

Disney's Jungle Cruise looks like an entertaining rehash of The Mummy

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Emily Blunt and Dwayne Johnson star in *Jungle Cruise*.

A scientist hires a down-on-his-luck riverboat captain as her guide on an Amazon adventure in *Jungle Cruise*, a forthcoming Disney film inspired by the classic Disneyland theme park ride. Yes, Disney's ride-inspired films have largely been forgettable apart from the hugely successful *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise. And yes, the trailer does seem eerily similar to the 1999 film *The Mummy* in many respects, with a soupçon of *Tomb Raider* thrown in for good measure. It also looks like good old-fashioned escapist fare, a perfect summer offering.

Emily Blunt plays Lily Houghton, a scientist who is keen to locate the Tree of Life somewhere in the wilds of the Amazon. It's purported to hold "unparalleled healing powers." She's already located a mysterious arrowhead she believes is the key to unlocking those powers, and now she just has to find the tree. Her younger brother McGregor (Jack Whitehall) accompanies her on the mission, and they hire a colorful riverboat captain, Frank (Dwayne Johnson), to guide them.

Frank is a bit on the shady side, manufacturing all kinds of

fake thrills on his standard riverboat cruise to delight (and sometimes disgust) his clients. He's in this for the money—and his price for guiding Lily and McGregor tends to fluctuate along with their fortunes. “All the while,” per the synopsis, “the trio must fight against dangerous wild animals and a competing German expedition.” Not to mention, there might also be some kind of mythical cursed creature standing in their way.

- Lily (Emily Blunt) and Frank (Dwayne Johnson) are thrown together on a riverboat in the Amazon jungle.

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- They're hunting for the Tree of Life's magical healing powers.

YouTube/Walt Disney Studios

- And they have a map! Just like in *The Mummy*.

YouTube/Walt Disney Studios

- Lily is about to make a bit of a mess in a library.

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- Frank runs the cheapest river cruise—but also the most elaborately staged.

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- The natives are totally in on the scam.

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- A glorious shot of the Amazon.

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- Lily's brother, McGregor (Jack Whitehall) tags along for the ride.

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- Hey, didn't a boat catch fire in *The Mummy* too?

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- Things are getting precarious.

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- Closing in on their prize.

YouTube/Walt Disney Studios

- What strange legendary creature is this?

YouTube/Walt Disney Studios

The parallels to *The Mummy* –which starred Rachel Weisz as Egyptologist Evie Carnahan and Brendan Fraser as American adventurer Rick O’Connell—are striking. An early 20th century setting? Check. Attractive young woman with a scholarly background, plummy British accent, and a yen for adventure? Check. Traveling to an exotic land with her brother as a sidekick? Check. A competing expedition? Check. Hiring a ruggedly handsome, rakish bad boy with a heart of gold as a guide? You betcha. Hell, there’s even a scene early on where Lily teeters precariously on a ladder in a library, which just has to be a deliberate nod to Evie’s major “oopsie” early on in *The Mummy* (“I’ve just made a bit of a mess in the library”).

And you know what? That’s OK by me. The formula may be well-worn, but it works. I loved *The Mummy*—a perfectly executed action/adventure comedy, despite some troubling ethnic stereotypes—and Blunt and Johnson clearly have the same kind of high-octane onscreen chemistry as Weisz and Fraser. Disney has struggled to recapture the magic of the original *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003) in its slate of films inspired by popular theme park rides. (Even the *Pirates* sequels have gotten progressively worse from a quality standpoint, despite their box office success.) With its adorably bickering leads and sense of adventurous fun, *Jungle Cruise* looks like it might just succeed on that score.

Jungle Cruise is scheduled to hit theaters July 24, 2020.

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