

Saratoga Springs Resort: A Slice of American Culture

by Sue Kulick, PassPorter Featured Columnist

When you think of Saratoga Springs, you may think of a quiet sleepy town in upstate New York, nestled between beautiful mountains and lush meadows. You think of the mineral springs that made Saratoga Springs famous. If you are a history buff, you may even know that the Battle of Saratoga is considered a pivotal turning point in the War for Independence! And, of course, you think of how the town comes alive every August with the elegance of horse racing!

Disney Vacation Club (DVC) has recaptured this amazing slice of American culture right in Orlando. Of course, there are no mountains, no race track, and no battles, but there are plenty of touches of that famous New York town!

When you first arrive at Saratoga Springs Resort (SSR), you are greeted at the Carriage House check in, which is representative of classic Victorian architecture. The lobby soars above you in beautiful muted pastels surrounding an intricate carousel horse centerpiece. The check in process for us has been quick and easy each time we have stayed there.

The theme continues as you make your way toward your Saratoga Springs Resort room. You will pass statues of horses, beautiful fountains, and places like "Horsing Around Rentals" and the "Win, Place and Show" arcade.

Saratoga Springs is divided into five sections. The Grandstand is the newest, and close to the Carriage House and amenities. It has a quiet pool, and overlooks the golf course. Congress Park is closest to the resort entrance. The Paddock (our personal favorite), flanks Saratoga Lake and also has a quiet pool. The view from your balcony is magnificent! Congress Park overlooks Village Lake and has views of Downtown Disney. It also has a quiet pool. And the Springs are closest to the Carriage House and the main themed pool. You can drive to your villa and park right outside. If you don't have a vehicle, bell services will be happy to assist you.

One complaint that some guests had is that the doors to all villas are outside, only accessed from exterior walkways. We did not find this to be a problem at all, but others felt it gave the resort a "cold" feeling. However, when you enter your villa that feeling will instantly evaporate, thanks to the beautiful decor. Decorated in more pastels, you get a

sense of richness as soon as you enter. Your accommodations include a flat-screen TV, DVD player, laptop-sized safe, and starting this year, free Internet. A studio unit has a small refrigerator, microwave, sink, and coffeemaker, while the 1 and two-bedroom villas have a full kitchen, whirlpool tub, and a washer and dryer. If you are lucky, you may find a horse-shaped towel animal when you arrive!

Once you have settled in, it's time to go exploring! If you are hungry, Saratoga Springs Resort offers several options. The Turf Club offers full service dining as well as cocktails. For a quick bite, The Artist's Palette serves meals cafeteria-style, as well as a variety of snacks and bakery/breakfast items. This is where you would purchase your refillable mug. If you are thirsty, in addition to the above options, there are two pool bars, "The Rocks" and "The Backstretch." You can rent surrey bikes, play tennis or shuffleboard, and of course, play golf at the Lake Buena Vista Golf Course. Sadly, Disney did away with the horse-drawn carriage rides around the resort.

If you'd rather relax than play, head for the Saratoga Springs Spa. While you might not be able to "take the waters" like in days of old, you can work out, get a manicure, or go for a full line of spa treatments from a facial to a massage. If you are more of an outside type, Saratoga Springs Resort offers a nice jogging/walking path. And if you would like to swim, might I suggest the High Rock Springs pool? I am not a water slide person, but my husband is, and he spent a good part of our swim time heading down the rock slide. He said it was a really great slide! I relaxed with a Blue Mai Tai from the pool bar, and then we both went in the hot tub. We also tried the quiet pool and the hot tub near the Paddock, and both were very nice.

And if you are ready to party, it is just a short walk or ferry ride to Downtown Disney. If you head out behind the Paddock and Congress Park, you will find the footpath to Downtown Disney. It's a short and relaxing walk to Disney's answer to fun and nightlife. We took this walk back from Downtown Disney, and it was a beautiful late night stroll. The Disney Vacation Club ferry also runs between Old Key West, Saratoga Springs Resort and Downtown Disney. You can board right behind the Carriage House for a relaxing trip. The ferries run about every 20 minutes or so up until 11 PM. The Downtown Disney ferry drops you off at the boat dock near Captain Jack's, and the Old Key West ferry drops you off at the Hospitality House (the main building at Old Key West).

Our only complaint about Saratoga Springs Resort is that we feel the signs are a bit confusing. The resort is large and spread out (Disney Vacation Club's largest resort yet!) and the signage could be a little more concise. After Day Two, we were comfortable enough getting

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around, but before that, more than once we ended up in a loop around the golf course entrance.

Bus service has not been a problem. The bus makes several internal stops, as is normal with a resort of this size, and then heads straight out to your destination. The bus stops are well laid out, and just a short walk from most villas.

I love staying at Saratoga Springs Resort. It brings back memories of a peaceful easier time, and gives you that relaxed feeling as soon as you walk in. I am very happy that we took the plunge and added points at this resort!

Disney's Saratoga Springs Resort Quick Facts

Address: 1960 Broadway, Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

Phone: 407-827-11000 / Fax: 407-827-1151

Rates: 2009 room rates begin 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: 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.

Article last updated: 01/19/2009

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