

Disney's Vero Beach Resort: Escape to the Shore

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Think of Disney and everyone thinks of theme parks. Understandably so, but the company's reach extends far beyond the parks. To date, there are two resorts with the distinctive Disney touch that are not connected with a Disney theme park, with a third due to be added to the family in 2011 in Hawaii.

Both existing resorts are Disney Vacation Club properties, with one located at Hilton Head Island in South Carolina and the other at Vero Beach on Florida's eastern coast. As DVC members, we stayed at Vero Beach on our points, but it's open for anyone to stay there, with non-members able to book cash stays.

It's a pleasant enough, if mainly dull, journey from Walt Disney World over to Vero Beach that takes about two and a half hours. This stay was our second time at Vero Beach, but despite that, this resort still manages to creep up unexpectedly on you. Suddenly, before you know it, you're at a set of traffic lights and a Mickey topiary catches the corner of your eye. Yes, this is the place to turn and the resort is just a few feet along on the left hand side of the road.

Vero Beach is made up of one main building that contains the inn rooms, which make up most of the resort. That's where we've stayed on both our visits. Surrounding it are six three-bedroom beach cottages along the shoreline with a selection of studios, and one- and two-bedroom villas located in three villa buildings.

As soon as we got to our inn room, we immediately noticed major differences from the last time we were here five years earlier. The entire thing has been refurbished with new bedspreads and drapes, giving the rooms a very different feel. The irony is that we loved the way the rooms were on our last visit and there was certainly nothing wrong with them. They didn't need refurbishing, but it was really nice to see that Disney had given them a new look. Here you can either select an ocean view or a garden view and we always opt for the ocean view. There's something very special about stepping out on to your own balcony and hearing the waves rolling into the shore beneath you.

That goes for the weather generally here. Although our previous visit had also been in December, this time was much kinder to us. Instead of being wrapped up in our winter woollies, freezing in the wind coming off the sea, we were able to stroll through the resort in light clothes as

the sun set, enjoying the early evening heat. As we headed down to the beach, immediately we saw a huge difference to 2004.

Then, ravaged by a series of hurricane that hit the area in short succession, Vero Beach was showing its battle wounds. We had seen photos hanging on the walls of the main resort of the walkway down to the beach and had gasped at them, realizing that almost nothing remained of it, although Disney had put temporary measures in place to ensure that you could still access the beach. Today everything is repaired and put back almost the same as it was before that storm. Looking out, it was impossible to believe the devastation we had previously witnessed here.

I don't know about you, but I personally love the feeling of having to use your room key to access a beach, as you do here. It makes me feel really special, as if the beach belongs to you as a resort guest. That makes walking along the beach all the more romantic and the peace and quiet was lovely.

When we first arrived, we did wonder if we were the only people booked in for the night and, although we did see other guests around, we had that feeling for much of the time we were here. So, apart from wandering along the beach, what else is there to do here? The resort pool complex is one option open to you, complete with a children's water play area, all based around a pirate ship, which was new to us since our last visit. There's also a water slide here, as you'd expect these days from a Disney resort, but unusually, you can also enjoy a miniature golf course right next door to the pool, cleverly hidden from view of those swimming.

Eb and Flo Rentals is the place to head to if you want to use the tennis courts here, rent watercraft or bicycles, borrow board and card games, or grab a DVD to watch back in your room, as they come with DVD players. There's an arcade nearby and a fitness center with state of the art equipment. Need to relax a bit more? You can also enjoy a massage in a complex located just off the main lobby.

Also located just off the lobby is the Island Grove Packing Company general store, where you'll find merchandise for the resort and the DVC, along with general Disney items and the range of food and drink that you'd expect from any DVC resort. We were easily able to find enough choices for our breakfast and could have picked from a selection of wines, if we had wanted.

The eating options here are more limited than our first visit. We were informed by our waitress at Shutters, now the main casual restaurant

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here, that their other restaurant, Sonya's, is now only open from Thursdays to Sundays. A great shame, as it's a nice, upscale place that used to offer a superb seafood buffet. Another choice is the Green Cabin Lounge on the first floor of the main building. It's more about drinks, as you'd expect from a lounge, but it does offer a limited selection of food and is a good place to hang out to watch the sun set.

All in all, we found Disney's Vero Beach resort to be a great place to just escape and relax. Having seen it when the weather wasn't so kind to us, it's definitely more of a fair weather resort than the DVC resorts at Walt Disney World. But it's a beautiful place to unwind and definitely somewhere that every Disney fan should try to escape to at least once.

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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