

New 'Frozen' boat ride to open in June at Disney's Epcot



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Disney World forecast a *Frozen* summer on Wednesday, revealing a June opening date for the new ride Frozen Ever After at Epcot as well as news on the expansion of its popular Soarin' ride, a slew of new nighttime attractions at Animal Kingdom and the final expansion of its shopping and dining area, Disney Springs.

At a media preview this week, the theme park giant showed a "behind the wall" peek in Epcot's Norway pavilion that revealed a rustic cottage under construction that will be the Royal Sommerhus, where guests can meet and greet characters Anna and Elsa from the hit animated movie. The former Maelstrom ride at Norway is being transformed into Frozen Ever After, a boat ride to Queen Elsa's ice palace. An exact opening date in June was not released.

Expect a soundtrack that includes the original performers from the movie, brought back to lend their voices to the ride.

Melissa Valiquette, Epcot vice president, called the *Frozen* story a "perfect fit" for Norway while maintaining the pavilion's mission.

"It was important for us to balance the characters with the history and traditions of Norway," Valiquette said. "It would have been silly to overlook that connection."

In other news that Disney announced the week:

- Animal Kingdom is embracing the magic of the natural world — at night. The park previewed a portion of its "Rivers of Light" show (no launch date yet) and announced a limited-run of "Jungle Book: Alive With Magic," which opens Memorial Day weekend. Some other new-at-night offerings include a nightly "awakening" of the park's iconic Tree of Life and the Kilimanjaro Safaris live wildlife tour that will now be carried out in the glow of a setting (artificial) sun and include new African animals.

- The long-promised expansions of Soarin' and Toy Story Mania, hugely popular rides with long waits, are opening



This rendering shows Frozen Ever After, opening at Epcot's Norway pavilion in June.

Disney

at last. Toy Story Mania will open a third track on Memorial Day weekend, and the hang-gliding trips of Soarin' reopen June 17 as Soarin' Around the World — with new technology and increased ride capacity for a tour of six continents.

- Disney Springs, the former Downtown Disney, is doubling in size and will complete its expansion May 15, though restaurants from celebrity chefs Rick Bayless and Art Smith open later this summer. The new Town Center has an actual spring, or at least the best replica Disney Imagineers can create. Its 1.5 million gallons of stunning blue water and cypress knees give the shopping, dining and entertainment district its name. The spring was revealed in a sneak peek to media members (no photos allowed).

Times staff writer Peter Couture contributed to this report.

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