

# Hangin' In Harry Potter's World



## Universal Studios' new Hollywood attraction enchants with big adventure and small details

By Christina Elston

**A**t last, Universal Studios has brought The Wizarding World of Harry Potter to Hollywood. For families that have imagined what it might be like to crash through the barrier between platforms 9 and 10 at King's Cross Station and ride the Hogwarts Express into a world of magic, the April 7 opening is as eagerly anticipated as the arrival by Owl Post of a new Nimbus 2001

broom just in time for Quidditch practice.

If that last sentence didn't make sense, there are seven books and eight films available to help you catch up.

Versions of the attraction opened in Orlando in 2010, and at Universal Studios Japan in 2014, but this one is all ours. "There are new little details dotted throughout, for people to find out as they

explore," Supervising Art Director Alan Gilmore says as he gives a group of visitors a preview of the new attraction.

Gilmore worked on the other TWWoHP attractions, and on the *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* films, and is eager to show off the attention to detail here in Hollywood.



Forced perspective in the skylines and small details in shop windows help the new attraction envelop visitors.  
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## Getting the Timeline Right

The attraction includes Hogwarts Castle and the Scottish wizarding village of Hogsmeade, which are fictional but designed to fit into their historical and architectural time.

In the story, Hogsmeade Village is nearly 1,000 years old, and the Owlery and The Three Broomsticks inn are its oldest buildings, dating to the Gothic era. “Most Old English towns have a building like this,” Gilmore says of the Owlery, “a gathering place that’s shaded where the traders could meet. [The Owlery and The Three Broomsticks] are the original center of the village, and everything’s grown around them.” Both buildings are built of stone and wood with slate roof tiles.

The Three Broomsticks features wood beams, small diamond-shaped windows with handmade leaded panes, and a huge fireplace with andirons. The walls are hand plastered with lime plaster, a natural material that breathes. “This is why there is staining evident throughout The Three Broomsticks, as moisture over many hundreds of years has permeated the walls,” Gilmore explains. The staining looks so real that Gilmore says the park’s cleaning crews initially tried to scrub it off.

Honeydukes sweet shop, Zonko’s Joke Shop, and Dervish & Banges magical supply shop represent Victorian design, as evidenced by details such as the larger glass panes and sashed windows in Honeydukes.

The village is meant to look like a

transplant from Europe, with smaller buildings and tight spaces. “People ask me why are the shops so small. Because they’re meant to be Scottish in scale,” says Gilmore. “We’re not going to build huge rooms that are not authentic. If a builder of ancient buildings came in, they’d go, ‘This feels absolutely correct.’ We’ve tried to bring in that hand-made feel to everything. You can zoom in to the detail on everything.”

Walking around outside, you’ll notice stains where coal dust has settled from chimneys, some of which are even smoking. Crooked roof lines and winding streets add to the old-village vibe. “Our design is deliberately inconvenient at times,” Gilmore says. “It’s not a straight line from the entrance to Hogwarts. You have to go

Brooms for sale at Dervish & Banges, Zonko's Joke Shop and the Owl Post are familiar fun for Harry Potter fans. PHOTOS BY CHRISTINA ELSTON



on a journey to get there.”

“If a stone mason comes here, they’ll think it’s real. If a carpenter comes, they’ll think it’s real, if an historian comes ... or just a fan, they’ll see the same detail as on the film sets,” Gilmore says. “It’s another layer that’s beyond the normal experience, but it’s important to us.”

## A Little Movie Magic

Speaking of film, *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter* will also appeal to anyone who enjoys films or film technology. Gilmore says it was exciting for him and his team to get to show their skills here. “It was very important for us from London to bring this to Hollywood,” he says. “It was a big deal because Harry Potter’s one of the biggest film franchises in the world and Hollywood is the home of movies, so we wanted to bring this home in a way.”

The village is created using forced perspective, a technique film set designers use to make objects – in this case the buildings and backdrops of Hogsmeade and Hogwarts Castle – appear larger than they really are. “We developed this place to really envelop people. It’s a world in a park,” Gilmore says.

