUESTS WITH
A TRULY
EXTRAORDINARY
STORYTELLING
EXPERIENCE.

ONCE A SMALL FISHING VILLAGE called Hudu, it's now the largest city in China—home to over 23 million people. It's a colorful, fascinating mix of past and present, where colonial-era buildings on the Bund waterfront stand in the contemporary shadow of the glistening Oriental Pearl TV Tower. This bustling metropolis truly signifies “modern China” to the rest of the globe—so it's no wonder that The Walt Disney Company chose Shanghai as the location of its latest, most awe-inspiring resort to date.

Shanghai Disney Resort broke ground in April 2011 as a joint venture between Disney and the Shanghai Shendi Group, and its completion is just around the corner. On July 15, 2015, Disney Chairman and CEO Bob Iger revealed new details about

the Resort to a rapt audience at the Shanghai Expo Centre; “We are building something truly special here,” said Iger. “We're taking everything we've learned from our six decades of exceeding expectations—along with our relentless innovation and famous creativity—to create a truly magical place that is both authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese.”

Located in Shanghai's Pudong New District, the Resort has spent almost a decade in its conception, design, and construction... both within the walls of Walt Disney Imagineering in Glendale and on site in Shanghai. As the Resort propels headlong towards its Spring 2016 opening, Disney twenty-three sat down with Bob Weis, Executive Vice President, Walt Disney Imagineering, for an inside look at what makes it all so very special.





GROUND MAY HAVE BEEN BROKEN IN '11

but the idea for a Disney Resort in Mainland China has been evolving for years, and many key players have been with the project long-term. “The core work that my team and I have been doing has taken about six years,” explains Bob. “I was not quite finished with the expansion of Disney California Adventure when Bruce Vaughn [Chief Creative Executive, WDI] asked if I wanted to get involved in Shanghai... It was pretty enticing.” Bob and his team spent the better part of two years “really vetting what the next generation of Disneyland is supposed to be. And that was a very exciting process, because we probably had big creative presentations with Bob [Vaughn] and Tom [Staggs, Disney Chief Operating Officer] every six or seven

fantastic Disneyland we could possibly bring to China.”

While this isn't Disney's first foray into the Far East (that distinction goes to Hong Kong Disneyland, opened in 2005), it's definitely its biggest—at 963 acres, with room to grow. Just off the Resort's beautiful Wishing Star Park, with its glittering new lake and verdant gardens, is Disneytown—Shanghai's answer to Downtown Disney. This shopping, dining, and entertainment mecca will feature local favorites as well as outposts of Western establishments (and like its Stateside cousins, no admission fee is required). It's also the location of the Walt Disney Grand Theatre, home to the first-ever Mandarin language production of the Broadway smash Disney's *The Lion King*.

The “crown jewel” of the Resort is Shanghai Disneyland, built

in the spirit of its sister Magic Kingdoms. The Park will include six themed lands: Mickey Avenue, Shanghai's version of Main Street U.S.A., where favorite Disney characters like Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck have “set up shop”; Gardens of Imagination, which lauds the relaxing wonders of nature and the joy of creative thought; Adventure Isle, a lost-world twist on Adventureland that boasts the largest “mountain” in Pudong; Treasure Cove, the first Park land ever themed after the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie franchise; Fantasyland, inspired by Disney's iconic animated films; and Tomorrowland, celebrating the limitless possibilities and optimism of the future in Shanghai. And at the center of it all, towering above the entire Resort, is Fantasyland's Enchanted Storybook Castle—the tallest, largest, and most complex Castle in any Disney Park.

In the shadow of the Park, the Resort's hotels are poised to bring Chinese (and international) guests a Disney experience that's unique to the world. The elegant, Art Nouveau-inspired Shanghai Disneyland Hotel boasts character dining and a unique fireworks viewing deck; and the playful Toy Story Hotel, themed after the iconic Disney-Pixar animated trilogy, has been designed in the shape of “infinity”—which happens to match the shape of an 8, a lucky number in Chinese culture. As Bob says, “Our Hotel group was very focused on, ‘How do you make this a fantastic place for families who are coming on a vacation with Disney for the first time?’... people seem to be really excited about them.”

Food is also an important piece of the Shanghai Disney Resort puzzle, a fact not lost on Bob and his cohorts. “There's a huge respect for food in China—for freshness, for the visual experience of food,” he explains. “There was a real desire to have the dining be fun, but at the same time really understand the Chinese audience... and I think that they have done a great job of making the dining exciting.”



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ERASE A MILLION WORRIES



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“THEY WANTED IT BIGGER AND BETTER, and they shared our dream of making this Park the most state-of-the-art, most fantastic Disneyland we could possibly bring to China.”

