

# Celebration, Florida: Small Town Done Disney

by Cheryl Pendry, *PassPorter Featured Columnist*

Sometimes it's very difficult to drag yourself away from the wonders of Walt Disney World. After all, with four theme parks, two water parks and more restaurants and shops than you could ever visit on one vacation, why would you need to leave this wonderland?

Because our trips to Disney usually last longer than the average stay, we tend to venture off property more than most and one of our favorite stops is very nearby to Disney World and had a huge dose of pixie dust in its development. That's because the Walt Disney Company was the organization responsible for developing the entire town.

Walt himself came up with the original dream of an Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow towards the end of his life. He saw it as a way of coming up with new ideas for urban living and made a film, spelling out what he would like to see. That included a monorail system, a city center where the pedestrian took priority over vehicles, apartments, houses and areas of green expanse, known as "green belt," to break up the residential buildings.

As we all know, EPCOT evolved into the second theme park to open at Walt Disney World, but it was far from the vision that Walt had originally spelled out. Yes, it looked at technology of the future and also brought together cultures and nations from around the world, but there was no-one living here, one of Walt's core ideas. But Walt's dream got a second chance when Celebration came along.

The first homes started to appear in 1996 and, since then, the community has continued to grow. It's fair to say that every time we visit the town, more has been added. Celebration is now a sprawling town, complete with its own facilities, including schools, churches, shops, restaurants, cinema and even its own town hall. If you ever need urgent medical treatment while staying at Disney, Celebration has its own hospital, a beautiful facility, which we spent some time at last year. Although it's never nice to have to go to the hospital, particularly when you're on vacation, they do try hard here to make the experience as pleasant as possible. (See our article on First Aid in Walt Disney World below!)

So, you may be wondering, why on earth would I want to visit a town, when there are so many great things to explore at the Walt Disney

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World resort? Well, although Celebration is a town, it's much more than that. As soon as you enter it, you realize that it's nothing like you've ever seen before. It really is an ideal version of the town you'd love to live in, with white picket fences and immaculately kept gardens, with beautiful houses set back from the road in lovely pastel colors.

Every time we go there, I can't help but compare it to Main Street USA. OK, so it's not the same, but they share the same general idea. This is an idealized version of how towns should be (at least in Walt's vision) and takes you back in time to the turn of the 20th century. That's even more obvious when you understand that Celebration was built with the idea of the pedestrian, rather than the car, being king. It's an odd concept to wrap your head around, particularly as you drive into the town. You'll find that you have to take extra care and slow down more than you normally would, which after you get used to it, is a pleasant change, as the slower speeds allow you to take in the wonderful scenery all around you.

Celebration isn't just somewhere for people to live though. It also recognizes the value of the visitor and that it's going to have an appeal to outsiders, especially with its Disney links and, as a result, the town plans for visitors, with special events throughout the year. If you're there in the spring, you can enjoy festivals of spring art, American Pie or even Posh Pooches. The summer brings 4th of July celebrations, while the fall is the time to enjoy Oktoberfest. In December, snow falls every night without fail with celebrations when they light the tree at the beginning of the month and at the end of the month to see the New Year in.

The shops, cafes and restaurants are also well worth exploring. We've spent many happy mornings or afternoons, just browsing around. Because Celebration has a slower pace of life and is a relatively quiet town, it's a pleasure to visit the shops. You won't find crowds of people here, but what you will find are unique outlets, where you might just pick up something a little bit more unusual.

Some of our favorite spots to head for include Day Dreams. You can't miss this place - just look for the two teddy bear topiaries outside. Inside, you'll find a wonderful assortment of collectibles and gifts. Further down Market Street are the Market Street Gallery, with home decor items and a selection of year round Christmas items, and the Village Mercantile, the place to get Celebration logo merchandise.

Other unusual shops include the wonderfully named Reading Trout Books in Front Street with thousands of new and used books and magazines and the Dog Bark Bakery in Celebration Avenue, the place to

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get a special treat for your four legged friend.

And if you want to add lunch or dinner to your visit, there are lots of places to try, with some, such as Cafe D'Antonio, the place to head for Italian food, the Columbia Restaurant, serving up Mediterranean food, and the Celebration Town Tavern, boasting wonderful lakeside views.

Perhaps those final words really sum up what Celebration is about. Because this town has been designed by Disney, there are just so many wonderful extra touches everywhere you look. It's clear a lot of thought went into designing this town, from the restaurants overlooking the picturesque lakes to the individual houses, with their beautiful pastel colors, to the lack of domination here by the car. All of these combine to make you feel as if you've stepped back in time and yet, you're only a few minutes away from the hustle and bustle of Walt Disney World itself.

Getting to Celebration from Walt Disney World couldn't be simpler. Take the 192 towards Kissimmee and then follow the signs, turning right on to Celebration Avenue. The town center is well signposted.

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)*

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