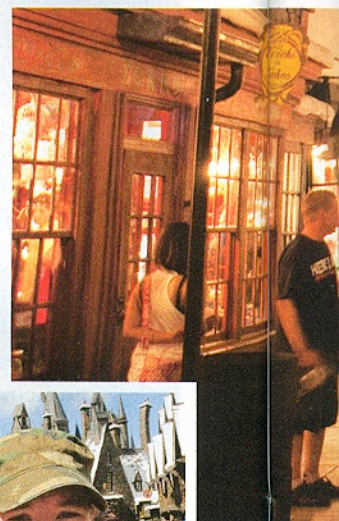


THIS Magic MOMENT



In which mother and daughter swoop into the Wizarding World of Harry Potter and fall under the spell of butterbeer

BY SUSAN CHAMPLIN AND ANNIE TAYLOR

Susan (mother): Our quest could have been something from a Harry Potter novel: We were to fly (by JetBlue, not by broom) to Florida to explore the new Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando's Islands of Adventure theme park. There, we would fight off hordes of—no, not soul-sucking Dementors, but costumed Potter enthusiasts, en route to snaring—no, not Horcruxes holding pieces of the soul of the evil Lord Voldemort, but maybe a really cool T-shirt.

Annie (daughter): Having read all the books multiple times and watched the movies religiously, I was looking forward to experiencing Harry's world in person, something I've wanted to do since I read the first book at age 7.

Susan: As I recall, the ultracool college student of today actually squealed at the prospect.

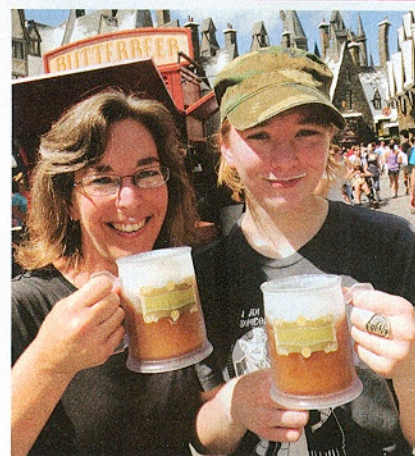
Annie: I can neither confirm nor deny.

Susan: For me, as someone who loved the books but can barely remember the difference between an *Expelliarmus* spell and an *Expecto patronus*...

Annie: *Patronum*, Mom. Sheesh.

Susan:... I brought more enthusiasm than expertise. And during the humid walk across Universal CityWalk, past Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville, through the lurid colors of Seuss Landing, I admit my enthusiasm began to flag.

Annie: Hey, you can't blame Harry Potter for Margaritaville. I don't know about you, but the moment I first saw the Wizarding World of Harry Potter was magical. Those tall, snow-covered peaked roofs with crooked chimneys peering over the stone archway? The towers of Hogwarts castle looming



in the distance? I was sold. It was a kind of "we're not in Kansas anymore" moment, when you realize you've been transported into the fantasy.

Susan: It was pretty spectacular to see the Hogwarts Express belching steam, as if it had just arrived from Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in London.

Annie: And the droppings-stained Owlery was a wonderfully unexpected touch of realism. All in all, there was nothing that threw me out of the illusion that we'd traveled to Harry's world. Well, except the thousands of fellow tourists thronging the streets.

(Clockwise) Guests wander through the all-Wizarding Hogsmeade Village; iconic elements, such as this Griffin statue (found on the way to Dumbledore's office), appear throughout the park; the authors, Susan (left) and Annie (right), indulge in butterbeer; the Flight of the Hippogriff gives riders a thrill.

A GLOSSARY OF Magical Words

Butterbeer: What wizards drink when they're not drinking pumpkin juice.

Dementors: Soul-sucking fiends that cause despair by feeding on joy.

Delvish and Banges: In the books, a shop for magical instruments; in the park, an all-purpose gift shop.

Expecto patronum: A spell manifesting happiness and light; it drives off Dementors.

