Buena Vista Street, Disney California Adventure
Project Spotlight: June 2012

LOCATION:
Disney California Adventure
Anaheim, CA

ARCHITECT
Cunningham Group Architecture
Marina Del Rey, CA

INSTALLER:
Continental Tile and Marble
Corona, CA

LATICRETE SUPPLIER:
Daltile
Corona, CA
By Ron Treister

Disney Theme Parks, “Where Dreams Come True,” are the most famous destinations of their kind in the world. A good example of this is since its opening, close to 600 million guests have experienced the magic at Disneyland in California. Many factors contribute to the allure of these parks: world-class service of employees, well-known family-friendly attractions and association with highly recognizable cartoon characters who have been a part of the lives of so many generations of children. Every aspect of each park is meticulously planned out to fulfill a very specific, detailed look. Whereas each section has its own particular visual theme, without question the most focal and important visual area of each park is the inviting front entrance. This first impression must creatively and confidently portray the hallmark Disney magic in store for visitors.

Because of the success of Disneyland in California, in 2001 a new theme park owned by the Walt Disney Company named Disney California Adventure was built. After experiencing success in its first decade similar to its sister park, Disneyland, in October of 2010, construction began on a re-imagined, completely renovated entryway to Disney California Adventure. And, on June 15, 2012, its Buena Vista Street entrance was completed.

The overall design of Disney California Adventure was initially created to resemble various aspects of California culture, modeled to look like a postcard of the Golden State. To continue to best serve visitors as well as keep up with the desired “feel” of the park, ongoing renovations were called for. For example, it was decided that “Sunshine Plaza” (as it was previously called) would be re-worked into “Buena Vista Street,” modeled after the location of the original Walt Disney Studios. The goal of the new project was to create a look reminiscent of the 1920’s in Los Angeles, homage to when Walt Disney first arrived there. The park’s major street would be similar to “Main Street USA” in the sister-park, Disneyland.

To create the desired look, every detail of the construction and the products used had to be perfect, as creating a 1920’s three-dimensional visual almost 100 years later was no easy task. The project required an enormous amount of tile and stone to accurately depict the era. Continental Marble and Tile out of Corona, CA was contracted to handle the task of installing the tile, an extremely crucial component of the job. A family-owned company, which has been doing business since 1924, Continental’s all-knowing experience made the firm a natural fit for such a large job. “Our company did all the tile installation,” stated Curtis Ballantyne of Continental Marble and Tile. “This was a huge project in every account. For example, there were over 578 types of tiles and 26 types of stone. These various tile products came from a number of different manufacturers, but we handled all the installation.” Because Disney was so specific on what it wanted, in some cases Continental installers were often times working with handmade tiles. “It would get tough sometimes because handmade tiles are not always uniform in size. You are inevitably going to come across tiles that are not completely straight, or the exact same size as the others,” said Ballantyne. “This made it very difficult, because it can be such a tedious job that if one item is off size-wise, it throws the whole alignment out of whack.”
To deal with the difficulties of installing the handmade tiles, Continental depended upon the LATICRETE System. “To accomplish this work, we used tons of LATICRETE® products,” Ballantyne said. “Everything from LATICRETE® Hydro Ban® on the floors to LATICRETE® SpectraLOCK® PRO Grout®. We needed the best, most high-performance materials on the market. I am no expert on the LATICRETE catalog of products, but I am willing to guess for this project, we used most everything they make!”

To add to the complexities of Ballantyne’s work, the job had to be done while the park was operational. This meant closing off certain sections at a time while undergoing construction. “Obviously, anytime you are working in an operational area, especially where there are tourists that include children, there are time and safety constraints. Deadlines are pressing, as the park wants to be back up and running at 100% as soon as possible. So, we needed to work efficiently under the conditions.” Originally, Ballantyne noted, another company’s installation products were specified. Continental Marble and Tile adamantly lobbied a total switch to LATICRETE products, as the firm was highly aware of the necessity of getting the job done correctly within the rigid time parameters set before them.

One of the key product characteristics of LATICRETE materials that Ballantyne specifically noted was the strength of the adhesives. “It was a huge help having LATICRETE products available to us. When we adhered the tiles, they stuck right on to the substrate; there was no sliding or any movement whatsoever. I could not even imagine how much harder the job would have been if our tiles had been sliding around, especially dealing with those non-uniform handmade tiles. Because of the efficiency of the LATICRETE products (e.g. LATICRETE 255 MultiMax™, a high strength, non-sag, polymer fortified thin set mortar), we were able to speed up the installation process overall. We did not have to go back and check on a one-at-a-time basis that every tile was staying in place.”

“Working with Continental Tile on this project was really a pleasure. The people there are highly professional; they know what they want to do and how they are going to do it. They simply needed the right products for the project,” said Gerard Meyers, Distributor Sales Representative for LATICRETE. “And, we were able to provide those. The installation expertise came all from them, and it was an honor being selected to provide the setting materials for such a high-tech and high profile project as this.”

A professionally executed tile installation is only half of the installer’s job, if the adhesives do not work at optimal levels, the entire project may be jeopardized. “It is great to get a high profile job, like this one at Disney California Adventure,” concluded Ballantyne. “But no matter how confident we are in our own abilities, we need to be confident in the products we are using, as well. When a job is going to be seen by as many people as will be walking into this theme park, it can go two ways. First, it can be a huge success, and you are proud to have a great project on your resume. Or second, it goes wrong and everyone can point to that job as a failure for your company and you personally. Luckily, we are equipped to do any job, and LATICRETE products are reliable, thus did not cause us any concern at all. The street came out exactly as everyone wanted it to.”

It was almost magical!