

Disney's Hilton Head Island Resort: A Resort Review

by Sue Kulick, *PassPorter Featured Columnist*

Shhhh . . . this may be Disney's best kept secret yet!

Did you know that Disney Vacation Club (DVC) has a resort on Hilton Head Island? It was one of the flagship properties in the DVC family of resorts, opened in 1996. It is available to DVC members using points, but there are also rooms available for non-DVC guests as well!

Disney's Hilton Head Island is themed in the style of the hunting and fishing lodges of the 1940s. The decor is rustic with a bit of ocean theme thrown in. You know right away by the attention to detail that you are on Disney property.

When you arrive, you immediately notice the Disney touches, from the Bambi and Thumper topiary to the Mickey flags flying. You enter Live Oak Lodge to check in, a beautifully structured building which also holds some of the resort's recreation areas. The resort is spread out over 15 acres, and each building cluster has several villas in it. Parking is usually adequate, although it can get a bit tight in the main lodge area.

After a painless and seamless check in, you will be directed to your room. As at other DVC properties, rooms are generally ready at 4:00 pm, but if they are available earlier, you will be allowed room access. The room types available are studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom villas that will sleep up to 12 guests. There are only a few three-bedroom units, and they are hard to get. One-bedroom villas tend to go quickly, also. All the rooms have all the amenities available in other DVC resorts - kitchenette in the studios/full kitchen and washer/dryer in the one-, two- and three-bedrooms; coffee makers, microwaves, flat screen TVs, DVD players, and pull out sofas.

After check in, you might want to spend some time checking out the resort. Just walking around the resort is an adventure, as the landscaping and theme carries throughout. The resort is built on a marsh, and you can go crabbing right from the dock. There is a pool as well as a children's play area, and there is a hot tub. There's a workout room and a community center, where organized activities take place every day. You can rent bikes or fishing poles and try your luck!

One downfall of the resort is that there is not a full-service restaurant on the property. You can get breakfast and lunch at the Tide Me Over Cafe, but it's mostly sandwiches and burger-type food. However, there

are two things that make this okay to deal with. First of all, the nearby Shelter Cove area has some wonderful restaurants, several within walking distance. And second of all, these are villas, so you have a kitchen if you choose to cook in. There is also a decent amount of outdoor barbecue grills for your use. Not too far from the resort you will find a Publix supermarket as well as a Wal-Mart if you choose to shop and eat in!

One thing that is a little different and takes a bit of getting used to is that the resort is not on the beach. However, Disney does have beach access available to its guests. How, you might ask? Well, about a mile away from the resort itself is the Disney Beach House, a private facility available only to Disney guests. You can take the shuttle bus over (it runs about every 20 minutes), you can drive, you can bike, or if you are in good shape, you can walk it! You need your key card to gain entry. Once inside, there is another pool, smaller than the one at the main resort but still nice. There is a snack bar, an adult bar, and access to the beach. The beach is owned and governed by the town of Hilton Head, so make sure you read the rules first. It is a wild and beautiful piece of land, right on the Atlantic Ocean. There are beach chairs available, and a whole schedule of activities. At night there are campfires, and on Thursdays in season, they have a shrimp boil!

When you check in, you will get a listing of the resorts activities. You can choose to do them all... or choose to just relax and do nothing! Some are free, some have a nominal charge, and some are expensive. Most require pre-registration, so it's important to decide what you want to do. As with all DVC resorts, cash guests get daily housekeeping whereas guests using DVC points get normal trash and towel service on day four and a full cleaning on day eight. There is a small mercantile store that carries the basics, as well as some DVC- and Hilton Head Island-themed merchandise. The weather is beautiful in the spring and autumn, hot in the summer, and too cold to swim in the winter months. Bring your casual clothes - there is nothing fancy about this resort.

Take time to spend some time at Disney's Hilton head Resort. You'll be glad you did!

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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