BOB IGER
DISNEY CHAIRMAN AND CEO



ONE

WHO HAS CHARACTER HAS COURAGE

APPEALING TO THE CHINESE

AUDIENCE— a people (and country) poised for the future, making a 21st century name for themselves on the world's stage—could've been a Herculean task... were it not for Walt Disney's legacy of innovation. "You just keep reminding yourself that Disney has always been doing fresh, new things," Bob says. "That's what the audience expects. And more importantly—in the context of China, because we have a brand new audience—it's what we expect going in there." So it's no surprise Shanghai Disney Resort involves a truly impressive number of "firsts"...

The Garden of Twelve Friends, just one of seven individually themed gardens inside Gardens of Imagination, features 12 exquisite, hand-laid mosaic murals where Disney and Disney-Pixar characters are reimaged as symbols of the Chinese zodiac. The Voyage to the Crystal Grotto is a brand-new excursion that celebrates magical Disney fables as it travels through the waters of Fantasyland before a finale never before seen inside the Enchanted Storybook Castle. Speaking of Fantasyland, Tim Burton's Alice in Wonderland comes to life in a new maze, and the airborne ships of Peter Pan's Flight receive a huge technological update. Treasure Cove is home to an incredible new Pirates of the Caribbean ride, Battle for the Sunken Treasure—a journey with Captain Jack Sparrow and Davy Jones that's

awash in cutting-edge innovations. Soaring Over the Horizon in Adventure Isle is an epic reinvention of the Disney California Adventure attraction, where guests will take a breathtaking aerial tour all over the globe. And let's not forget Tomorrowland, which takes Walt's spirit of hope for the future and presents it to the next generation (and a whole new culture). The first land with a completely two-story environment, Tomorrowland includes the TRON Lightcycle Power Run, a thrilling coaster-style attraction on a one-of-a-kind indoor/outdoor track. And near the land's entrance are two immersive experiences created especially for Shanghai—Star Wars Launch Bay (where guests can meet both heroes and villains from the Star Wars saga) and Marvel Universe (which includes an important "mission briefing" and a chance to draw your own comic-book art).

But that's not all: Shanghai Disneyland's live entertainment options are all new, created by best theatrical minds in both China and the States. "Mickey's Storybook Express," a parade with its own exclusive soundtrack, will travel down the longest parade route in any Disney Park; stage show "Tarzan: Call of the Jungle" will fuse Disney storytelling with the best of Chinese acrobatics; and "Ignite the Dream: A Nighttime Spectacular of Magic and Light" uses stunning projections and pyrotechnic effects to turn the Castle into an amazing, inspirational new world.



LIVING the DREAM

The Shanghai native offers unique perspective to the WDI team as they bring Shanghai Disney Resort to life.

Chang Xu is smart, eager, and totally modest. The most important point to get across, she says, is that she doesn't represent the entire country of China. "Representing 1.3 billion Chinese people in this way? It's a little pressure," confesses Chang with a chuckle. "I always say it's not just me." It's true: the Shanghai native—who grew up in Pudong, the very district where Mickey Mouse will hang his sorcerer's hat—is one of three Chinese nationals assisting Walt Disney Imagineering in Glendale with creating Shanghai Disney Resort from the ground up. (And that's not to mention the hundreds already employed at the Resort in Shanghai.) But her support is key, says WDI Executive Vice President Bob Weis: "She's been one of my most important team members since she joined the project. She did a tremendous amount... and not just from a research perspective, but also as a [creative] contributor."

Chang works as a Cultural Analyst, a position she began just after finishing her graduate school degree in the States five years ago. "A lot of what I did was develop the cultural awareness among the team," Chang explains. "That included research trips to China and Chinese language class for Imagineers, and every other week we did a 'cultural session'—we introduced project folklore; we helped our team in California understand 5,000 years of Chinese culture... and what's happening right now, to stay relevant to contemporary [trends]." She also helped WDI execute focus groups—including ones with Chinese families visiting Southern California.

But perhaps most importantly, Chang and her fellow Analysts assisted WDI graphic designers with nomenclature. "All the marquees [and] operational graphics are in Chinese and English, but there are a lot of Disney terms that may be difficult for Chinese guests to understand," she explains. "So we really have worked very closely with the writers to understand, 'What is the intent? What is the story? How do we translate it to Chinese in a way that makes sense?'... We do that for every single attraction, shop, theater, and entertainment show."

Chang was in junior high when she first heard about the possibility of a Disney Resort in Shanghai. As she readily admits, "It's amazing, years later, that I'm actually working on this project... and my mom just cannot believe it. She's very excited about it!"



