

The Animal Kingdom Lodge Night-time Safari: A Walt Disney World Event Review

by Randi Briggs, PassPorter Guest Contributor

While on our most recent trip to Walt Disney World in Florida, my husband and I wanted to try some of the special activities offered.

We love staying at the Animal Kingdom Lodge and watching the animals on the savanna, so we decided to try the Night Safari offered exclusively to guests staying there.

We met in the lobby of the Sanaa restaurant at 9:45 pm, and our guide arrived shortly after. And the experience began! We headed out to an open sided safari truck, climbed aboard and, once seated, received a set of night vision goggles. We were already having fun trying to see whatever we could with the new eyewear. As we drove around the back of Kidani Village to the gate leading into the savanna, our guide began to tell us about the animals that were on the savanna that night, how they cared for them, and how they treated them in case of illness or injury. All in all, it was a very interesting discussion. Interestingly enough, she pointed to where many of the animals had bedded down for the night because she could easily see them --she was so used to them, but at first we were unable to pick them out. It took a couple minutes, but once we were able to start "seeing" them, we could see them all.

□ We reached the barn and went through the savanna gates, and the fun really began. As we drove slowly through the savanna, we could see groups of animals bedded down in the grass, and others wandering around grazing. They absolutely did not care that we were there. In some cases, they would be lying right next to the road, and we would be right there next to them. At one point we stopped and one of the more curious residents -- one of the juvenile giraffes - came over for a looksee and apparently found us to be rather boring, because he lost interest pretty quickly. One of our favorite sightings was of a group of gazelles. They were quietly sleeping in the grass. Earlier in the day, we watched them from our Animal Kingdom Lodge balcony running, chasing each other and jumping like they do. To see them so peaceful and quiet was such a contrast. The only animal that made our guide nervous when it showed an interest was the ostrich. They are apparently very bad tempered, not to mention quick. Some of the other animals we saw were the adult giraffes, plenty of zebras, kudu - you name it. But I think what was most fun, was seeing all the animals so peaceful and unconcerned with their visitors (us) and seeing them

happy, and thriving.

□ We asked her if any of the animals got over the electric barrier that is meant to keep them from getting too close to the buildings. Apparently, it is not that uncommon for some of them to do so. They just encourage them back to their side of the barrier, or they often go back on their own. The grass is always greener!

We had noticed during the day that some of the animals stake out spots next to the areas where hay is distributed for the grazing animals, and we noticed some of the residents doing the same at night. They just bedded down right next to the food. Our guide explained that it is usually the older animals that do that. It is just easier for them, not to mention convenient.

□ The tour lasted an hour but felt more like ten minutes because it went by so fast, but we loved every minute of it. The tour is fun, interesting and educational (we learned a lot about the different animals). Photography is not allowed except with an iPhone, and the pictures have to be taken through the night vision goggles. This should be a "must do" if you stay at Animal Kingdom Lodge.

□ This adventure costs \$70.00 per person, and is for tweens, teens and adults. Also, keep in mind you won't have access to a restroom for at least an hour, so plan for that. The groups are kept purposely small, so it is very personal, which is nice, but make reservations well in advance if you want to do this.

About The Author: Randi Briggs owns her own consulting business as a Printed Circuit Board Layout Specialist and she is a resident of Smartsville, California. When she is not working, she is trying to figure out how soon she can save enough for the next trip to Walt Disney World or Disneyland. And she can tell you, it's never soon enough!

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