Expelliarmus: Disarming spell; sends your opponent's wand flying.

Hippogriff: Creature with an eagle's head/forequarters and a horse's hindquarters.

Hogwarts: School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, which Harry attends.

Horcruxes: Items imbued with bits of a wizard's soul, creating semi-immortality; very dark magic.

Lord Voldemort: The villain of the books; Harry's nemesis. Hates all those who aren't "pureblooded" wizards (possibly including himself, a half-blood).

Muggle: Nonmagical folk—e.g., you and me.

Owlery/Owl Post: Where owls reside and letters are posted, owls being wizards' mail carriers.

Platform 9³/₄: The platform at London's Kings Cross station where students catch the Hogwarts Express. Reached by running through the barrier between platforms 9 and 10.

Quidditch: A sport played on flying brooms. Sort of like soccer—no, basketball—no, dodgeball—well, it's a sport.

Sorting Hat: A magical talking hat that sorts students into the four Hogwarts houses, Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, and Slytherin. —A.T.

Susan: I loved the fans who came dressed as Hogwarts students, and the group who wore T-shirts bearing names, pictures, and quotes from their favorite characters—such as Arthur Weasley, the wizard who loves Muggle culture and asks Harry, "Tell me, what exactly is the function of a rubber duck?"

Annie: The fans showed as much dedication to the original material as the park's designers.

Susan: And that's hard to do, considering the designers spent more than five years working with the same craftsmen who made the films. It's astonishing how faithfully they were able to reproduce the ingenious figments of J.K. Rowling's imagination.

Annie: We were told that Moaning Myrtle, the ghost who inhabits the

girls' bathroom at Hogwarts, can be heard in the park's restrooms. Too bad the constant roar of the hand dryers drowned out her sobs.



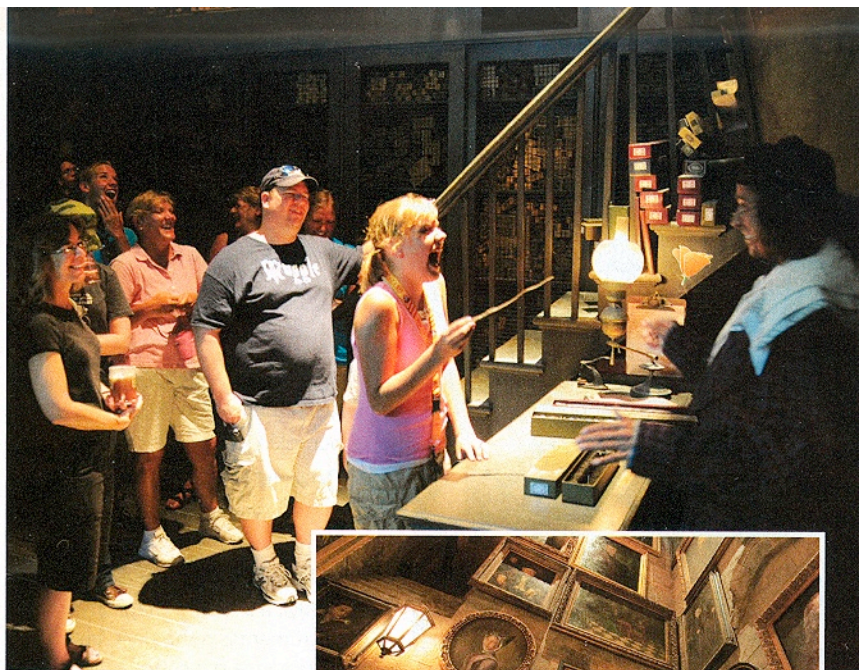
Susan: But butterbeer, the drink we'd been waiting for, was readily available. The books are vague as to butterbeer's alcoholic content; here it's a cream-soda-meets-root-beer concoction with a mustache-worthy foamy head.

Annie: Don't forget the pumpkin juice! I was wary at first...