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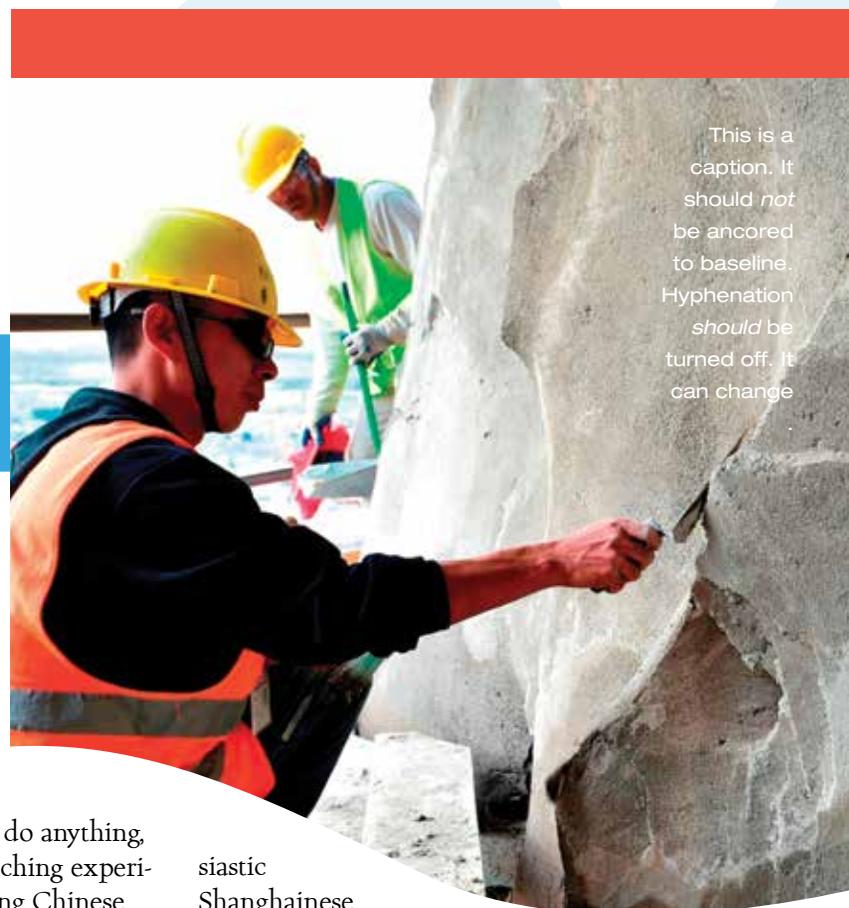


They are among the most excited, dedicated people imaginable... we're guests of this country—and [the Resort] creates an emotional center for Disney there, beyond just bringing our films and distributing our products. It really says we're a part of this country, and we're connected...

I THINK IT'S JUST A GREAT TIME TO BRING DISNEY TO CHINA."

BOB IGER

DISNEY CHAIRMAN AND CEO



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A JOURNEY

BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP

BUILDING A COMPLETELY NEW RESORT from the ground up gave Walt Disney Imagineers around the world yet another chance to “break the mold.” But the location of this particular Resort made the situation truly unique... in the best way possible. “We know we ‘know Disney,’ but we didn’t know China—so it was about being open to those learnings,” Bob admits. “We did a lot of research, at every stage... [and we wrote] the scripts in Mandarin, rather than getting everything perfect in English and then saying, ‘Oh, now we’ll translate it all’... that was fundamental.” As was finding the right people for every single job: “There is a truly amazing arts and crafts culture in China,” says Bob, “and we’ve had the most amazing sculptors, artists, and painters on our Show Production side... It was really gratifying to see how they not only learned from us, but how we also learned from them.”

And it’s not just the opportunity to work alongside expert Chinese craftsmen and women—it’s the chance to broaden the idea of what “leisure” can mean. “It’s a very interesting time, in that the idea of leisure, of actually taking a vacation, is really kind of a fresh notion,” explains Bob. “I remember

talking to a teacher in a Chinese school during one of our many visits with locals, and we were saying, ‘Well, how can we make this more enticing to teachers and parents, to want to come to Disneyland?’ And a couple of the teachers actually said, ‘Y’know, you don’t really have to do anything, because Disneyland in itself is an enriching experience, and a whole new world for young Chinese students.’” And China’s latest generation has also started embracing arts-related careers like never before; “You’re seeing an explosion of arts programs, like animation and game design, in universities,” Bob says. “If you think about what we provide Cast Members in Entertainment and so many other areas... when you visit the Resort site, you see a lot of these young Chinese professionals who are so excited to be at Disney, and so excited to be in a creative business... [The Resort] really makes us a part of the creative community.”

All told, the excitement surrounding Shanghai Disney Resort’s 2016 is palpable—for the entire Shanghai team, from executives down to the enthu-

siastic Shanghainese construction workers who live on-site... and it started on Day One. “We have a huge Imagineering [department] in China,” explains Bob, “of which the overwhelming majority are Chinese, and they were brought into the company in China. They are among the most excited, dedicated people imaginable... As I believe Bob Iger has said, we’re guests of this country—and [the Resort] creates an emotional center for Disney there, beyond just bringing our films and distributing our products. It really says we’re a part of this country, and we’re connected... I think it’s just a great time to bring Disney to China.”