

## The Villas at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge: Size Matters

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

If you've been keeping an eye on recent Disney developments, you'll be aware that the Disney Vacation Club (DVC) is expanding at an amazing rate. In recent years we've seen announcements about new resorts, including DVC villas at Disneyland California and in Hawaii, as well as the debut of the latest addition to the offering to DVC members -- Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge Villas.

This new Villas addition has included a number of firsts for a DVC resort. For starters, the rooms are being split between two locations. Currently the only ones open are those in the existing main building at Animal Kingdom Lodge, now being referred to as Jambo House. By sometime in 2009, the remainder of the rooms will be open at a new location at the resort known as Kidani Village. By the time work is finished, there will be 134 new villas in Jambo House and 324 in Kidani Village, which will be surrounded by a brand new wild animal savannah. Kidani Village will also be home to a new table service restaurant, feature pool, and interactive water play area.

But let's stop there. I'm getting ahead of myself. When I first wrote this article, the only way DVC members were going to be able to stay at the Animal Kingdom Lodge Villas was by booking a room in the main building, as Kidani Village was just a mass of cranes (and I don't mean the birds!) in the distance. Well, that's exactly what we did. We booked on June 6, 2007, which was the day bookings opened to those who hadn't already purchased points at Animal Kingdom Lodge. Understandably, the new resort was exceptionally popular with members and all I could get for our dates was a one bedroom villa with a standard view. Sure, it's a shame we couldn't get a savannah view, but I wanted to see what the new addition was like, so I took what I could get.

Well, the verdict is that we are really impressed with what they've created. I guess it helps when your room is literally only three doors away from the main elevators and is overlooking the main Uzima pool. Somehow, once we saw that, the lack of a savannah view didn't bother us that much, as we still had some beautiful scenery to admire outside.

The first thing that struck us as we opened the door to our one bedroom villa was the size of it. For those who don't know, you can book a studio, which is essentially very similar to the usual hotel rooms you're used to at Disney, albeit with a kitchenette that includes a fridge, coffee maker and microwave. Then you can also go for the one bedroom or two

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bedroom villas, the main difference being how many people each will sleep. Both boast full size kitchens - and boy do I mean full size! We couldn't think of anything that was missing from our kitchen, with a stove, fridge, freezer, dishwasher, microwave and more storage space than I think anyone could ever use on a Disney vacation! The other bonuses with the villas are the washers and dryers you get, which make doing laundry so much easier and the wonderful whirlpool baths.

With our room, we walked straight into the kitchen and entrance area, which immediately opened out into the living room, complete with flat screen TV, which is guaranteed to impress anyone who enjoys new technology! The furniture is African in feel, as you'd expect, and we loved the little touches, such as Simba designs on the back of the chairs and elephants and zebras appearing on the storage units.

Turn left and you're in a hallway that leads to the bathroom on the left and the main bedroom on the right. I don't think I've ever seen such a huge bathroom area before at Disney! The floor space in it was incredible, with my favorite spa bath sitting there, under a beautiful tiled design of the African savannah at night. There were two sinks, a separate toilet and even more storage space. I really came away impressed with how much space they give you to put everything away and I really want to meet the family who can fill up all that space!

Across the hallway is the main bedroom, with its brightly colored bedding, closet and set of drawers, along with another flat screen TV and a table and chair, and the patio doors leading out on to the balcony beyond.

The colors vary throughout the villa, from a fairly bright orange in the bathroom to beiges elsewhere. The colors of the walls need to be light, as all the furniture, without exception, is made of dark wood, which does darken the rooms somewhat. That was really our only complaint during our stay -- not only does this make the rooms appear dark, but there is a lack of lighting in the rooms, particularly at night.

The place seemed huge for the two of us and perhaps that's because these are the first one bedroom DVC villas that will sleep up to five people. I could see that, even with five, there would probably still be more than enough space to move around without treading on each other's toes.

Despite the fact that we were overlooking the pool and, with the doors to the balcony open, it was noisy at times, once they were shut, we never heard a thing, which just goes to show how good the soundproofing is in these rooms.

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I'll be honest here. I wasn't a huge fan of the Animal Kingdom Lodge before our most recent trip. I was certainly keen to see what the new DVC rooms were like, but I wasn't expecting to be so impressed by them. They're a great addition to the DVC range of resorts. Disney Vacation Club members should definitely try out the Animal Kingdom Lodge Villas at some point, as they don't disappoint [Ed.- and they're a great choice for anyone interested in booking villa-style accommodations at Walt Disney World].

Now I can't wait to see how the new Kidani Village looks. Perhaps that's the time to return for another stay there. That's something I certainly wouldn't rule out in the future.

*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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