

OP-ED

# How Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge Will Change the Disneyland Experience

By **MOLLY J. LISTEN**

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The exterior of the "Millennium Falcon: Smuggler's Run" Attraction at Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge in Disneyland on April 30, 2019. (Bob Iger / Twitter)

From animatronic fortune tellers on Main Street U.S.A. to original dark-ride attractions, Anaheim, California's Disneyland is filled with quaint old-timey charm. However, since it opened in 1955, Disneyland has been updated with new attractions and entertainment selections to fit the tastes of changing audiences. The most recent alteration is the construction of a new land expansion project. Beginning in 2016, several attractions were closed temporarily or removed to make room for Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, a brand-new Star Wars themed land, that will [open to the public on May 31](#) of this year.

When Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge opens, it will feature technologically-advanced attractions, must-have toys, themed food & beverage options (even [specially-branded Coke products](#) and Tatooine-style [blue milk](#)!), and immersive, interactive experiences. These characteristics will likely preserve Disneyland's rank as one of the most sought-after and popular theme park destinations in the world for many years to come. But after Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge opens, how will it change the Disneyland theme park experience for the average parkgoer?



In anticipation of the land's upcoming opening, Disney unveiled a [“Reservation system](#) to limit each persons' time in Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge to four-hour time slots between May 31-June 24. The demand for guests to visit Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge is so high that free reservations for the first month sold out in only two hours. Now, you only have to pay between \$337 and \$445 per night for a [Deluxe on-property resort](#) (subject to availability) plus theme park tickets for the chance at receiving a single day reservation. Considering the high demand for reservations, might the low capacity of the land lead to extreme exclusivity and an upsurge of eBay scammer tickets? After June 24, we can all join the hoards to wait in line for the attractions without a reservation. It's a bad time for Measles to make a come-back.

Even Disney workers, called [“Cast Members,” will not have access to Disneyland until at least September 1](#), and perhaps even longer. That means the people working inside Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge won't even be able to visit the shops or rides in the exclusive land on their day off. For an average parkgoer, even with a four-hour “reservation,” the opening of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge could result in immense crowds and absurd wait times – long enough to justify Disney's choice to offer a [bathroom pass](#) while guests wait in line. The limited land capacity coupled with overwhelming demand makes Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge the newest elitist attraction.

In addition to the heightened capacity concerns, the size of the new land will leave a substantial footprint on Disney's charming original 85-acre park. Disney's Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge will be nearly 14-acres large, making it the largest single-land expansion in Disney history. Later this year, on August 29, one of Walt Disney World's four parks, Hollywood Studios, will open its own version of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, also weighing in at 14-acres. However, the Hollywood Studios park in Orlando, Florida is a hefty 135 acres, making it nearly 50 acres larger than Disneyland. Despite the difference in size, the yearly attendance of Disneyland is far greater than Disney's Hollywood Studios park, with a near [7 million person difference in visitors](#) annually. Because of differences in size and attendance, the comparative impact of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge will likely be far greater in Disneyland than at its sister land in Walt Disney World.

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All of the advantages of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge in Disneyland also come with a hefty price tag. Anticipating popularity of the new land, [Disneyland hiked up its ticket prices](#) in early 2019. A standard one-day ticket was raised from \$97 to \$104 for standard pricing. During peak attendance periods, including many weekends, traditional school breaks, or the dreaded week between Christmas and the New Year, ticket prices were raised from \$135 to \$149. A [five-day vacation](#) for a single person visiting one-park-per-day will cost \$340. A five-day vacation for a family of four (two adults and two children under 10) to visit one-park-per-day will cost \$1,320. To hear the charming pennywhistle of the Mark Twain Riverboat or smell a freshly shaken bag of Mickey beignets is probably worth dipping into your retirement fund, right?



At Disneyland's opening in 1955, [Walt Disney famously said](#), "Disneyland will never be completed. It will continue to grow as long as there is imagination left in the world." However, the influx of loyal Star Wars fans could change the dynamics of the park experience entirely. An [article from Futurism](#) suggests that Star Wars fans are the worst. Following the 2017 release of *The Last Jedi*, dissatisfied fans raised more than \$400 million to remake the movie. Additionally, some fans have bullied Star Wars actors so extremely that they felt inclined to delete their social media pages or quit acting altogether. If the same difficult fans are less-than-overjoyed with the outcome of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, will they demand it be changed? Furthermore, is the Star Wars-themed land meant to cater to fans of Star Wars or Disneyland or both? How will Disney negotiate the demands and expectations of these drastically different audiences? Certainly, Disneyland is changing. But is it headed in the right direction?

The high demand, low land capacity, high costs, and demanding fans in Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge will diminish the vacation value for a casual Disneyland visitor. And even if you don't care about Wookies or Lightsabers, you'll still have to suffer the consequences. Higher attendance is likely to have reverberating effects on the entire Disneyland park, even outside of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge. Across the park, there will likely be higher attraction wait-times, increased crowds at merchandise shops and food & beverage locations, and the elitism that comes with spending up to \$149 for a regular park ticket and not even being able to get inside the new intergalactic land. The real impact of the new land will not be known for several months or even years after Star Wars' Galaxy's Edge opens. But the immediate message is clear: increasingly, a Disney vacation is meant for the wealthy and Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge is for the wealthiest one percent.

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