

Expect the Unexpected... To, From, and At the Happiest Place on Earth (Part 3): A Walt Disney World Planning Article

by Amy Jones, PassPorter Guest Contributor

On Saturday morning, the day we had planned to leave Walt Disney World, our six-year-old daughter started to get sick.

We had reservations at Beaches and Cream Soda Shoppe, and while the rest of us really enjoyed it, she didn't eat, and she lay her head against her daddy the entire time.

We had planned to go to Epcot before we went home, and we proceeded there after our lunch, hoping that she would feel better. She didn't. While my 8-year-old daughter and my husband rode Soarin', my sick little one and I sat in the hallway while she lay with her head in my lap. A cast member kindly gave me a rider switch pass, so I was able to ride Soarin' by myself later.

□ My daughter didn't seem to have a fever or other apparent symptoms, and she rallied around enough for us to exit Soarin' and navigate our way into the sunlight. I then remembered that we were Disney Vacation Club members and could use that wonderful lounge that just opened at Innoventions. We went in and had to wait about twenty minutes for an opening, since the lounge was at capacity, but I got her in and she slept on a sofa for about three hours. Yep, that was our afternoon at Epcot. In the lounge, on the sofa, while she slept. I think she was mostly just exhausted!

□ We decided that we wanted to spend one more night in Orlando, just to make sure she would be okay for the trip home, and it was already getting late anyway. I got us a nice room at the Sheraton in Orlando for a decent price, but there were add-ons to that price like parking and hotel fees that I wasn't expecting (I honestly prefer Disney resorts!). Still, that "room" turned out to be a very nice suite, and our daughter felt much better by that night and asked to go swimming.

The hotel didn't have complimentary breakfast, and we were still close to Disney, so rather than to just cross the street and eat at a Shoney's, which would have been a fine breakfast, I'm sure, we decided to do breakfast as only Disney can. I got us reservations at Whispering Canyon Cafe at Wilderness Lodge.

□ This cafe turned out to be another hidden treasure! If you've ever

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experienced the Hoop-Dee-Doo Review, this is Hoop-Dee-Doo, Jr. Our server sat down at the table with us, said that "Grandma" was back in the kitchen and would cook us whatever we chose from the menu, and made us feel right at home.

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□ Let me note another lesson we learned this trip. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, or it is for us. We were on the Disney Dining Plan, and I had made most of our table service reservations for breakfast, and I'm glad I did. We found that if we feasted like kings (and princesses) for breakfast, we could last longer through the day and eat less and less as the day went on. Typically, we would table service for breakfast, snack in the afternoon, and have a quick service meal for supper.

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□ The food at Whispering Canyon was wonderful (try the Bananas Foster French Toast!), and there was a hobby-horse race for the kids, which our younger daughter still wasn't quite up to, but was fun to watch. Just be careful if you ask for ketchup!

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□ Then we found the last hidden treasure--the lobby of the Villas at Wilderness Lodge. I wish I had stayed with my gut instinct and made this our last stop instead of continuing to Magic Kingdom and making hot, tired children navigate the crowds just to see the parade, but that's life.

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□ Still, I'm so glad we went to the lobby of the Villas at Wilderness Lodge to check it out. That is truly one of my favorite memories of the week. One daughter sat at the checkerboard with some other kids while my husband and other daughter rested in the window seat.

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□ The details in this lobby are truly up to the Disney standard. I toured the decor--a tribute to Walt's love of trains, plus some fun, 1800's style maps and photos designed just for the Villas. There were old books on display by authors like J. Fennimore Cooper and Nathaniel Hawthorne, and there was one book open to a story about a friendly skunk. Best of all, a real car from Walt Disney's backyard miniature train is on display.

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□ Then I sat down on a sofa by the fire, listened to the theme from one of my favorite old movies, "How the West Was Won," and slipped into a sleepy stupor. I expected Fess Parker to walk in at any moment. Disney's hidden treasures go so far beyond Hidden Mickeys.

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.

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