

Disney's Wilderness Lodge Resort: A Total Disney Experience

by Jill Clinevell Shelton, PassPorter Guest Contributor

If you enjoy Disney theming at its best, love relatively quick and scenic transportation to the Magic Kingdom, and long for laid-back pampering at a deluxe resort, **Disney's Wilderness Lodge is the resort for you!**

From the moment you turn onto Timberline Drive and wind your way through the tall conifers and Redwoods that line the road, you'll know you've entered a magical place. The tall main gate made from bundles of huge logs **welcomes you to the Wilderness Lodge** and gives you a hint of what's to come.

As you top the incline, you'll **catch your first glimpse of the majestic Wilderness Lodge**. Its beautiful log exterior with the many-leveled green roof looks just as you might imagine a grand lodge might appear. Cast members dressed as park rangers wait to greet you as you pull up to the massive front doors.

The sights, smells, and sounds that greet you when you step over that threshold onto the rough-hewn granite floors momentarily take your breath away. The **seven-story high lobby of the Wilderness Lodge** is breathtaking to behold. You feel tiny and childlike as you glance backward at the huge doors through which you just stepped and then see the enormous bundled log pillars and totem poles. The beautiful teepee light fixtures hang several stories above you and beg to be more closely examined from the floors above. You immediately notice the comforting smell of a wood fire burning in the nine-story fireplace on the opposite wall, and the background music evokes the frontier spirit.

The motto of the resort, "**Don't just stay … explore,**" is just what you long to do as you make your way across the vast lobby, past the mission-style furniture placed in groupings on reproduction Native American rugs, and toward the little foot bridge near the back side of the lobby. Any children in your group will rush toward the bubbling spring and clamber to the top of the bridge to peer over and toss in a penny. You'll notice that the spring leads right under the glass wall of the lodge to a pebble-bottomed stream, Silver Creek. If you follow the stream outside into the courtyard, you'll notice that it leads to Silver Creek Falls, which empties into the free-form swimming pool known as Silver Creek Springs. As you meander over the wooden walkways, you'll notice the hot and cold Silver Creek Spas and soon you'll come upon Fire Rock Geyser, modeled after Old Faithful, which erupts every hour from

7:00 am to 10:00 pm. (Better than the real thing, in true Disney style, the geyser is even programmed with a wind gauge, which dictates the height of the spray so nearby balconies stay dry.) As you turn to look back upon the majestic sight of the Lodge with its two enormous wings and the beautiful "nature" that abounds, you'll know you've chosen the most magical place to stay.

For families, the **location of Wilderness Lodge is perfect!** After a scenic five-minute stroll from the back of the lodge, over cement pathways marked with animal paw prints, and over raised wooden walkways, you arrive at the Lodge's private dock on Bay Lake. Hop aboard a launch to the Contemporary Resort, Fort Wilderness, or the Magic Kingdom. A trip back to the Lodge for a nap or a swim is just as quick and simple. At the end of the day, as the boat is approaching the Lodge, be sure to see if you can spot the bear face built into the architecture!

As with all deluxe resorts, **amenities abound for you at Disney's Wilderness Lodge.** There are three restaurants, a lounge and a poolside bar to choose from. For a quick meal or snack, choose Roaring Fork Snacks. The counter-service restaurant offers many quick "pick up and go" items as well as a few made to order fast food items. (The chicken salad sandwiches are delicious after a hard day of playing in the parks!) Whispering Canyon Cafe is a great family-oriented restaurant with Lincoln Logs to divert folks waiting to be seated, and stick horse races are organized among the diners. (Just don't ask for the ketchup - you've been warned!) Artist Point is one of Disney World's signature fine dining restaurants, featuring cuisine of the great Northwest prepared by world-class chefs. Among other amenities, the Lodge offers an arcade, health club, boat and bike rental, bike and jogging paths, a childcare "club," playground and a mercantile.

There are **fireplaces on the floors overlooking the lobby** that offer cozy nooks in which to relax, read, or have quiet conversation. Take a walk to the observation deck that overlooks the pool area and Bay Lake. It is the perfect viewing spot for the Electrical Water Pageant that entertains guests of the lake-view resorts every night. By day the deck offers a view of Discovery Island, the now closed wildlife preserve.

Upon check-in at the Wilderness Lodge, **ask about being the Flag Family** one morning of your stay. During this popular daily ceremony, one family is picked to meet a cast member and climb to the roof of the Lodge. The family then assists in raising the flags that fly high atop the Lodge. There is time for a look around at the spectacular view of the other parks and some of the area resorts. At the conclusion, the family is given a certificate to commemorate this special and magical event.

Don't let your time at the Wilderness Lodge slip away without taking a **guided tour of the Lodge**, offered most mornings, or searching for Hidden Mickeys. The cast members at the front desk have copies of a Hidden Mickey scavenger hunt.

There are **so many compelling reasons to visit Wilderness Lodge**. It is majestic yet comfortable and cozy all at the same time. Once you visit, you'll long for those comforting yet exhilarating sights, sounds, and smells that greet you when you arrive at Disney's Wilderness Lodge!

About The Author: Jill is a former schoolteacher and a stay-at-home mom of two little Disney princesses. She and her family love learning about Disney secrets and history and are currently planning their next trip to the World, a Grand Gathering, for later this year.

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