

# Reserving a Disney Resort Hotel Room: What You Need to Know

by Jennifer Marx, PassPorter Author

With 28 resort hotels and over 30,000 rooms, reserving a room at Walt Disney World is somewhat different than the typical hotel reservation experience.

Reservations for all Disney-owned resorts are made through Central Reservations. The Cast Members at Central Reservations can help you explore room availabilities at all resorts, make note of your needs, and help you with nearly any matter involving your stay at Walt Disney World. If you phone a specific resort in hopes of making reservations you will be redirected to Central Reservations.

## So, let's get started and make a new reservation!

First, decide when you want to go, and at which Disney resort you wish to stay. We advise that you select several alternate dates and several alternate resorts, just in case your first choice isn't available. Write them down on a piece of paper (like the handy Lodging Worksheet in the *PassPorter Walt Disney World* guidebook.)

The reservation process continues in one of several ways:

- \* Call your favorite travel agent or travel planner.
- \* Visit the Walt Disney World Official web site at [disneyworld.com](http://disneyworld.com)
- \* Phone Walt Disney World Reservations at 407-WDW-MAGIC (407-939-6244)
- \* Send U.S. mail to: Walt Disney World Central Reservations, Box 10100, Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830.
- \* Use other online travel resources including Travelocity.com or Expedia.com.
- \* Just by the nature of the process, your best bet is to use a travel agent or phone, especially if you're taking advantage of a discount program. The one-on-one contact with an agent is invaluable as you explore all the options. If you know exactly what you want, the web may be a more convenient option.

Be prepared to take notes, especially if you're shopping for discounted rooms.

You can book more than one reservation, at more than one resort at a

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time, which gives you an opportunity to present options to your traveling companions.

When you're finished, the agent will give you a reservation number, which you should use whenever you call about the reservation. Within a week you'll get an e-mail or written confirmation of your plans from Disney (written confirmation comes via U.S. mail).

**For Room-Only Reservations:** You generally have seven (7) days in which to pay a deposit on the reservation, equal to the cost of one night's stay. (Exceptions to this rule enter when your stay begins in less than 30 days.)

**For Package Reservations:** Packages require a deposit of \$200, due in seven (7) days, and full payment for your vacation is due 45 days in advance.

Both packages and room-only reservations made online will incur a \$100 charge for cancellations made between 6 and 45 days prior to your arrival, \$200 for cancellations made less than 6 days prior, and full price for cancellations 1 day or less. There's a \$50 charge for modifying package reservations within 46 days of your arrival.

### **Now You See It, Now You Don't, Now You Do Again!**

Room availabilities (whether at regular rates or discounted) are constantly changing. If the reservation of your dreams is available, book it immediately, even if you must confirm your decision later with your traveling companions' blessings. Room availabilities have a way of disappearing right from under your nose. Note Disney used to hold your reservation for three weeks without a deposit, but now requires a deposit at the time of booking if your stay begins in less than a month. If your stay is over a month away, you have two weeks to pay your deposit.

If your first preference is not available when you speak to Central Reservations, reserve an alternative or two, and try calling back at a later time or date. Cancelled and expired reservations are tossed back into the pool of available rooms all the time. Just keep trying!

### **Room/Location Requests and Other Preferences**

One aspect of an enjoyable resort stay is getting the right room, in the right location. Do you want a room on a particular floor, or near the pool? Do you want a king-sized bed or two queen beds? If Disney

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doesn't charge a different rate for the privilege (as they often do for things like water views) you'll have to note your preferences with the reservation agent who takes your reservation, and hope your wish can be granted.

The reservation agent cannot promise you'll receive your request, and there is no guarantee that your request will influence your room location. Actual room assignments are made by the staff at each individual resort, and are not finalized until you check in at your resort. If you state no special requests or preferences, rooms are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. If your request has been entered into the computer system Disney will do what it can to honor your request. Sometimes you get your heart's desire, other times you get a reasonable substitute, and sometimes... well, you can't win them all.

It helps to understand the dynamics of the system, and to be patient, understanding, and persistent with the Cast Members you deal with. They do want to please you, but sometimes it's just not possible.

Our basic technique for getting the room of our choice is pretty simple. It's not always successful, but we've done pretty well over the years.

When you make your resort reservation, be prepared. Write down all your preferences before you phone. Also make a note of any special discounts you want to inquire about (seasonal deals, Annual Pass, Florida Resident, etc.)

Carefully read those preferences to the reservation agent who takes your reservation, and ask him/her to read them back to you after they've been entered in the system.

Once you've received written confirmation of your reservations from Disney, call Disney (407-WDW-MAGIC) again, and be sure the preferences you stated are still in the computer system. Ask the reservation agent to read them back to you, and make changes or additions as required. If you didn't state your preferences when you first reserved your room, now is the time to do so.

Within about three days of your arrival at Walt Disney World, phone your resort's front desk. (Before then they don't have your reservations in the local computer--they're still in the hands of Central Reservations.) Explain your preferences again, and be sure they have them in their records. Just the fact that you've made this call increases your chances, since you've shown them just how important your preferences are to you.

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When you check in to your resort, tell the Cast Member that you requested certain preferences. They'll tell you whether they were able to meet those requests, and if they couldn't, they'll generally tell you why they gave you the room you got. Let them know you're willing to be flexible within certain limits and they may do even better for you. They still know their resort better than we do, and in our experience the substitutions are often quite satisfactory, if not better, than our original choices.

The sooner you check in, the better. We generally arrive at our resort in the morning, well before official check-in time. We visit the front desk for preliminary check-in and discuss our room assignment. Again, they can't make promises until official check in time, but they've pulled-off a few miracles for us, once they have that face-to-face contact. Note: If you book with a travel agent, they will note your room preferences and pass these along to Disney. You'll want to confirm preferences with your travel agent prior to arrival, as Disney reservations will likely not have your information in their system until the day you arrive.

We've had a few cases where we simply got the wrong room. For example, once at the Old Key West, we requested and needed a One-Bedroom Villa and when we arrived at the room, we'd actually been given a Studio. The Cast Members worked very hard to set things right, and we were transferred to our preferred accommodations with very little fuss. For the occasional problem like this, be sure you keep your confirmation slips with you when you check-in.

### *About The Author:*

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