

# Disney's Old Key West Resort and Disney's Saratoga Springs Resort and Spa: A Walt Disney World Resort Comparison

by Lisa Smith-Lester, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Have you ever wondered how Disney's Old Key West compares to Disney's Saratoga Springs Resort?

We got back from our most recent trip at the end of October, which included a stay at Disney's first Disney Vacation Club (DVC) property, Old Key West Resort. This resort was chosen over Disney's Saratoga Springs Resort, where we had a wonderful time in October 2013, as there were 9 of us, including one infant, and we felt we needed the space offered in the Old Key West 2-bed villas. We found ourselves comparing the two resorts quite a few times on our vacation so I decided a comparison might be useful to others.

**Location** - Both Old Key West and Saratoga Springs are located in the Disney Springs area of Walt Disney World, on Disney Vacation Club Way, perfect if you like visiting Disney Springs. Saratoga Springs is closest to Disney Springs, with Old Key West being a further minute along the road by car or bus. Both resorts offer a boat service to Disney Springs, with Saratoga Springs being the shorter journey of the two. You can also walk from there to both the West Side and Marketplace areas of Disney Springs. We had our own car and driving time to Magic Kingdom, Epcot and Hollywood Studios were all 5-10 minutes, making both resorts an excellent base.

□ My verdict on location -- Saratoga Springs is the winner, as we loved walking to Disney Springs.

□ **Rooms** - On both trips, we stayed in a 2-bed villa. Each 2-bed villa has 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a living/kitchen/dining area, entry way and balcony/patio. There are also laundry facilities; in Saratoga Springs, these were in a large closet off the dining area and in Old Key West, in their own laundry room. On both occasions, we were in a dedicated 2-bed villa meaning we had additional vanity space rather than the small kitchenette, which suited our family group much better.

Old Key West has some of the largest rooms on property. Our 2-bed was approximately 1395 square feet compared with the 2-bed at Saratoga Springs, which was approximately 1075 square feet, quite a considerable difference. Noticeably different was the living areas.

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Saratoga Springs has one 2-seat sofa and a single chair with Old Key West having a 3-seat sofa, 2-seat sofa and single chair. The balcony here was also much larger, with a table and 4 chairs compared with just 2 chairs and a small table at Saratoga Springs. Both villas also had dual access to the master bathroom, meaning you could get to them from the main living area as well as the master bedroom.

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□ My verdict on the rooms -- Old Key West wins this by far. The room sizes are much larger and are definitely preferable for larger groups staying together.

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□ Dining - Both resorts have table service and quick service options. The table service restaurant at Old Key West is Olivia's and at Saratoga Springs is Turf Club. We did not visit either of these so cannot comment on them. The quick service options at Old Key West are Good's To Go, which is located near Hospitality House, and just across from the main pool area, and Turtle Shack, located in the Turtle Pond Road pool area. We sampled both breakfast and dinner from Goods To Go. I have to start by saying that this is an outdoor location, with a small covered area for ordering and collecting your food, getting cutlery and condiments and using the drinks refill stations, and no indoor seating. The food options were the usual fare of chicken breast nuggets, a burger, sandwiches, etc. The food was good but I don't feel they had the best variety available, to my tastes.

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□ The options at Saratoga Springs are Artist's Palette, located within the main lobby area, and Paddock Grill, located at the Paddock pool area, both of which we visited. Artist's Palette is all indoors, with indoor seating to enjoy your meal. The menu is very varied and has the usual options, though with the addition of flatbreads and daily Chef's Specials, which can include Chicken Parmesan and Meatloaf. We really enjoyed the meals we had from here and would highly recommend a visit. The Paddock Grill was also a perfect choice for our pool day, with a lovely burger on offer amongst chicken breast nuggets and sandwiches.

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□ My verdict on dining options -- Saratoga Springs wins again. We enjoyed our meals more here and felt the choices were better and the indoor location more preferable.

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□ Pools - There are four pools at both resorts. Each has a main pool with waterslide and hot tub, with smaller pools located around the resorts. The main pool at Old Key West has a sandy play area adjacent to the main pool and a small baby/toddler pool. We found the pool area to be quite small, though the waterslide was very fun. We also used the pool near our villa at Old Turtle Pond. This was a decent size for a small pool,

with a hot tub and a sandy play area for children. The main pool at Saratoga Springs has a zero entry area and a water play area, along with a small slide for toddlers. We loved this pool. It was large and we preferred the zero entry for our daughters. The smaller Paddock Pool also had a zero entry area, along with a fantastic slide (very similar to the slide at Vero Beach) and a superb water play area.

My verdict on the pools - another win for Saratoga Springs. The main pool and Paddock pool are fantastic for all ages and ideal for those with families.

Transportation - Transport from both resorts to the parks is by bus. As we had a car for our whole trip this time, we did not use any buses whilst at Old Key West so unfortunately cannot comment on them. We did see them regularly and it wasn't often that we saw people waiting at the stops so presume they were fairly regular. We used the Disney buses regularly on our 2013 trip at Saratoga Springs. We were in the Grandstand area so were the first pick-up and drop off each time. It is a slow process, especially having to go round the whole resort when you just want to get to the parks in the morning. As previously mentioned, there is also the boat transportation from each resort to Disney Springs and back, which runs regularly, every 20 minutes, along with the two walkways from Saratoga Springs to Disney Springs.

My verdict on transportation - again, as with the location, Saratoga Springs is the winner with the shorter boat journey and being able to walk to Disney Springs.

Overall verdict - If we were visiting again, with the same family group of 6 adults and 3 children, we would obviously have to go with Old Key West for the room size, however, based on everything else, and if we were just booking for my family of four, Saratoga Springs would win every time. We loved the proximity to Disney Springs, the quick service dining options were far superior and we loved both the main pool and Paddock pool.

*About The Author: Written by Lisa Smith-Lester, a working Mum with two daughters who just returned from an amazing vacation!*

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