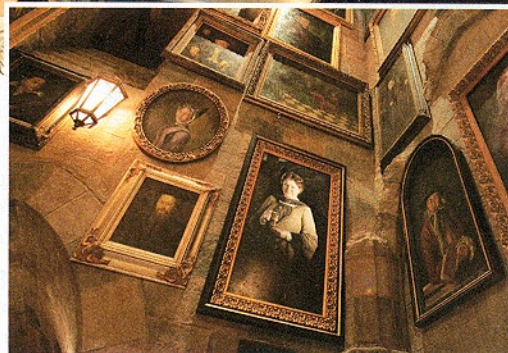
Susan: I believe your exact words were, "I'll let you throw yourself in front of the pumpkin-juice bullet."

Annie: ... But I found it was surprisingly refreshing—recognizable pumpkin flavor without being overpowering.





(Above) Susan and Annie watch as a guest tries out wands at Ollivander's wand shop; (right) talking portraits line the walls of Hogwarts castle.



Susan: Thank you, Julia Child. Then there are all those enchanted places, like Ollivander's wand shop—where “the wand chooses you”—that have been meticulously rendered down to the aged shingle hanging outside.

Annie: Small and cramped, filled from ceiling to floor with dusty wand boxes, Ollivander's was perfect. A dozen of us crowded into the store, and the wand-keeper singled out a shy teen girl to receive a wand. But just as Harry's wand chose him, the right wand had to choose her. The shopkeeper presented a few wands for her to try. The wrong ones caused magical havoc when her test spells went haywire. (I refuse to say more! I don't want to spoil the magic for anyone.) But when the right wand finally found her . . . well, let's just say it was a moment right out of the movies.

Susan: I was most curious about Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey, the ride in which you tour the inside of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry—headmaster Albus Dumbledore's office, the creepy Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom, the common room of the Gryffindor house—before being launched on a flying ride with Harry. The holograph-like images of Dumbledore, Harry, and his friends Ron and Hermione were truly spectacular; as jaded as I may be at my advanced age, for a second there I really believed the films' actors were in the room with us.

Annie: While waiting to get on the ride, it was cool to see talking portraits describing the flying benches that you'll sit on, and Hogwarts' famous Sorting Hat giving the typical safety warnings—but in a rhyming speech.

Susan: The lurching thrill ride that followed is something of a blur to me; may I just interject here that butterbeer and roller coasters are not a happy combination?

Annie: It's a shame, because the ride does take you into the adventure. We flew behind Harry and Ron, battling a rogue dragon, Dementors, and giant spiders on the way to and from a Quidditch match. It was a really innovative mix of sets and simulation.

Susan: I wouldn't know, since my eyes were closed much of the time.

Annie: The same can't be said of the park's two traditional roller coasters, the hardcore Dragon Challenge and the family-friendly Flight of the Hippogriff, although the sheer fun of them made them worthwhile. But the rides are not the point of the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. The world itself is.

Susan: I couldn't agree more. It's the imaginative wit of places like the Dervish and Banges shop, where a tooth-baring Monster Book of Monsters snarls as you shop for cast-iron cauldrons, wizard robes, and broomsticks.

Annie: And I think the Wizarding World will be even more magical when the grand-opening crowds have died down. Then you can experience Harry's world in a more personal way.

Susan: Like . . . reading the books?

Annie: More like diving into the books headfirst. **W**

Susan Champlin is a freelance writer in New York. Annie Taylor is in her second year at Hampshire College.

If You Go

Entrance to the **Wizarding World of Harry Potter** is included with admission to Universal Orlando's Islands of Adventure theme park: \$82 for adults, \$74 for children ages 3–9. AAA discount available at AAA.com/universal. Parking is \$15 per day. For more park information, go to universalorlando.com/harrypotter.

Your AAA Travel Agent can provide more information. Visit your local Auto Club branch, call (800) 208-0556, or go to AAA.com/travel.