

## Bay Lake Tower at Disney's Contemporary Resort: A Resort Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

The newest of Disney's resort facilities is a striking building rising above the stretch of water that it takes its name from. Linked to the Contemporary Resort's original A-frame tower by an elevated walkway, Bay Lake Tower is the latest addition to the rapidly growing portfolio of the Disney Vacation Club (DVC). Like all the other DVC resorts, although its clientele is primarily members, rooms are available to anyone on a cash basis.

Since its opening in August 2009, DVC members have certainly been falling in love with the place, with overwhelmingly favorable reviews and, after our stay there, I can see why. Its location, to the north of the Contemporary's main building, puts it even closer to the Magic Kingdom. I really enjoyed the short walk over to the park, so much so that we didn't even bother with the monorail on the way back.

Sadly, when you check in, that location doesn't work as well. You have to go to the main building to check-in, and that's where the Disney Magical Express buses drop you off. Once you're all checked in, you take the elevator to the fourth floor, where you walk past the various shops and outside on the deck beyond. Here, you'll find the walkway to Bay Lake Tower, but you'll need a room key to access it, so anyone curious for a look around this resort will have trouble doing so. If this sounds like it's a lot of work when you first arrive, it is. It's one of the few failings of the resort and it would be nice to have a check-in located at Bay Lake Tower itself.

The walkway brings you by a set of elevators and intriguingly, you're suddenly on the fifth floor of Bay Lake Tower, having left the fourth floor of the Contemporary. Be warned, if you want to visit the Top of the World lounge -- and more on that later -- you'll need to use the other set of elevators located to the left of the main lobby. Access to the lounge is also only from the ground floor.

We were lucky enough, despite having reserved a Bay Lake view room to get one that also overlooked the Magic Kingdom, although admittedly it wasn't a central view. Having seen the model rooms at DVC's sales center at Saratoga Springs Resort, we knew that the studios here were some of the smallest on offer by the DVC, but we were pleasantly surprised by how much space we had. Admittedly, there were only the two of us and I wouldn't like to cram four people in here, but it was fine for our needs.

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We also found the decor to be less garish than we were expecting. The bright colors worked together more than I expected. I also found no problem whatsoever with the innovative idea of putting the "bathroom" sink and vanity countertop in the kitchenette area (the vanity occupies one wall, and the kitchenette the opposite wall) and actually quite liked this approach. The area still had more than enough room in it.

Although getting to the Top of the World Lounge can be tricky -- and the night we went, we had a Cast Member scrutinize the room keys of every single person who boarded the elevator -- the lounge is well worth a visit. Of course, it's most popular around the time of Wishes fireworks each night, just like the California Grill in the main building. The view from here is spectacular and well worth seeing, especially if you're not lucky enough to have a room with a prized view of the Magic Kingdom.

They have a full service bar up there and there is very much an adult feel to the place. When we were there, we were impressed by the quiet, yet upscale, atmosphere. It's a very nice to head for to enjoy a drink or a bite to eat. We sampled some of the flat breads on offer up there and they were excellent, although they were much bigger than we'd expected. If you're thinking, like we were, that you'll just get a snack there, think again. The flat breads were exceptionally filling and, hungry as we were, we struggled to finish them.

The other area I was looking forward to seeing was Bay Cove pool. I'd been lucky enough to catch glimpses of this, as we took the boat over to the Wilderness Lodge in May and it looks like an intriguing design. It certainly is, and just like the rooms, it's got some bright and bold colors, but again they work together. It makes for one of the most creative and unusual water slides ever seen on Disney property. As you'd expect from the new pools at Disney, this one is zero-entry and there's a separate interactive water-play area for youngsters, who also have their own shallow pool. For the adults, there's a hot tub and we were lucky enough to watch a stunning sunrise from there during our stay.

Also outside in the recreation area are two shuffleboard courts and table tennis and, of course, like all DVC resorts, there's Community Hall, where you can head for a variety of activities. While we were staying there, these included bead art, build-a-button, pin trading, and the chance to try your hand at Toy Story Mania on the Wii, before you hit the attraction of the same name in Disney's Hollywood Studios.

All the resort's other facilities - shops, restaurants, front desk (as already noted), spa, pools, marina and watersports - are located in or near the main Contemporary Resort tower.

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Overall, we were more impressed with Bay Lake Tower than we expected to be. We thought the rooms would be a little too small for us, but they weren't. We loved the pool area and Top of the World Lounge, as well as the easy access to the Magic Kingdom. If only Disney would introduce check-in downstairs at Bay Lake Tower, then our stay would have been perfect from start to finish. If you're a Disney Vacation Club owner -- or even if you're not -- it's worth your while to give Bay Lake Tower a try. I doubt you'll be disappointed by it.

*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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