

Choosing a Disney Resort: 8 Things To Consider

by Jennifer and Dave Marx, Authors of [PassPorter Travel Guidebooks](#)

Ah, this is the fun part -- deciding which of the resort hotels at Walt Disney World is best for you. It reminds us of picking one dessert from a tray laden with every imaginable, mouth-watering goodie. Some are a bit too "rich" for us, and others not quite "sweet" enough, but there are enough choices left over to make us feel quite spoiled. Sometimes we can't resist, and stay at two or more resorts in a single visit. Are you surprised?

The *PassPorter's Walt Disney World* guidebook offers a detailed comparison chart, listing every Disney-owned resort and their amenities. We'll take a slightly different tack here, and address the general factors that go into making your choice.

The *PassPorter* guidebook focuses its attention on the "on property" resorts at Walt Disney World. These resorts are truly part of "The World," and offer an immersion in the Disney experience that off-property resorts can't hope to capture. That's not to say that excellent accommodations and values can't be had if you're willing to stay off property. It's just not our focus.

There are twenty "on property" resorts at Walt Disney World. Nineteen are open to the general public and one (Shades of Green) is leased by the U.S. military for the benefit of armed services personnel. Of the rest, seventeen are operated directly by Walt Disney World, and two (Dolphin and Swan) are operated by other lodging companies. All twenty benefit from Walt Disney World's internal transportation system, as well as their proximity to Disney's theme parks and the amenities at the other on property resorts.

Resort Categories

Walt Disney World groups their accommodations into four categories: Deluxe, Moderate, Value, and Deluxe Villa (formerly "Disney Vacation Club" or "Home Away From Home"). Within each grouping Disney tries (and succeeds) to offer a variety of experiences, to suit the varied tastes of the public. Walt Disney World offers everything from Chief Executive-level villas to RV pads, and everything in between.

Deluxe Villa resorts is an odd category. It groups together those resorts that offer mostly villa or suite accommodations. These facilities work well for families and friends who need room for larger groups and want to

cook at least some of their meals in their rooms. Some are quite deluxe, while others are comfortably middle-class. Fort Wilderness offers a wide variety of facilities, from tent and trailer sites to "cabins" for six which are actually well-disguised "manufactured housing."

Some factors to consider beyond price include "theming," proximity to specific theme parks, in-resort dining options, health club and recreational facilities, and on-site childrens programs.

Theming

"Theming" is purely a matter of style. Do you want to stay in a grand hotel from the turn of the last century? How about an island resort, a Southern plantation, or a majestic mountain lodge? At times it's hard to tell if you're staying in a hotel or a theme park, and we wouldn't have it any other way. Since you're here to enjoy Disney magic, go wild, and see if you can make a fantasy come true.

Proximity

The Deluxe resorts enjoy the best proximity to the major parks. From a Deluxe resort you can board either a boat or monorail to the nearby park(s). In some cases you can even walk. With the exception of the Fort Wilderness Campground and Resort, which also offers boat transportation to the Magic Kingdom, the remaining resorts require a bus or car ride to get to the parks.

Dining

In-resort dining may not be a factor for you, as you can dine at every park and can take easy advantage of the restaurants at other resorts. If you expect to spend a lot of time relaxing at your resort, though, this may be a significant factor. As you may imagine, in-resort dining is most extensive at the Deluxe resorts. The Deluxe resorts all offer a choice of full service sit-down restaurants, along with less formal fare and room service. Most of the Moderate resorts offer a choice between one full service restaurant, a reasonably-priced food court and either room service or pizza delivery (the exception is Port Orleans French Quarter, which does not have a full service restaurant). The Value resorts only offer a food court and pizza delivery. The dining options at the Deluxe Villas resorts are varied, as each addresses a very different clientele.

Recreation

Health club and recreational facilities vary widely between resorts. Some Deluxe resorts have world-class health spas and extensive health club facilities. Although any Disney guest can take advantage of "the World's" golf courses, you may prefer to be adjacent to the 18th fairway. Many Deluxe and several other resorts are graced by tennis courts, and

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the majority of resorts have some sort of marina with a variety of water craft available. Every resort has at least one pool, and some have pool complexes reminiscent of a water park. If a soak in a hot tub spa is high on your list of "must" factors, be sure your resort has one. Most do, but there are exceptions.

Childcare

Finally, most of the Deluxe resorts offer an (added-cost) evening child care program, which makes it simple for Mom and Dad to take a well-earned evening off at Pleasure Island or Epcot's World Showcase. Guests at other Disney resorts can generally also take advantage of the facilities, but you still have to go out of your way to drop the kids off and pick them up again. (Yes, you do have to take them home with you.)

Classifications

The Deluxe resorts are: Animal Kingdom Lodge, Beach Club, BoardWalk Inn, Contemporary, Dolphin (managed by Sheraton), Grand Floridian, Polynesian, Swan, and Yacht Club. Moderates are: Caribbean Beach, Coronado Springs, Port Orleans Riverside, and Port Orleans French Quarter. Value resorts are: All-Star Movies, All-Star Music, All-Star Sports, and Pop Century. The Deluxe Villas resorts are: Animal Kingdom Lodge Villas, Beach Club Villas, BoardWalk Villas, Saratoga Springs, Fort Wilderness, Old Key West, and Wilderness Lodge Villas.

Special Needs

A final factor in your choice may be discounts or special needs. Although all resorts accommodate the differently-abled, some resorts have a fairly limited number of wheelchair-accessible rooms. This site gives a good rundown of what to expect. When it comes to saving money, if you hold an Annual Pass, or take advantage of other discount programs, you can make a decision based on what deals are offered. You may have to schedule your vacation based upon availability, but you may also get the opportunity to sample one of the pricier resorts without a major stretch of your budget. This is a great way to make dreams come true!

About The Authors: [Jennifer and Dave Marx](#) are the founders of PassPorter Travel Press/MediaMarx, Inc. and the authors of dozens of bestselling books. They live in Ann Arbor, Michigan and frequently travel within the U.S. and abroad.

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