

24 Hours Solo at Disney's Fort Wilderness Campground: A Walt Disney World Resort Review

by Theresa Krol, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Every year I visit Walt Disney World with college friends that currently work at Disney. I usually fly in a day early so I can have some time to myself and visit a Disney resort. When I come to Disney my goal isn't to hit the parks every day, it's to take advantage of all the no-cost options staying on property has to offer. I often travel solo, and many people say to me "You are so brave, I'd never travel alone!", or I hear "I wish I would have thought of that!" Solo travel is really easy, especially at Walt Disney World, I usually book in the fall when temperatures are cooler, crowds are smaller, and resorts are at a discount.

Girl's weekend kicked off this year on the Friday before Thanksgiving, I flew into Orlando on Thursday and took Disney's Magical Express to Fort Wilderness. By noon I was checked in and being driven to my cabin. They offer express check-in online so that you can go directly to your room, however, I prefer to start my vacation checking in at the front desk. I like to say "hello" and be welcomed by the Cast Members when I arrive. I also like to get the map of the property, and grab any holiday brochures. If you head straight to your room they do have some brochures available, but I like to have extra copies for my Disney photo albums.

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□Fort Wilderness was already decked out for the holidays with wreaths, bulbs, and decorations. The property is almost one and a half miles from check in to the boat dock, and they do have a resort only bus, as well as golf cart rental. I enjoy walking or taking the resort bus, but I would consider renting a golf cart if I was staying here for more than a few days. Everyone had decorated their golf carts for the holidays with garland, gift wrapped presents, and ornaments. RV owners had really customized their golf carts, some were Disney themed! (You could spend a whole day checking out everyone's decorated cart and camp site. I was told that that during the holidays Disney won't allow anyone including cast members to drive through. It would be bumper to bumper traffic with everyone ogling the holiday displays!

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□My cabin was amazing- Yes, I booked a 6 person cabin just for me, and it was luxurious! I loved the theme as I am a tent camping gal from Michigan. Since I had just flown in from Michigan, my plan was to be at the pool within minutes of arriving, soaking up every drop of sun I could get. I grabbed my towels from the cabin. IMPORTANT!!- Fort

Wilderness does not offer towels at the pool, you must bring your own supplied from the cabin! As a courtesy, the resort had Deep Woods Off (bug spray) in the room for your use. I didn't see any mosquitoes, but it was nice to have it in the cabin.

I walked to the Meadow Trading Post shop, which is adjacent to the Meadow swimming pool. I'm a sucker for Disney souvenirs and I love when the resorts have their own themed magnets, mugs, towels, post cards, and stickers. In addition to souvenirs they have food and drinks to take back to your campsite or room.

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 □The Meadow pool is not as spectacular as some of the other themed pools, but it was still large and nice. There was also a smaller pool --the Wilderness Swimmin' Pool, closer to the cabins. The main pool has the Meadow Snack bar and I don't consider my Disney vacation "started" until I have a Pina Colada. Unfortunately, this pool bar did not have a full alcohol selection. They only had their special "moonshine" sold at Fort Wilderness restaurants. As I did not want my Pina Colada tainted with moonshine (whiskey), I ordered it without alcohol which is a few dollars cheaper and just as good. I often will order the Pina Colada without alcohol, because they are so creamy and delicious- Disney seems to have the perfect blend of pineapple and coconut. For lunch I ordered the Wilderness Dog with BBQ pork, coleslaw and chips. The hot dog was divine, I could have ate three of them! It rivaled Casey's Corner in the Magic Kingdom. I did end up purchasing the refillable mug, which is good for 2 weeks past activation date. If you use the mug 6 times you break even on the cost, plus, it's another souvenir! The pool was nice and relaxing. Even with the pool party/bingo going on, I was able to zone out in the hot tub and soak up the Disney experience. Cast Member Jasmine was leading the kids in a dance contest and it was really fun to watch, I had a smile on my face the entire time! I was reluctant to leave to get cleaned up for dinner.

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 □That evening, I joined the Chip 'n' Dale Campfire Sing-A-Long. There is no cost for this show! At 6:30pm Cast Members light a campfire and you can bring your own s'mores to roast, or purchase from the Chuck Wagon in the pavilion. At 7:00pm, Chip 'n' Dale come out and lead everyone in a sing along. Chip 'n' Dale made their way through the crowd and took photos with everyone (even me!). What an amazing "no cost" character experience. A Disney movie aired after the sing-a-long, but it was a little chilly and I needed to get dinner. The temperature drops quickly after sunset! By now it was dark and I meandered through the camp loops, (there are over 20 - this is a huge property!) Guests go the extra mile decorating with Disney inflatables, blow forms, lights, and custom decorations they handcrafted themselves.

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☐ As I gawked at everyone's creativity, I made my way towards the Settlement area in the back of the resort. Since I was traveling alone I decided to eat at Crockett's Tavern bar area. I sat in between other couples that were visiting Disney without kids. I ordered nachos and a few drinks, and we all joked at how hard it was to get a drink. The bar area was only staffed by one bartender and she was trying to make drinks for us, Trail's End restaurant, and the carry out window. Even if it took a while, I enjoyed my Disney themed cocktail.

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☐ Fort Wilderness offers a nightly wagon ride which is first come first serve, however tonight the ride was cancelled so I tried to book a private carriage ride and they were sold out. It looked like a nice trip, I will make reservations for my next visit! Even without the carriage ride, the resort felt magical with the decorations up. I viewed the Magic Kingdom fireworks and the Electrical Water Pageant on the boat dock. I never miss the Electrical Water Pageant, it's my own personal tradition. What an amazing day! And I had only been on property for 9 hours!

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☐ There is so much to do at this resort - Segway tours, horseback riding, archery class, pony rides, bike rental, canoe rental, tennis, and fishing. Even if you didn't go to the parks, you can't get bored with this place. If you like to hit the trail- Fort Wilderness has a beautiful path that leads to the Wilderness Lodge. The entire resort is serene, I couldn't believe how quiet my cabin was. Very different from staying in the hotel and hearing kids running down the hallways and doors slamming.

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☐ After an amazing night's sleep in the cabin, I walked to P & J's Southern Takeout, and ordered my Mickey Waffles- no breakfast at Disney is complete without them. After breakfast I spent some time at Tri-Circle-D Ranch. The horses had just been served breakfast (unfortunately no Mickey Waffles for them!). I took my time watching the horses and chatting with Cast Members. After a trip to the beach and one more walk through the resort, picking up some last minute souvenirs I was ready for girl's weekend. As I left the resort headed to Epcot, I thought about how wonderful my stay had been and what you can accomplish in 24 hours!

About The Author: Theresa Krol is a Mouse Junkie. She participated in the Walt Disney World College Program where she worked at Disney's Boardwalk Bakery and fell in love with Disney resorts. She has visited every year since college, and has stayed at almost every resort on property! She loves to travel the world and is looking forward to seeing Greece in 2017!

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