

Mini-Golf at Walt Disney World: More Ways to Play

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

If, like us, you head to Walt Disney World on a regular basis, there will no doubt come a time when you want to do something that's outside of the four main theme parks. Disney recognised that at an early stage, developing plenty of opportunities for people to play outside of the Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Disney's Hollywood Studios and Animal Kingdom. They also realised that they had a stream of visitors who were heading off property to a variety of miniature golf courses, so if they had their own, that would keep people at Disney, surely?

The ploy worked and, in 1996, the first of the resort's two miniature golf facilities opened, each with two distinctive courses. The Fantasia Gardens and Fantasia Fairways courses are both located just behind the Dolphin Resort on Epcot Resorts Boulevard, meaning they're within easy walking distance of that hotel, along with the Swan, Yacht and Beach Club, and the BoardWalk.

So what's the difference between the two? Well, Fantasia Gardens is the course that's lovingly decorated with hippopotamuses from the beloved Disney favourite Fantasia, hence the name of the course. You'll find them prancing and pirouetting around the various different holes, as this course also has a decidedly musical theme to it, representing music from the film. The names of each hole give that game away, with titles such as the Nutcracker Suite, Toccata and Fugue, and even the Pastoral Symphony.

At the start to each hole, there's a rhyme that gives you a clue as how best to play it -- or at least gives you some hints of what to avoid anyway! Each hole is exceptionally creative, with lots of little touches, sometimes something that rotates, while at other times, there are obstacles that you have to avoid, meaning you can't just aim straight for the hole at the end. Each hole you tee off a familiar Mickey head, and sometimes you may even get noise to accompany your efforts.

This is an excellent way for beginners in golf to learn the art of this sport. I'm perhaps one of the worst golfers in the world, yet even I've managed a hole in one on this course -- and trust me, that was great cause for celebration, as that's an achievement I never thought I'd ever reach! However, don't necessarily be fooled by that, as some of the holes can be a challenge for all the members of the family, and we have a number of photos of us trying to retrieve our golf balls from the nearby hedges. I can assure you that we weren't the only ones to suffer

that fate either!

Once you graduate from the beginner level, which we've never managed to do, you can try out the neighbouring Fantasia Fairways, which is designed for more serious golfers with long, rolling greens rather than typical mini-golf tricks. This course is much more about skill, rather than chance, which is one good reason for me to avoid it!

The other fun miniature golf facility can be found right by the entrance to Blizzard Beach and, as you'd expect from anything located near a snow resort, it's very much themed around the idea of colder weather. Even the name, Winter Summerland, gives that away. This is another pair of courses that was designed with great imagination and the back story is that this is an off-season retreat for Santa and his hard-working team of elves. As a result, it's certainly more fun to play it around the Christmas season and this is often when we visit it.

Once again, there are two courses here, the first, either called Snow or Winter is very reminiscent of Blizzard Beach, with snow everywhere and Santa in evidence on various holes. The other course, known as Sand or Summer, is more tropical, although you'll still find Christmas ornaments hanging from the trees. Even the division into two courses has a story to it, with the elves apparently dividing into two camps, one that liked the warm Florida sun and the other group, who preferred the snow and cold of the North Pole. I know which group I'd be part of!

The last time we visited Winter Summerland, we were fascinated by the various Disney characters found scattered through it and adored Squirty the Snowman, but I wouldn't like to give anything away about him and what he does, so I'll leave it there ... When you reach that hole, just be sure to read the rhyme very carefully and you'll get a good idea of what awaits you!

Like Fantasia Gardens, we've both found the snow course at Winter Summerland to be both a challenge and fun at the same time. Sometimes we've lucked out with holes in one, whereas other holes have completely confounded us. Once again, it's the mark of a good course, where it makes you work, but you can enjoy it at the same time.

Miniature golf, much like everything else at Walt Disney World, is a great deal of fun and well worth a visit. It may take you away from the main theme parks that we all know and love, but in return, you'll have a lot of fun and enjoy some wonderful and imaginative theming, while getting to grips with one of the world's most popular sports.

If you fancy enjoying a round of miniature golf at any of the Disney

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courses, it will set you back \$12.52 for adults, and \$10.39 for children aged 3-9. For those who enjoy their first round, you can then get a second for a 50% discount and there are usually good discounts for Annual Passholders as well. We've enjoyed half price deals in the past.

All courses are open daily from 10:00 am to 11:00 pm. It's worth being aware that the courses tend to be more crowded in the afternoons and on days when the main theme parks are exceptionally busy. You can make reservations for the courses by calling 407-WDW-PLAY.

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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