

Splitsville Luxury Lanes: A Walt Disney World Resort Review

by Jennifer Schuitema, PassPorter Guest Contributor

My husband doesn't like crowds or humidity, but he goes to Walt Disney World because he's a good guy and enjoys being with his family.

Still, he wasn't particularly thrilled when I planned a Walt Disney World vacation with his parents and his sister's family that happened to include his 40th birthday on June 8. But if you hate humidity, crowds, and your birthday, why not combine all three?

Each time we go to Walt Disney World I like to have new experiences. Since we had never been to Splitsville, I thought it would be a good place to celebrate his birthday with dinner and bowling. Splitsville Luxury Lanes opened at the end of 2012 in Downtown Disney West Side, in the location of the former Virgin Megastore. It's a two-story bowling, billiards, and dining experience. The menu has a wide variety of offerings including sushi, rice bowls, pizzas, burgers and sandwiches, and salads and entrees. Splitsville does accept the Disney Dining Plan.

□ We had a group of nine ranging from my in-laws in their sixties to my eight-month-old nephew. Bowling is an activity with wide appeal and my husband loves sushi. (I had heard good things about the sushi.) So, I made an Advanced Dining Reservation on the My Disney Experience website.

□ A couple of weeks before our trip, I decided to check out the Splitsville website. It got me thinking about the logistics of dining and bowling with a large group. Would we eat and then bowl? Would we bowl while eating? I asked my husband, since it was his birthday, what he preferred. He definitely wanted to bowl and eat at the same time.

I revisited my ADR (advanced dining reservation) in My Disney Experience. The reservation clearly stated that it was for the dining room, and the Splitsville website stated that bowling was on a first-come, first-served basis. To be clear, I had no idea if it would be easy to get a lane for eight bowlers or not, but in general, I don't do well with the unknown. I rarely assume things are going to magically work out for the best. And, you know, there's that whole 40th birthday thing. I wanted everything to go smoothly.

□ Through a link on the Splitsville website, I inquired about reserving a lane. I received an e-mail from an events manager with pricing information. It's definitely more expensive to bowl when you've reserved

a lane versus walk-in rates. Here's the lowdown on pricing for what Splitsville calls Priority Bowling:

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□ OPEN-4PM: \$80 per hour/per lane/maximum of 8 bowlers per lane

□ 4PM-CLOSE: \$125 per hour/per lane/maximum of bowlers 8 per lane

Shoe rental is \$4 per person Please note: Payment can be split a maximum of 2 ways.

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□ Walk-in bowling rates include shoes and entitle bowlers to a designated amount of lane time ranging from 1 hour to 1 hour 45 minutes depending on the number of bowlers in the party:

□ Monday-Friday, OPEN-4PM: \$15 per person including shoe rental

□ Monday-Friday, 4PM-CLOSE: \$20 per person including shoe rental

□ Saturday & Sunday, OPEN-CLOSE: \$20 per person including shoe rental

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□ Through a series of e-mails, eventually I received a contract to fill out and fax or email back to Splitsville. Once I received confirmation that they received the contract, I cancelled my Advanced Dining Reservation through the Disney system. For my party of eight, I reserved the lane for two hours for a total of \$282 including shoe rental. Comparing that to if we had just waited for an available lane the cost would have been \$160. (This would have included 1 hour and 45 minutes of lane time for a party of eight rather than the 2 hours we received with priority bowling.)

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□ When we arrived at Splitsville, everything went very smoothly. We received our shoes and were escorted to our lane immediately. The table and seating area at the lane was spacious and nicely accommodated our party. And in general, the space was fun and festive. Our waiter arrived minutes later for drink orders, and we started bowling right away.

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□ Our party ordered a wide variety of food including three types of sushi, a burger, a rice bowl, pizza, and kid's meals. All the food arrived at the same time and were as ordered. Once our food arrived our server was less attentive. There were a couple of times I left the lane to ask to have our server come over to take a drink or dessert order. We left a few minutes before our two-hour lane time ran out, and we did not fully complete our second game. Overall, we had a great time eating, drinking, and bowling. It was a great experience for a multi-generational party.

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□ So, was Priority Bowling worth the extra expense? From a value standpoint, my answer is no. From a convenience standpoint, I would say yes, but only in our situation--when hosting a larger group in the

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evening, dining at the lane is a must, and waiting between a half-hour and 45 minutes to be seated would lessen the enjoyment of the experience.

About The Author: Jennifer Schuitema is a florist living in Grand Rapids, MI with her husband and daughter. She's enjoyed spending the past decade raising a Disney fan. She looks forward to visiting Walt Disney World each year with her mom and daughter, and occasionally with her husband.

Article last updated: 09-10-2015

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<http://www.passporter.com/articles/splitsville-luxury-lanes-review.html>

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