

## Choosing A Disney Resort: On-Property Lodging

by Justine Fellows, PassPorter Guest Contributor, E-Book Author, and Host of Travel Girl podcasts

So you're thinking about staying onsite at Walt Disney World? On campus life has it perks: Disney's Magical Express transportation from the airport including luggage service, Extra Magic Hours, the dining plan option, Disney transportation, and a few other benefits. There are two topics we are going to discuss - categories and location.

There are three main resort categories: Value, Moderate and Deluxe. Easy enough, except Disney has to throw in some exceptions to the rule just to keep us overwhelmed with information. Let's start with the exceptions. Two big ones - The Swan and Dolphin Resorts - which are not official Disney hotels but are on Disney property. They are owned by Starwood Hotels and offer a great location, not much Disney theming but great restaurants and usually much cheaper rates. You can also get most Disney benefits except for the most notable one, no Magic Express transportation from the airport.

Then we have Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort and Campground which offers both camping and trailer spaces as well as cabins, ideal for larger families. If you are up for roughing it with a tent or have an RV, Fort Wilderness is a great money saver. They also have cabins that are convenient for large families, but are not cheap.

Lastly we have the Disney Vacation Club Villas. Non-DVC members can rent these studio, one- and two-bedroom villas. They are priced high though they do offer the convenience of kitchen areas. If you can find a friend who will rent you their DVC points you can save a ton of money.

Now back to the basics: Value, Moderate and Deluxe. If you are on a budget but are set on staying at Disney, Value hotels are your answer. The theming and service is still Disney but the frills are cut out. My choice for Value is Pop Century, which is the newest in this category. Be prepared for smaller rooms, though the food courts and pools are convenient and ideal. Stepping up a notch to the Moderate level brings you to a choice between the Caribbean Beach, Port Orleans, and Coronado Springs resorts. A bit more spread out with lush, more extensive grounds, the Moderate level resorts tend to have more intricate theming, making you feel as if you are in another land. Escaping to New Orleans at Port Orleans French Quarter is my top Moderate choice. The size and intimacy of this resort as well as the fantastic pool slide and convenient boat to Downtown Disney are

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fantastic.

Now to the dream category: Deluxe.

I call it the dream category because most of us are dreaming about it. These babies are expensive, but if you have the money, go for it! Extensive theming, better restaurant choices, high quality stores, intricate pools, and convenient transportation sets Deluxe resorts apart from the rest.

Which brings us to the next topic; location. There are four main locations for hotels at Walt Disney World: the Magic Kingdom area, the Animal Kingdom area, the Epcot area, and the Downtown Disney area. If you are looking for a resort on the monorail line you only have three options, all Deluxe -- Disney's Contemporary, Grand Floridian, and Polynesian resorts. All three are also in the Magic Kingdom area. So when looking for hotels, start by thinking about category, next look at location. Do you want the convenience of the monorail or do you like the idea of a boat ride to Downtown Disney? Do you want to walk into the back entrance at Epcot or escape to the serenity of Animal Kingdom? More dollars shelled out equals more convenience, theming, bells and whistles.

What truly matters though is family time and fun no matter where you stay- you really don't spend too much time in the hotel room anyway! So take Travel Girl's advice. Stick to your budget. Less stress about money equals less stress on vacation!

*About The Author:* Justine, the author of [PassPorter's Disney Speed Planner: The Easy Ten-Step Program](#), works in education in Connecticut. She is also the host of [Travel Girl's\(TM\) Tips for Disney World](#) podcasts.

Article last updated: 01/22/2009

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