

Walt Disney World ...The Resort Experience

Over the past two months, we've looked at some of the wonderful off-season events and great dining options that will enhance your Walt Disney World Vacation. Now let's wrap up your perfect vacation by reviewing the Disney Resorts.

If you've gotten to this point and you've decided to travel for the Epcot International Food & Wine Festival, and you've picked out a couple of great restaurants that you'd like to try, and you're thinking you'll tie it all up with a stay at the Sleep Cheap Motor Lodge that's "five minutes from Walt Disney World", think again! When you take into account that Walt Disney World covers 47 square miles (or roughly the same size as the city of San Francisco), "five minutes away" might as well be 50 miles.

Staying at a Walt Disney World Resort hotel lets you envelop yourself in the magic for the duration of your vacation. There are also other great benefits of staying on-site:

- Most importantly, you don't have to deal with all the traffic! Their transportation system is quick and efficient, never leaves you stranded and it's free.
- One of the Disney theme parks opens an hour early to resort guests each day.
- You can truly leave the outside world behind from the time you arrive until the time you depart, and isn't that part of what you're looking to do when you go on vacation?

Disney Resorts may be classified into several different groups, so there really is something to fit every travelers taste and budget. Here are some of my favorites:

- Disney's Pop Century Resort – this is Disney's version of the Sleep Cheap Motor Lodge and is classified as one of their "Value Resorts". It is truly massive in size and rooms are compact, but it has several themed pools and a gigantic food court. Best of all, nightly rates here start at roughly \$79 per night and it's less than a year old.
- Disney's Port Orleans Resort – one of Disney's "Moderate Resorts", Port Orleans is split into two sections; one reminiscent of New Orleans' French Quarter and the other evoking the feel of the old south. Pools at the moderate resorts have water slides and dining options include a full-service restaurant in addition to a food court. Transportation picks up at locations throughout the resort.
- Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge – this is a Disney "Deluxe Resort". For those of you who have always dreamed of going on safari in Africa, but the thought of an 18 hour flight doesn't thrill you, then Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge is the place for you. As soon as you turn onto the entrance road, you leave Florida behind and arrive in Africa. I highly recommend the Savannah View rooms. They are worth every penny. This resort also has a spa, zero entry pool with water slide, fabulous dining with an African twist, cocktail lounge and concierge level accommodations.

- Disney's Polynesian Resort – one of the original resorts at Walt Disney World, this “Deluxe Resort” has the highest number of repeat guests. Tropical flowers, waterfalls and soft Hawaiian music relax you almost instantly. Great dining options abound, including an authentic Polynesian revue. Go boating on the lake or immerse yourself in the tropical pool and watch the fireworks explode over Cinderella's Castle. It doesn't get much better than this.
- Disney's Grand Floridian Beach Resort & Spa – the flagship of the Disney Resort, it is the ultimate in luxury. From gourmet dining to parasailing, high tea and beach cabanas, this resort has it all. It is also one of just three resorts that are connected via monorail train to the Magic Kingdom.

That wraps up our look at the “Hidden Disney”, so in August we'll be off to an exciting new topic.

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