

Inside Pandora – The World of Avatar How Walt Disney Imagineering Brought Pandora to Life

A WORLD APART: When Disney’s Animal Kingdom guests journey to the far-away world of Pandora as probable eco-tourists, they encounter floating mountains, a glowing, bioluminescent rainforest and other wonders of an alien world. The Valley of Mo’ara on Pandora is undergoing a rebirth long after a destructive mining operation known as the Resources Development Administration (RDA) ceased operation. Eco-tourists, for the first time, can travel to this exoplanet located in the Alpha Centauri star system 4.4 light years from Earth.

Where Mountains Float . . .

- The iconic floating mountains in the Valley of Mo’ara – there are 22 – peak at about 130 feet above the valley floor. .
- Sharp-eyed adventurers will see Pandoran Stingbats nesting in the mountains. Despite their lethal tail spines, these animals can be summoned by the Na’vi with clicking sounds made between the tongue and teeth.
- A team of more than 60 artisans from the U.S., Peru, France, Portugal, Japan and Ireland contributed to creating the art-scape of the floating mountains.

And the Landscape Glows and Hums...

- It wouldn’t be an alien planet without bizarre plant life. On Pandora, a diverse ecosystem is rebalancing as a variety of colorful plant life flourishes.
- Plants have names like Puffball Tree, Dapophet, Vein Pod, Scorpion Thistle, Episoth and Flaska Reclinata.
- Humans rapping on the Flaska Reclinata cause this large alien plant to pollinate by releasing spores within the environment. With its wide base tapering to a narrow top, the Flaska Reclinata is found just past the old RDA bridge.
- Many plants are bioluminescent, with internal lighting or material that makes them glow. Plants are interactive. Guests can see and sense the energy of the plants that moves in waves.
- Pandora plays to a surreal soundtrack. Said Matt Beiler, WDI producer: “For the land to feel like a real jungle from another planet, we don’t have traditional background music in Pandora – we have a soundscape designed to make it feel as though it is an alien jungle. We hear vocalization patterns like mating calls and hunting moments, and this makes it feel real. When those moments happen, the lighting ties into that with waves of energy. It gives us a connectedness to nature.”

Where Water Flows . . .

- At the center of Pandora is a riparian area, where waterfalls cascade from the mountaintops into gentle pools and streams.
- One stream follows a peaceful path along the entry to Pandora. The other flows into the Na'vi River Journey, where guests board reed boats for an excursion to see the revered Shaman of Songs.
- The looming mountains are arid, and guests will hear different animal vocalizations from those areas.

And Earth Elements Integrate...

- The Walt Disney Imagineering landscape architecture team worked side by side with the land's design and engineering teams to ensure that thousands of Pandoran plants, including epiphytes and barnacles, fit into the overall landscape plan.
- For example, the Dapophet plant features a sort of starburst bloom that resembles the live agave planted next to it. The Puffball Tree looks like the family of plants we know as cycads with its fern-like, palm-like characteristics.
- More than 250 varieties of live trees, shrubs and epiphytes mingle with the Pandoran The Disney horticulture team planted more than 500 trees and nearly 10,000 shrubs across the Pandoran landscape.

Where Even the Walkways Glow...

- Many of the walkways and paths, like the alien plant life that surrounds them, are also bioluminescent. A treatment added to some of the Pandoran walkways gives them that glowing quality. Charged by sunlight and reinforced by black light, the glowing pathways come to life.

And Creature Life Surrounds You...

- No matter where guests go in Pandora, they will feel the presence of many animal species. Pandora teems with them.
- The pack hunter, the Viperwolf (with six legs and opposable thumbs) communicates with unusual coyote-like yelps. The Direhorse (a six-legged domesticated riding animal) exhibits a gentle demeanor.
- Mountain Banshees, with wingspans averaging approximately 45 feet, inhabit the mountainous regions of Pandora. The most fearsome land predator is the omnivorous, powerful Thanator. And the Great Leonopteryx, larger and more solitary than the Mountain Banshee, is the most formidable winged creature.

Where You Can Fly on a Banshee . . .

- At Avatar Flight of Passage, 48 guests at a time can enter a state-of-the-art theater and board mountain banshees as avatars for the ride of their lives across Pandora.
- Immersion in the world of Pandora is complete thanks to a projection screen 69 feet wide and more than 97 feet high.
- Flight time during the six-minute experience is about four minutes.

And Meet a Na'vi Shaman...

- During the 4½-minute Na'vi River Journey, guests will meet an Audio-Animatronics Na'vi Shaman of Songs. At nearly 10 feet tall, the shaman is typical height for a Na'vi.
- New technology programs fluid energy into her every movement and gesture.