Citizens of Tomorrowland! Join us as we take a tour of this futurist galactic metropolis – a place where aliens and robots from all corners of the galaxy gather to meet, work and play. Tomorrowland is a fanciful vision of the future, filled with technological wonders, exotic creatures, and soaring spaceships. You'll also get to experience a collection of out-of-this-world attractions, and naturally (this is Walt Disney World of course), there will be a few cosmic surprises along the way.

Creating the World of Tomorrow

Tomorrowland has always presented a unique challenge to Disney Imagineers. Unlike the worlds of Adventureland, Frontierland, and Liberty Square (which draw on real-life inspirations), Tommorowland required the Imagineers to bring to life a world that no one had ever seen, but that many had imagined. And unlike Fantasyland, whose fanciful worlds could stay true to the classic Disney films that inspired them, Tomorrowland’s vision of the future needed to be continually updated, otherwise it could easily end up being outdated, or simply wrong. In that sense, Tomorrowland shared the same problem that a film like 2001: A Space Odyssey has. Now that the year 2001 has come and gone, we can see how that vision of the future, though accurate in some ways, turned out to be a bit off the mark. (No manned flights to Jupiter quite yet!) In fact, when Tomorowland was first built for Disneyland back in 1955, the intent was for it to be a depiction of life in the year 1986. Central to that vision was the TWA Moonliner, a giant “atomic powered” rocket ship with “retractable legs” that represented the regular moon voyages that would presumably be happening 31 years later. (‘Rocket to the Moon’ exhibit was right next door.) Of course, that’s not quite how it turned out!

So how do you portray the future in a way that is both timeless and accurate? It turns out that doing both is a fairly impossible task; both present their own dilemmas and require very different solutions. For the sake of accuracy, Imagineers adopted a “World’s Fair” approach, where they could showcase the latest technologies in an ever-evolving collection of exhibits. This was the inspiration behind Future World at Epcot, and you can see that vision come to life at Innoventions, where pavilions are continually changing to show off the latest in home, computer, transportation, and entertainment technology—in a fun and interactive way, of course!

But such an approach would be impractical in a themed land such as Tomorrowland. Disneyland updated its Tomorrowland with major renovations in 1959 and 1967. But by the early 1990s, the Magic Kingdom’s version was also in need of a major overhaul. The problem was that the vision of the future as seen in the 50s and 60s was of clean lines and stark white geometric buildings. At the time it seemed ultra-modern and advanced, but as the years passed, the coldness of the architecture (as futuristic looking as it may have been) was always in stark contrast to the vibrant colors and exotic landscaping that were found throughout the rest of the parks. So what to do?

When Tomorrowland was reimagined in 1994, the solution was to present a world of tomorrow that was timeless, and to do so the Imagineers ironically looked to the past. Instead of trying to predict the future, they harkened back to the early days of science fiction. Taking inspiration from old time sci-fi films like Things to Come and magazines such as Amazing Stories, Tomorrowland was reinvented as a world of science fiction fantasy. Gone were the stark buildings and outdated technologies. In their place appeared a colorful, kinetic world filled with the sounds, sights, and details of an intergalactic metropolis. The art deco styles and retro-futuristic elements were reminiscent of the golden era of Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon, and visitors to the new Tomorrowland found themselves in a fantasy world filled with spaceships, robots, and aliens. The change was summed up perfectly by the new signage that welcomed Guests: “The Future That Never Was, Is Finally Here.”