

# The Community Halls at Walt Disney World Deluxe Villa Resorts: A Walt Disney World Resort Review

by Stacey Nyman, PassPorter Guest Contributor

When planning a trip to Walt Disney World, people generally tend to focus on what there is to do in the parks.

☐Fast Pass+, Advance Dining Reservations and Nighttime Shows can often overshadow one of the greatest parts about visiting Walt Disney World- the resorts. In 2014 and again this past June, 2016, my family took advantage of a true hidden gem available in select Disney Deluxe Villa resorts- Community Halls.

☐What Are the DVC Community Halls?There are currently five Community Halls at Walt Disney World Resort. Locations are: Disney's Old Key West Resort, Disney's Saratoga Springs Resort and Spa, Disney's BoardWalk Villas, Bay Lake Tower at Disney's Contemporary Resort and Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge at Kidani Village. If you haven't noticed, these are all Disney Vacation Club (DVC) resorts. However, you do not have to be a DVC member to visit a Community Hall, you just need to be a guest of the resort.

☐Back in June 2014, my family was taking a big trip. It was big because we were there for two weeks, there were 21 people in our group and I was almost seven months pregnant with our fourth child! My family of five which consisted of myself, my husband Scott, my daughter Sophie who was 10, and my two sons, Ethan and Griffin who were 8 and 6, arrived a week prior to the rest of my husband's family's arrival (his parents, brother and children, along with various cousins and aunts). We wanted to be able to take our time doing the things we were interested in so that we could really go with the flow when everyone else arrived. When looking into accommodations, we decided to try something new- renting DVC points from my husband's coworker.

☐Because I was largely pregnant, comfort was a big deal. We knew that DVC could provide us with more space and a great place to relax when my limitations required it. We got a great deal from the coworker and we found ourselves with a split stay between Bay Lake Tower at Disney's Contemporary Resort and Disney's Beach Club Villas. The second week of our trip would be at Disney's Port Orleans Riverside. I know that we did this backwards! Most people save the nicer accommodations for later so they are moving up and not down! However, we wanted to be near our family so that the cousins could be together for the week. And

yes. It was hard to go from a multi-room villa, with washer/dryer in the unit (for a family of five, this was HUGE) and a full kitchen to a single hotel room.

To say we were blown away by DVC would be an understatement. We started at Bay Lake Tower and fell in love. We truly felt at home! While exploring, we stumbled across the Community Hall. It was a simple, labeled door in the hallway. We weren't quite sure what it was or even if we were allowed to enter! One of us was brave and opened the door. We were instantly greeted and welcomed. We didn't have time to really explore since we were headed out to a park, but the kids were instantly intrigued and we promised to go back the next morning when we had planned a half day at the resort for swimming.

□ □ Benefits of DVC Community Halls

□ The next morning, the kids were wide awake VERY early and begging to go back to "that cool room." I believe it was open at 9, and after eating breakfast, we headed down. The kids had a BLAST. They did sand art, colored, played with toys, read some books, made several beaded necklaces and played video games. My daughter and husband rented tennis rackets and tennis balls while I stayed and lounged on the couch while my boys played video games with some new friends. We begrudgingly dragged the kids out to swim a bit before heading to a park for the afternoon. At some point, my daughter also rented a DVD to watch late one evening. The next several days, the kids constantly asked when we were going back. We were able to fit in one more morning before heading to Beach Club Villas. The kids were so sad to find out that there was no Community Hall there.

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 □ Fast forward to June 2016. This time we would be staying for 10 days. Half at Disney's Port Orleans Riverside and half at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge at Kidani Village, again on rented points from my husband's co-worker (though this would probably be the last time we'd ever rent points- foreshadowing!). The first half of the trip was great. We did lots of commando park touring, all with our newest addition, a 20-month old daughter name Britta! This was her second trip, however. We stayed at Disney's Caribbean Beach resort in 2015 when she was 8 months old. The second half our trip had lots of built in relaxation, since we wanted to take advantage of Animal Kingdom Lodge. As we were busy exploring upon arrival, we were THRILLED to discover a Community Hall! In our planning we somehow missed that Kidani had one. The kids were so excited. They were then 12, 10, 8 and 20 months.

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 □ Kidani's Community Hall was so great! There was a pool table, video games, play area with toys, cool photo booth machine (free-pictures were printed and they went to memory maker!), lots and lots of crafts and much more. We decided to come back that day and spent the entire

afternoon and evening in and out. Sophie painted a ceramic Beast which was then fired in a kiln and ready a few days later. Griffin made his own t-shirt (he chose Olaf) with stencils and fabric markers. Britta made a bobble head cat (which she still plays with every day) and Ethan made video games (story of his life). Scott and I relaxed, watch snippets of Disney Movies and read/played on our phones and chatted. The kids also played with the board games and toys available. Britta especially loved the bucket of toy animals.

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□The Community Hall staff was WONDERFUL. For the most part, we were the only ones there. They staff could have just stayed behind the desk. However, one sat with Sophie while she painted her Beast (which was HUGE. It took her about 1.5 hours to paint) and painted her own ceramic while chatting. Sophie isn't the most outgoing person, and I was thrilled to hear her openly talking and laughing. They also learned all of our names and used them during the several times we came back throughout the week. We were so sad when our week came to a close.

□Community Hall as a Perk of DVC Membership

□The Community Hall was a huge part of our decision to take a big step for our family. During this trip we became DVC members ourselves! It just makes sense for us with the size of our family and how often we go. Having so many great amenities with a big family makes a huge difference in terms of comfort and convenience. As I said before, you do not have to be a DVC member to utilize a Community Hall, but you do have to be a guest at the resort. That being said, DVC members do get discounts on the activities that require a fee. Most of the activities are free, but things like the higher end crafts (like the t-shirt, ceramic and bobble head) do cost money.

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□While we didn't buy in because of a perk like Community Halls, we felt as though the level of service and care that we experienced while in there was really synonymous with DVC. It makes us very excited for our future trips where we can explore the other three Community Halls on Walt Disney World property, and we will likely stay at the resorts that have Community Halls more often than those that do not.

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□If you ever get an opportunity to stay at one of these resorts, please do! It was a great experience and we can't speak of it highly enough.

*About The Author: Stacey Nyman is the Education Manager at the Swedish American Museum and Brunk Children's Museum of Immigration in Chicago, IL. She is an avid reader and Disney podcast listener. When she isn't at Walt Disney World with her husband and four children, she is planning her next trip.*

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