

## Serka Zong Bazaar a Dazzling Cascade of Expedition Everest Merchandise

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — One of the great adventures involving Expedition Everest, the new thrill attraction at Disney's Animal Kingdom, is the one embarked upon by merchandise designers. Their thrill was conjuring the look and attitude of the yeti, a star attraction of Expedition Everest and a creature whose existence is one of legends rather than physical encounters.

Working in collaboration with Walt Disney Imagineering (responsible for the overall development of the attraction), the Disney merchandise design group sought to bring to the shelves of Serka Zong Bazaar — the gift shop located at the exit of the attraction — a line of goods with an authentic feel and theme . . . yet with recognition that no one knows what the creature would really be like.

“Not knowing what the yeti's total personality would be like made this a project that was a lot of fun for the design group,” said Megan Kachur, the Disney's Animal Kingdom merchandise product developer. “Is the yeti purely one-dimensional — the legendary protector of the sacred mountain? Maybe. But maybe not.

“Aaron Babcock, the product developer who was involved in the initial design work, decided to explore that possibility — what the creature might be like if there were more to it than ferocity.”

That design adventure has produced a profile of the yeti as everything from a critter that you don't want to mess with . . . to a furry friend to cuddle with. And in between: a cool dude who just likes to chill out.

The “cutesy yeti,” as Kachur describes the furry-friend persona, is a playful yeti portrayed in a snowball fight on pastel-colored fitted T-shirts for girls. “He's smaller, baby-like, round, very harmless.”

“Elevate Your Fear,” it says on merchandise that depicts the “cool dude,” extreme sports yeti snowboarding across jerseys and hats. “He's broad-shouldered, muscular, athletic in build and shape,” Kachur said. “He has no fear.” (And if that's not the way the yeti makes you feel, you can opt for a shirt that simply proclaims, “Scream Like A Girl.”)

And then there is the merchandise — photo holders to shirts to drink mugs to beach blankets — depicting versions of the protector yeti. There are fuzzy white slippers and a plush backpack with arms and legs — “actually an extension of a doll.” And there's a fluffy hat that suggests the yeti is munching the wearer's head. Also yeti binoculars that provide the user a yeti's-eye view of the world.

The shop showcases not just the yeti but the Expedition Everest story and drama in well over 100 items ranging upward from a logo post card (\$1) . . . to a smartly styled nylon jacket featuring a mountain-climbing logo at the peak of the merchandise line (about \$75). In between there are patches and key chains, headwear and backpacks that celebrate the theme of mountaineering.