

# No Ticket Needed at Disney Springs: A Disney Springs Review

by Ronni Wick, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Many people who head to Walt Disney World choose to buy park tickets for each day, including arrival and departure days. This is not a requirement. In fact, it is sometimes wasteful if you don't have at least several hours to spend in the park. You have other options. We chose not to buy park tickets for our arrival day, but that didn't make it any less Disney. We spent the evening at Disney Springs, where there is no admission fee, but so many things Disney, some quite unique.

Our flight from Chicago arrived an hour late to McCoy International Airport because of plane maintenance, but we were able to walk right onto a Disney Magical Express bus, which took off within 5 minutes! This was the first time we had used the Disney Magical Express program, as we usually drive from our home in central Minnesota. It was very convenient, and I highly recommend taking advantage of this FREE service provided when you stay on Disney properties.

□ We checked in to Saratoga Springs Resort at The Carriage House, where we also bought our refillable mugs and a souvenir. This building also houses the restaurants, a small gift shop, and some lounge areas. Off of The Carriage House is the main pool, which has a zero-entry pool with a small waterslide.

□ Our villa was located in The Grandstand area, and there was a turret outside the villa! It was very cute, and perfectly themed. We requested this area because it is within walking distance from The Carriage House, so we could easily stop to refill our mugs on the way to or from the parks each day. This was the first time we purchased refillable mugs, and we took advantage daily, usually both morning and evening.

□ We freshened up in our villa and headed to Disney Springs for dinner and shopping. Since Saratoga Springs is a Disney Springs resort, we could walk, bus, or boat to the entertainment area. We chose to take a boat ride. We waited about 10 minutes for the boat to arrive, but we were in no hurry, and it was a beautiful evening. There were not many people waiting, or on the boat, and we enjoyed every moment. My husband, Dean, loves to learn about other people, and struck up a conversation with the driver. The boat stops at two places at Disney Springs, one at each end. We decided to stay on the boat until the second stop to enjoy the breeze.

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□ We had no plans, just flew by the seat of our pants, which is rare for me. Our goal was to slowly eat our way through the night. We started at Cookes of Dublin, the quick service location on the back of Raglan Road, and shared an order of fish and chips with a Bailey's frozen shake. Dean and I like to try new things, and usually share so we can try more at different locations. We had not seen the shake on the menu online, so we thought we would try it.

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□ After some window shopping at the Lego store and The World of Disney, we stopped by Portobello Country Italian Trattoria. Instead of getting on a list for seating, we opted to sit at the bar, which is first come, first served. Dean ordered a craft beer recommended by the man sitting next to us, and we perused the menu. The bread service at Portobello is a loaf of focaccia with roasted garlic and olive oil, which the bartending staff was happy to show us the proper way to eat. You receive this service even at the bar, so it is a great option if you don't have a reservation.

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□ We ordered the Quatro Formaggio wood fired pizza, adding mushrooms. Portobello is known for their wood fired ovens which make, as we soon found out, some delicious pizza. The oven creates a crisp, flaky crust because of the extreme temperature, and the cheese gets all melty and bubbly. We were tempted to lounge there for the rest of the evening, as we really felt at home here, but I wanted to see more.

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□ We meandered our way to Raglan Road Irish Pub for a Guinness for Dean, and to watch some Irish dancing to live music. It was a fun atmosphere, and very loud. We didn't stay too long, as we didn't have an official place to sit, but it was impressive to see the talented dancers. They even invited some children up to dance, what a fun experience for them.

There are so many stores to visit in Disney Springs, many that have recently opened after the reimagining of the entertainment area. While there are some non-Disney stores here, I really love feeling I am at Walt Disney World without being actually in the parks. One of my favorite stores is the Art of Disney. There are so many prints to look through, and original artwork on the walls.

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□ We topped our meal off with a sea salt caramel and hot fudge sundae at Ghirardelli Ice Cream and Chocolate Shop. Fair warning, there is always a line, but it goes quickly, and they make the sundaes to order. There were no available tables in the shop, so we took our sundae down toward the water and sat on a bench to enjoy our dessert. It was wonderful that the stores were open late to give us a chance to shop and look around in between our meal courses. Even though it was still

fairly early, we chose to walk home and enjoy a relaxing hot tub to prepare for the next day.

*About The Author: Ronni Wick is a wife and mother to four children, a reading and spelling tutor, and loves to spend her vacations in Walt Disney World.*

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