Film set decorators from London worked on everything down to the shop windows, and there are even a few actual film props about. Check out the luggage racks in the Hogwarts Express train carriage near the entrance, where you can be photographed in front of a green screen with images of the route to Hogwarts projected on them. “These are the actual luggage racks

from the train in the movie,” Gilmore says. “These are the ones that Harry and Ron and Hermione sat under.”

In *Gladrag’s Wizardwear*, you can see Cho Chang’s gown from the Yule Ball in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Up at Hogwarts Castle, the desks and chalkboards in the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom are also actual props from the film.

The broomsticks in *The Three Broomsticks* were created by the same people who made the broomsticks for the films, and the paintings on the walls are recreated from the film sets. In the upper level, “you might spot the odd moment of the shadow of a goblin or house owl appearing,” says Gilmore. “We have shadows that are projected on the walls, and that’s another little level of detail.”

## Living the Wizarding Life

The centerpiece of Harry Potter’s world, though, is magic. And thanks to the “interactive” wands on sale at Ollivanders, you can follow a wand map to 13 magical spots throughout Hogsmeade and perform spells and charms. Icons on the ground give the words of various charms and the wand motions required to set them in motion. Perform the “Revelio” charm in front of Honeydukes, for instance, and see a chocolate frog emerge from its box.

Visitors can even queue up at Ollivander’s for a chance to have a wand choose them. Out of each group of 15-20 people admitted to the wand pairing room, the wand maker chooses one for a pairing. “The whole room has a series of magic

experiences that can be activated through the wands,” Gilmore says. “It’s virtually identical to when Harry Potter got his wand in Diagon Alley.” Interactive and collectible wands are available to all in the shop.

There is plenty of other shopping to do in Hogsmeade as well. At *Dervish & Banges* you can buy brooms, and sweaters from the same woolen mill in Scotland that made the ones for the movies. Find toys and tricks at *Zonko’s Joke Shop* and telescopes, hourglasses and other supplies at *Wisacre’s Wizarding Equipment*. Take a look at the *Marauder’s Map* at *Filch’s Emporium of Confiscated Goods* and send mail with the Hogsmeade postmark from the Owl Post.

At *Honeydukes*, you can taste a chocolate frog, *Fizzing Whizzbees* and *Bertie Bott’s Every Flavour Beans*. “Everything you see is the same as Harry and Hermione would have had on the Hogwarts Express from the sweet carriage, or going into Diagon Alley,” Gilmore says, adding that J.K. Rowling personally approved all of the flavors.

Visit *The Three Broomsticks* for fish and chips, shepherd’s pie, fresh veggies and other meals Hogwarts students might have enjoyed. If you’ve ever wanted to taste pumpkin juice or butterbeer, this is the place. At the rear of the tavern is the *Hog’s Head* pub, where grownups can enjoy domestic and imported beers and specialty drinks as well.

The culmination of all this is your visit to Hogwarts Castle, where architectural detail, movie magic and theme park technology come together to create the ultimate fan experience.



See the House Points add up and visit herbology class at Hogwarts Castle, and purchase your own magic wand at Ollivanders. PHOTOS BY CHRISTINA ELSTON

Approach the castle with its impressive skyline, and join the queue of explorers. Outdoors, you'll get a peek at herbology class. Inside you'll venture through the portrait gallery and Gryffindor common room and Dumbledore's office. In the Defense Against the Dark Arts classroom, Harry, Ron and Hermione emerge from beneath the invisibility cloak to tell you they want you to meet them in the Room of Requirement so they can sneak you into a Quidditch match. Everyone can walk

through the castle, but riders must be 48 inches tall to continue onto the ride itself.

Once you take your place on a special bench, the Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey ride commences with a dusting of floo powder, then takes you on an interactive voyage across the Quidditch pitch, through the Forbidden Forest and into the Chamber of Secrets. Combining real sets, animatronics, wrap-around projection screens and 3D technology, the

experience lets visitors encounter dragons, the Whomping Willow and a horde of Dementors, among other iconic figures from Harry Potter's world.

"You're meant to be a character in the films, the books. That's our level of detail," says Gilmore. And after a day in Hogsmeade and a visit to Hogwarts Castle, you just might feel like you are.

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