

Disney's Deluxe Resorts: Making The Most of Bell Services

by Leah Rollins, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Imagine: As you arrive for your long-awaited (and much deserved) Walt Disney World vacation, a uniformed gentleman opens your car door, assists you with your luggage, offers to park your car, and answers your questions in a friendly, courteous manner. He even accompanies you to the resort front desk to help you with your room request. Then another uniformed gentleman takes you and your luggage through the winding corridors of your resort to your room, giving you insider's tips about the theme parks and interesting facts about your chosen resort. Once inside your room, he stows your luggage away with ease, and even offers to get ice for you from the hallway machine. A fantasy? No. This is Bell Service, Walt Disney World style.

I always thought valet parking and bellmen at hotels, referred to in the hospitality industry as Bell Services, were only for the rich and famous. But as I'm about to share with you, these services are available for every guest at a Walt Disney World Deluxe Resort, and they're well worth using.

Let's start with arriving for your vacation. Walt Disney World Deluxe Resorts offer valet parking services for overnight guests for a fee of \$10, which is charged to your room each night that you leave your vehicle in valet parking. Disney Vacation Club members and handicapped guests enjoy free valet parking. When you arrive at your deluxe resort to check in, a Disney Security host/hostess will direct you to the valet parking area, where you will be greeted by a Disney Bell Services valet host/hostess. He/she will ask for your name and unload your luggage from the vehicle. You will receive a claim ticket for your car and another for your luggage. The valet will give you instructions for retrieving your car during your stay -- present your claim ticket at the valet desk, or call ahead from your room to have it waiting for you -- and will direct you to the Front Desk to check in. He/she will then park your car in the secure valet parking lot. At this time, the valet will note any existing damage to your vehicle, as well as any operating problems (rear bumper dented, automatic locks don't work, etc). The valet records the parking space number and returns your car keys to the valet desk, where they are secured until needed.

As you are checking in, the valet transfers your luggage to the Bell Services bellman on duty. After the Front Desk cast member gives you your room number, he/she will ask for your luggage claim ticket and

will notify the bellman to accompany you to your room, bringing your luggage with him. He will unload your luggage and make sure that everything is in working order in your room. If there is a problem with your room upon check in, the bellman will call the Front Desk and have the situation rectified immediately. If you arrive before check-in time, Bell Services will store your luggage in a temperature-controlled storage room. They have a refrigerator for medications, and for groceries you picked up on your way. They even have a locked area to store valuables (jewelry boxes, laptop computers, etc.). When you receive your room number, you may call Bell Services from your room phone - there's a button on the phone that dials directly to the Bell Stand - and a bellman will deliver your luggage promptly. Note, however, that the bellman is not allowed to leave luggage in your room unless someone in your party is present to accept it.

Check-out works in a similar fashion. When you are ready to depart your room, use the button on your phone to dial the bell stand. A bellman will be dispatched to your room, where he'll load your luggage and bring it down to the luggage storage room. If you're departing later in the day, he will store your bags until it's time to go. If you're ready to leave right away, a valet will retrieve your car from the parking lot and have it waiting for you. The bellman will load your luggage into your car, help you with directions, and you're on your way. That's it! Disney knows it's hard enough to leave, so they made their part as easy as possible.

Now let me offer some "tips" on tipping. Walt Disney World valets and bellmen do not receive any part of the valet parking charge collected by the resort. Because of their status as tipped cast members, they receive a reduced hourly wage, the same as servers in restaurants. Therefore they rely heavily on guest tips to pay the bills. I always advise guests to tip according to what the valet or bellman service is worth to them; rule of thumb is \$3 for parking a vehicle, and \$1 per piece of luggage handled. For example, if I have my car valet parked, and the valet unloads 5 pieces of luggage from my car, I will tip her \$8. Then when the bellman delivers the luggage to my room, I will tip him \$5-7, depending on the distance from the front desk to my room. Please keep in mind that tipping is never required, but it is greatly appreciated, especially if the Bell Services cast member has gone out of their way to accommodate your needs.

Other neat things about Walt Disney World Bell Services:

* Need something from your car? A Bell Services valet can get it for you, or take you to your vehicle on a golf cart. * Need help with those

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groceries? A Bell Services valet will be glad to unload your groceries and have a bellman deliver them to your room. Note that due to insurance regulations, guests are never allowed to use luggage carts unassisted.

* Need Bell Services valet or luggage assistance at 2:00 am? There is a Bell Services cast member on duty 24 hours a day, so your car is never out of reach, and there is never an arrival or departure time when you cannot avail yourself of Bell Services. If your departure time is before 5:30 a.m., you will want to coordinate luggage service by calling the bell stand the evening before.

* Need directions? Bell Services valet desk cast members can get you from here to there and back with no problem. They'll even highlight your route on a complimentary map.

* Need a taxi? Yellow Cab usually has cabs waiting at every resort. If one is not available, the Bell Services valet desk cast member can have one there within 5 minutes.

* Going golfing at a Disney course? Bell Services can store your golf clubs in their luggage storage room -- they have a special area just for golf bags! The Bell Services valet desk will coordinate your taxi ride to the course and give you a voucher for the fare. The pro shop will provide a return voucher.

* Need some park or resort information, or just want to chat with a cast member for a while? Bell Services cast members are some of the friendliest on property, and they are a wealth of information. Many of them have worked at Walt Disney World for over 10 years, and they often "play tourist," bringing their families to the parks on their days off. When the Front Desk appears too busy, head to the Bell Stand. Chances are you can get the answers you need right there!! I hope you've learned something new about Walt Disney World Bell Services. Disney knows how to make every part of your vacation easy and enjoyable, so I encourage you to try something new the next time you stay at a deluxe resort -- live the life of the rich and famous and let someone else take care of the car and luggage. After all, this is vacation!

About The Author: Leah Rollins loves all things Disney, and has worked for the Walt Disney Company in some capacity since 1993. She loves to plan Walt Disney World vacations for guests, and is especially excited about planning her next family vacation to Walt Disney World in September. Leah currently lives near Savannah, Georgia, is married and has a two-year-old son who can sing "It's A Small World" in its entirety.

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