

Disney's Old Key West Resort: The Original Disney Vacation Club

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

I'm a Beach Club girl through and through. Let's just get that little fact out of the way first. Wherever we stay in Disney, no other resort will ever better my beloved Beach Club Resort. Having said that, we don't spend our entire life at Disney in the Beach Club. (Much as I'd love to.) Firstly, I believe that variety is the spice of life and let's be honest, how do you know if one resort is the best and perfect for you if you don't try the others out? Secondly -- and, let's be honest, more importantly -- sometimes your first choice of resort isn't always available. That's exactly what happened to us as we planned for our fall vacation last year. So faced with the news that we couldn't get into the Beach Club Villas for the last five nights of our stay, what were we going to do? The Disney Vacation Club was able to offer us Saratoga Springs or Old Key West. It didn't take long for me to decide on Disney's Old Key West Resort.

Why Old Key West? Not only would Old Key West cost us fewer Disney Vacation Club points, it would be new to us and I had been hearing good things about the resort for some time from those who'd already stayed there. So choice made, what did we make of the place?

The first thing you notice when you arrive here is that the resort is well hidden away. You can't really see it as you drive along and the only way you'll get a glimpse of it, without actually entering the resort, is by renting a boat from Downtown Disney. As soon as you get into the grounds, you notice how spread out everything is and it quickly becomes clear why that is the Lake Buena Vista golf course sprawls its way throughout the resort. Holes three to eight see golfers make their way around Old Key West and if you're lucky, you may even get a room overlooking the course.

Set against the golf course and Trumbo Canal that cuts through Old Key West Resort are a total of 64 buildings, all in beautiful pastel colors. As with all Disney's resorts, there are superb photo opportunities all around this resort. The buildings make for some great shots, as does the Hospitality House area. This is where you'll find check-in and the resort's dining options. While they're not as plentiful as at some other DVC resorts, you can still enjoy a great meal at the resort's table service restaurant, Olivia's Cafe, get hamburgers or ice cream at Good's to Go or get some drinks at the Gurgling Suitcase. Many people choose to eat in their rooms, especially as every room, except for the studios, comes

with fully-equipped kitchens. It's no surprise then that the Conch Flats General Store has a great range of items, including food, drink, Disney souvenirs and Disney Vacation Club and Old Key West merchandise.

Walk a little further and you'll find the recreation area, including Hank's Rent-n-Return. This is the place to either rent a boat (a great way to spend a couple of hours) or if you're feeling more energetic, you can rent bicycles here and set off on two wheels to explore the resort. Nearby you'll find a children's playground, tennis, basketball and volleyball courts and there's also a jogging trail that runs all around the resort.

If the weather doesn't inspire you to do any of those things, then there's also the Electric Game room or you can rent DVDs and games from Conch Flats Community Hall. The Hall is also home to various activities for youngsters -- it's worth checking it out to see what's going on while you're there.

The main swimming pool in the recreation area has recently undergone some major improvements, including the addition of a new slide. If the main pool is busy, there are three other quiet pools scattered around the resort, meaning you should never be too far from one.

As this is a sprawling resort, if you don't have a car, you may need to catch one of the many buses to get around Old Key West. As rental car drivers though, one of the things we most enjoyed here was being able to park right by the building we were staying in. Trust me; it's a big bonus when you come back from a long day at the parks. Instead of having to park and then walk for what seems like miles back to your room, you can pull up just outside.

And the rooms at Old Key West are perhaps the biggest draw. If you want space, this is the place to head for. This was the first Disney Vacation Club resort to open on Walt Disney World property, and rooms were built a lot bigger in those days. We were really impressed with the extra space we had in our studio, especially with the amount of luggage we were carrying with us! The pastel continues inside the rooms and we found that very relaxing.

But let's not forget, Old Key West is designed to be relaxing. That's the beauty of the place. It's laid back and has a wonderful community feel to it. We really felt as if we were part of a big family during our stay here and that's not something we've encountered to that degree at any other Disney resort.

So if you're looking for somewhere that will offer a complete break after

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a long day at the parks, then it's worth considering Old Key West. Although my heart remains firmly with the Beach Club, I can now say that Old Key West is an excellent alternative if our number one choice isn't available!

Disney's Old Key West Quick Facts

Address: 1510 North Cove Road, Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

Phone: 407-827-7700 / Fax: 407-827-7710

Rates: 2009 rates start at \$295 for a studio villa, \$390 for a one-bedroom villa, \$545 for a two-bedroom villa, and \$1205 for a grand villa

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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