

## The Villas at Disney's Grand Californian: Disney Vacation Club Review

by Jane Price, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Relatively new to the ever-expanding Disney Vacation Club are the vacation villas at the Grand Californian at Disneyland Resort. We are also relative newcomers to the Disney Vacation Club, having purchased Bay Lake Towers in September 2009.

We reserved a one bedroom villa at the Grand Californian which sleeps five people, for July 18-20, 2010. In retrospect, I wish we also stayed the 17th, so we could have attended the 55th anniversary of the opening of Disneyland. Nothing was done on Sunday, the 18th. Oh well.

You must check in at the Grand Californian reception desk, as online check in is not offered here as it is in Walt Disney World. The hotel is the flagship of the Disneyland Resort, so every detail here is stunning, from the soaring lobby with fireplace, to the inlaid stone floors that match the carpet design. This attention to detail carried over to the vacation villas as well.

The hotel is arranged in a squared-off circle surrounding the central theme pool, and is bordered by Disney's California Adventure park on two sides. The vacation villas are located on the southern part of the circle, with southern exposure rooms overlooking Paradise Pier. Our room was in the extreme southeast part on the second floor, directly across from the Golden Zephyr ride and Mickey's Fun Wheel. Now this is a real theme park view! Not like the so-called view we got at Bay Lake Towers a month before at a cost of extra points. The sun reflecting on the silver zephyr jets as the moved created a disco ball effect inside our villa. An added big bonus, we had a very good view of the new World of Color show every night. Currently, World of Color is running three times a night, so we were able to catch one or two shows every evening.

The room decor echoes that of the rest of the hotel, early 20th century Arts and Crafts. The kitchen had granite countertops and a HUGE table, room for more than five. We had difficulty finding the extra bed. At Bay Lake Tower, the living room easy chair converts, but it was obviously not the case here. When the bellman delivered our luggage, I asked him where the bed was, but he didn't know, either. Later on, when trying to find the remote for the flat screen tv in the living room, I discovered a fold out bed in the large cabinet below the TV. This bed was large enough for a child 12 or under, but an adult over 5-foot tall would be pretty cramped.

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There were two full bathrooms, which came in handy with a 14-year-old girl in tow. As with other DVC villas, there was a jetted tub and separate shower in the master bathroom. One big difference between here and the Florida villas is the lack of linens. In Florida, we always get two towels for every person, here it was only one. There was only one blanket for two beds, and only five pillows, total.

Being part of the hotel, we were able to enjoy the pool area of the Grand Californian. The area takes up pretty much the whole center of the hotel's circle, with three pools and spas interspersed among the grass and trees. Inviting padded lounges are everywhere. The theme here reflects the mountainous northern part of the state, with lots of trees.

Again, a difference between the property here and the Florida vacation clubs; there is no playground area I could see and no community/activity room. The activity room was sorely missed since our children enjoyed doing crafts and playing games at Bay Lake Tower. However, we could take advantage of the hotel's exclusive entrance to California Adventure, Downtown Disney was right outside our hotel, and it was a short five-minute walk to the Disneyland turnstiles.

We plan to return to the Villas in California next February, as they are really convenient, comfortable, and lovely. We hope we will get another truly theme park view.

*About The Author: Jane lives in southeast Arizona with her husband, three granddaughters, and the family parrots. She is an Annual Passholder for Disneyland as well as a Disney Vacation Club member.*

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