

Fort Wilderness: A Resort Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

I'm proud to say that there's not much of the Walt Disney World resort that I haven't seen in our many visits there. Staying for long periods of time helps to allow you to fully explore everything that it has to offer. We've made it to every resort on property now, except for Shades of Green, but it was only recently that I realized that there was one resort that I'd never actually seen in the daytime: Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground.

Fort Wilderness is located just a short boat ride away from the Magic Kingdom, but despite that, the only times we'd previously visited were for sleigh rides during the Christmas season (a wonderful experience) and to see the Hoop-Dee-Do Musical Revue, an exceptionally fun evening and definitely something everyone should try once. But that was it. We'd never visited the resort in daylight hours and I was keen to see what I was missing. As we were staying at the Contemporary on my May trip, it was easy enough to get over to Fort Wilderness.

As we pulled up to the marina at Fort Wilderness, I could immediately see how different this place was in the sunlight. For starters, I never realized how much beautiful white sand there is along Bay Lake for people to sit on and enjoy. In the darkness, you also don't spot the variety of boats available to rent from the marina, but in the daytime, that was clear as well.

As we approached the resort itself, the first thing that I spotted was something that's unique to Fort Wilderness -- golf carts. Sometimes people bring these with them or they may hire them when they get to Disney, but either way, they're a great way to get around this huge, sprawling resort. It was really fun to see some of the Disney touches that people had put on them as well. The one that caught my eye, in particular, was the amazing Minnie Mouse golf cart, and I couldn't help but think of the wonderful Christmas decorations here, where people go all out to decorate their own particular areas -- and do an amazing job of it.

There are some wonderful Disney touches everywhere you look. I loved the Lawnmower Tree, which you can find as you walk from the marina to Pioneer Hall. It's definitely worth having a look at, as it's got a lovely back story to it, which is explained on the plaque next to it.

The feeling you get as you walk around this resort is that you've stepped back in time a couple of hundred years to the days of the pioneering

west. A lot of that feeling is due to some wonderful Disney theming, with the occasional supply wagon to be seen and wooden buildings in the distance.

Some of those wooden buildings make up the heart of Fort Wilderness, including Pioneer Hall. It's the place to head to for entertainment, as it's the home of the Hoop-Dee-Do Musical Revue, which performs three times a night, and it's also the place to go for food, as it's the location of both Crockett's Tavern, which serves snacks and drinks, and Trail's End Buffet. This buffet is regarded by many as one of the best values on Disney property, serving up a good buffet at a really reasonable price.

Nearby, one of the other buildings is home to the Settlement Trading Post, which sells a wide variety of items, including basic groceries and some completely unique souvenirs that we saw only at Fort Wilderness during our stay. It's a cavernous place with a really high roof and it's worth looking up to see the theming that's gone in here.

Somewhere else well worth exploring is the Tri-Circle D Ranch and I'd just never realized that it was almost next door to Pioneer Hall, as of course you can't see it in the dark! Its home to a range of horses and you can book guided horseback rides here. It's not something I'm ever likely to try, never having been on a horse in my life before, but it was very calming to stand there watching the horses, and we attracted quite a bit of attention from them as they came over to explore whether we had any food on us. They were obviously all very friendly and pleasant animals.

All too soon, we had to head back to the Contemporary, but coming to Fort Wilderness had been a very pleasant change. It's an exceptionally relaxing resort and here, you can easily imagine you're a million miles away from the hustle and bustle of the theme parks.

If you want to stay at Fort Wilderness, there are two main options -- either the campsites or the Wilderness Cabins. It's the only pet-friendly resort on Walt Disney World property and I'm also aware from our previous sleigh rides here that some people locate down here for the winter months, usually from the colder northern states. Having experienced this place, I can fully understand why they do that.

Fort Wilderness is one of those places that you can escape from everything and I'm looking forward to escaping over there again on our next trip to try out the new Segway tour that's offered here. But that's another story for another day...

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to

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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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