

The Disney Vacation Club Safari Spectacular: A Walt Disney World Event Review

by Amy Jones, PassPorter Guest Contributor

□ This year is the 25th birthday of the Disney Vacation Club (DVC), and, in true Disney fashion, where there's a birthday (or even an un-birthday), there's a party. The DVC chose to host a special, free (yes, free!) party at Disney's Animal Kingdom for DVC members only, and I'm so glad we were able to attend! It was the DVC Safari Spectacular!

□ My personal adventure with the DVC Safari Spectacular began at home, on the phone, the day booking was available. It turns out that free events are rather popular. When I called the DVC hotline, the automated operator said something along the lines of "If you are calling to reserve the Safari Spectacular, please press 1. For all other calls, please press 2." I should have known that I was in for a long wait, since the event had its own line that day. Live and learn.

I pressed "1" for about an hour before the phone actually rang, then listened to "Cruella De Ville" for another hour while on hold, but persistence pays, because I got through and got us in!

□ Getting to the DVC Safari Spectacular

□ Fast forward to the actual event. The Safari Spectacular was set up similarly to any other after-hours Disney event, like Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween party or Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party (except, again, this event was free and the others, definitely, are not). We were able to enter the park without tickets at 7:00 (I'm a little fuzzy on this since we are annual pass holders), checked in to the party, and received a wrist bracelet similar to the bracelets from the other parties. We were also issued vouchers for the nighttime safari, as well as free tickets for the Fossil Fun Games at Dinoland USA.

□ The park officially closed by 8:30, and by then the non-partygoers had been ushered out. Just as with the Halloween and Christmas parties, this party offered plenty of extra park time with smaller crowds. My husband and I have to take turns riding the bigger rides since our kids are not thrill seekers, but I was able to walk straight on to Expedition Everest using the single-rider line. (Ok, so I rode it two times in a row. He still got his turn!)

□ Party Time at the DVC Safari Spectacular!

□ At 9:30 the party officially started. My husband and I had each waved at the Yeti enough for the evening, so we let the kids lead the way to their favorite part of Animal Kingdom, Dinoland USA.

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□ I'll forgo the number of times we rode Triceratops Spin (I lost count, anyway) and get right to the Fossil Fun Games. We usually bypass these since the vouchers to play cost money, but we had each received two when we entered. We played, we lost, we had fun, and we were about to leave when a very sweet family approached us and offered us their vouchers. (Pixie Dust!!) Then a sweet older couple offered my girls the stuffed bears they'd just won. (More Pixie Dust!) And then, as we were waiting to play a game, the man who had just won turned to my younger daughter and asked "What color do you want, hon?" She chose red and received a very gentle-looking red shark. (Pixie Dust abounds!!!) Of course, that left my older daughter without a shark, but never fear. When it was my turn to play the water gun game, I actually won (I never win carnival games!), and got her her own blue shark (which I never could have done without that extra voucher from the sweet family!).

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□ It was then time for a treat, and believe me, treats abounded at the Safari Spectacular as much as the Pixie Dust. There were several treat stations set up, and we went to the one at Restaurantosaurus. There was a cookie buffet, a chip station, a frozen treat cart complete with Mickey Bars and other frozen goodies, and a station for water and lemonade. Quite honestly, the expensive Magic Kingdom parties could take a lesson from this free event on how to feed the masses.

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□ We then remembered that we had been told that the nighttime safari would end at 11:00, so we maneuvered past the Zootopia dance party and raced toward Kilimanjaro. Once there, that was the only time we had to stand in a long-ish line, but we were on a safari within just a few minutes.

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□ The nighttime safari was not that different from the daytime one except that it was in the dark and much cooler. I felt like we went on a slightly different path for part of it, but I am easily disoriented and could be wrong. We had taken the regular daytime safari just a couple of days before, and I honestly can't remember seeing anything that I hadn't seen then. In fact, I think I saw even less because of the dark and my sleepiness than I had in the daytime. Still, it was charming. And free.

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□ After the safari we were pretty much ready to call it a night, but we stopped first at the DVC station and received our DVC 25th Anniversary buttons. Hey, can you really have too many Disney buttons? I think not. Next, the bus ride back to the resort where, unfortunately, I fell asleep on the man next to me no fewer than five times (it turns out that I am not one of nature's nocturnal animals.)

□ So, all in all, the DVC Safari Spectacular was a great experience, and I'm so glad that we were able to do it. We've only been DVC members since November of 2015, so this was our first DVC vacation and first

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real "perk," but hopefully the beginning of a lifetime of memories.

About The Author: Amy Jones lives in Kentucky with one husband and two future Disney imagineers. She is a stay-at-home mom, a runner, a writer, and a Disney planning fiend. She and her family have been to the World twice and have two more trips scheduled for 2017 to celebrate birthdays, Star Wars, and a long-awaited 20th wedding anniversary!

Article last updated: 11-04-2016

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