

Pleasure Island: A Guide to Upcoming Changes

by Dave Marx, Authors of [PassPorter Travel Guidebooks](#)

Late in the afternoon on Friday, June 27, 2008, Walt Disney World announced that the six dance and comedy clubs on Pleasure Island, part of the Downtown Disney shopping, dining, and entertainment complex, would close on September 27, to make way for "a completely re-imagined Pleasure Island." A Disney spokesman said, "Our bold new vision for Downtown Disney reflects the feedback we receive from our guests each and every day."

Let's pick the hard information out of the press release:

The September 27 closure affects only the six nightclubs currently operating on Pleasure Island: 8-Trax, Adventurers Club, BET Soundstage Club, Comedy Warehouse, Mannequins Dance Palace, and Motion. (Disney's fiscal year starts October 1, and there can be tax benefits to wrapping-up club operations before the year ends.)

The shops and restaurants will remain open: Raglan Road, Fuego by Sosa Cigars, Curl by Sammy Duval, Orlando Harley-Davidson, and various outdoor food and beverage kiosks.

A new restaurant, previously announced for Pleasure Island, is expected to open in Spring 2009. Operated by [E-Brands Restaurants](#), the "high-energy, casual eatery will feature authentic Central and South American cuisine, specialty drinks and live music along the waterfront. Concept art released by Disney suggests the eatery will be called "La Dolbe," and will be located between the Adventurers Club and former Rock and Roll Beach Club.

Disney also cataloged other changes for the Downtown Disney area:

Portobello Yacht Club, also on the Pleasure Island property, is being re-styled and re-themed in summer of 2008 (like, now), as **Tuscan Country Trattoria**, with new interior decor, new menu (but still Italian, of course), and an outdoor dining area. This establishment is operated by Levy Restaurants of Chicago.

Fulton's Crab House, just across a small bridge from Portobello and also operated by Levy Restaurants, will get spruced-up in spring 2009, and they'll add an upper-deck area for added guest capacity and the option for larger private parties.

Just steps away from Fulton's, Portobello/Tuscan Country Trattoria, and The World of Disney in Downtown Disney Marketplace is [T-Rex](#), a new themed restaurant operated by Landry's (the Rainforest Cafe folks). That's set to open in the fall of 2008.

In the final restaurant news, sometime in 2009 **Wolfgang Puck Cafe** in Downtown Disney West Side will also receive refreshed interior decor and a **new, enclosed outdoor patio**. That patio may help relieve some of the demand for tables that can be so frustrating on busy, weekend evenings.

Since old news can still be repackaged as new news, the recently completed rehabs of **Cap'n Jack's Restaurant**, **Ghirardelli Soda Shop**, **Earl of Sandwich**, and **Wolfgang Puck Express**, all in the Marketplace district, were also mentioned in the press statement.

Not to be upstaged by the very recently announced, [400-foot tall Big Wheel](#) (observation Ferris wheel) set to rise in Orlando's International Drive district, Disney has unveiled plans for a **tethered observation balloon**, which will take passengers up 300 feet into the skies above Lake Buena Vista. It's sure to provide much better views of Walt Disney World property than the Big Wheel, which will be seven miles away to the northeast. According to Pleasure Island vice president Kevin Lansberry in an interview with [Orlando Attractions Magazine/Inside the Magic Podcast](#), the balloon will be located in Downtown Disney West Side area, in the open area between Bongos Cuban Cafe and Wetzels Pretzels. And if anyone is worried about floating away, Wizard of Oz-style, I have a feeling Disney will have the ropes fastened a bit more securely.

Hanes will open a design your own t-shirt store in fall 2008, at an unspecified location somewhere on the 120-acre Downtown Disney property.

Goofy's Candy Company, in the Downtown Disney Marketplace district, will be opening a **private party room** in fall 2008. That'll be for family-style birthday parties, of course.

Also in the Marketplace in fall 2008, the **Marketplace Stage** will be upgraded to a **new, covered stage**, intended to be a major venue for Magic Music Days (for which it already hosts many smaller events).

Fans of the Adventurers Club have reacted strongly to this announcement, as one might expect (Jennifer and I have many fond memories of the club and its cast, and have long recommended it to our readers). There is an online petition at

<http://www.petitiononline.com/wdwaclub> that currently has nearly 3,800 signatures, and many are writing letters to Disney (for a start, Guest Communications, Walt Disney World Co., Inc., PO Box 10040, Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830-0040)

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