

Disney Vacation Club: Disney Raises the Timeshare Bar

by Sue Kulick, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Think you know timeshares? Think you've heard it all? Think again!

Florida and timeshares go together like salt and pepper, like hearts and flowers, like, well ... Mickey and Minnie! As Florida became a popular resort destination, more and more timeshare companies offered their wares in the land of sun and fun. Traditional timeshares let you pay for a week or two at a beautiful resort property, usually complete with kitchen, several bedrooms and all the comforts of home. You are somewhat limited in your choice of week, and many of the contracts are for a certain time period, i.e., a week.

In 1991, Walt Disney World turned the timeshare business in the Orlando area on its ear, introducing a revolutionary concept in timeshares known as "Resort Ownership". The Disney Vacation Club (DVC) was born!

The first DVC resort property was known simply as "The Disney Vacation Club". Today, it is known as Old Key West, and has an old-time, laid back, Florida theme. It is done in beautiful pastel and seaside colors, and set around the Lake Buena Vista Golf Courses. The rooms are also among the largest in the DVC family.

In 1995, DVC added Vero Beach, and in March 1996, the Hilton Head Island resort was added. These resorts are not on Walt Disney World property, but an ownership there gave owners the opportunity to stay at DVC properties at Walt Disney World! And in summer 1996, DVC opened their second Walt Disney World resort, Boardwalk Villas. This resort brought back memories of turn of the century Atlantic City. The family was growing!

In 2000, the Villas at Wilderness Lodge were opened, themed after the old lodges in the National Park Service in the 1900s. In 2002, Beach Club Villas was added with its laid back beach theme. In 2003, DVC started to sell Saratoga Springs, which invoked the richness and fun of the famous New York State race, and the first buildings opened in 2004. And this year, the Animal Kingdom Villas, with all their mystery and excitement, opened for occupancy!

So what is it about DVC that makes it so unique? Well, first of all, DVC uses a point system to secure reservations. Each room is assigned a

point value, and those values are based on the size of your accommodation, the resort, the day of the week (weekend values are higher) and the time of year (or "season" as DVC refers to them) in which you are traveling. The seasons change slightly from year to year, but you will always receive a book that will let you know the seasons.

A DVC resort differs from a regular resort room in that it has different amenities. A studio has a small kitchenette area, and access to laundry facilities. A one-bedroom has a full kitchen, a separate master bedroom that sleeps two, and split bathroom complete with Jacuzzi tub. It also contains an apartment-size washer and dryer. A two-bedroom contains what a one-bedroom does, plus a second bedroom that can sleep up to four. In a "lock-off" 2-bedroom, which is a studio connected to a one-bedroom, you will have a second bathroom and an additional kitchenette. And for true luxury, there are Grand Villas, which sleep 12, and are truly an experience!

If you like daily "Mousekeeping" (housekeeping service), DVC may not be your cup of tea. You will get "trash and towel" service (change the towels, empty the trash) on day four of your stay, and a full cleaning on day eight. But other than that, you are on your own.

And of course, there is the magic of staying on Disney property. Most other timeshares in the area make you a "day guest," where you arrive at Walt Disney World by car in the morning and leave by car each night. But the DVC resorts are on property, and accessible by boat, bus and all the other forms of Disney transportation. You can use the resort amenities, including the pool, hot tub, and workout room. At Old Key West and Saratoga Springs you can park your vehicle outside your villa, and at Animal Kingdom Villas, Villas at Wilderness Lodge, Boardwalk Villas and Beach Club Villas, you can take advantage of free valet parking, a perk available to DVC guests staying at a DVC resort on points.

You can also use your points to stay at any moderate or deluxe resort on Disney property, at Disneyland, Disneyland Paris, Tokyo Disney or Hong Kong Disney. And you can use your points to take a Disney cruise!

And if you get tired of Disney, DVC has an exchange program. You can stay at some of the top hotels in the world (Concierge Collection and World Passport Collection), take a safari or an Alaska cruise (Adventurer collection), or spend a week at over 450 destinations through an agreement with Interval International (Member Getaways).

DVC properties are an ownership, complete with a deed. They are also a contract, with an expiration date. Currently, contracts for Old Key West,

Beach Club Villas, Boardwalk Villas, Villas at Wilderness Lodge, Vero Beach, and Hilton Head expire in 2042. (Although Old Key West members are currently receiving lease extension packets that offers them the option to extend their membership to January 2057.) Saratoga Springs contracts expire in 2054, and Animal Kingdom Villas contracts expire in 2057.

Disney Vacation Club owners have grown to almost 90,000 families since their simple beginnings in 1991. If you'd like to learn more about what is being called "Disney's Best Kept Secret", stop by one of the DVC kiosks the next time you are at Walt Disney World. Or visit our active DVC Forum on the PassPorter message boards any time. We'd love to chat with you and answer any questions you may have!

[Editor's Note: Disney recently announced plans to open DVC resorts at Disneyland Resort's Grand Californian Hotel in 2009, and in Hawaii in 2011 (see [What's New and Changed](#)).]

About The Author: Sue Kulick is a resident of the Pocono Mountains and an avid Disney fan. She and her husband, Steve, live in a log home with their Golden Retrievers, Cody and Belle and their cat Tigger.

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