

Old Faithful Inn: The Inspiration for Disney's Wilderness Lodge Resort

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

With Disney's wonderful attention to detail, it's only natural that, from time to time, you'll visit places around the world and realise where the Disney Imagineers got their inspiration.

As our boat first pulled up to Venice, I couldn't help but exclaim "it's just like World Showcase," while our visit to the real Akershus castle was made all the more special by having seen Norway in Epcot first.

It's the same with the resorts. A few years ago, we were lucky enough to visit the Hotel del Coronado in San Diego, inspiration for the Grand Floridian, and recently we were able to add the Old Faithful Inn to that list. As anyone who's visited or stayed at Disney's Wilderness Lodge will know, it's got a Pacific Northwest theme to it, with inspiration taken from the national parks lodges built at the turn of the 20th century. Of those, Yellowstone's was the first to be created, and so it's only natural that the Imagineers headed there to gather their ideas for the Wilderness Lodge. Until we actually visited the Old Faithful Inn and stayed the night there, I had no idea how much inspiration they had taken.

As we first pulled into the parking lot, exhausted from a day of seeing some amazing sights in the park, once again, I couldn't help but let out the words, "Look, it's the Wilderness Lodge," and, sure enough, there it was, right in front of us. It's a national historic landmark, which immediately tells you how important it is in the history of the U.S. national parks. Completed in 1904, it has the same glorious sloping roof that greets you as you drive up to the Wilderness Lodge, although Old Faithful Inn's roof is very definitely different. Here it's brown, as opposed to the green hue on its Disney equivalent. And sadly, while Disney will hide anything away that detracts from the feel of a property, it didn't happen here, with a huge chimney on the front of the inn, which feels very out of place.

Step inside, and again you can see where the designers of the Wilderness Lodge got some of their ideas. It's a towering lobby, reaching about five storeys above you. It's completely open, with walkways running all around the walls, with the same style of woodwork balconies on each level. One thing that is very different is that at Disney, there's far more light streaming in, and I have no doubt that's something the Imagineers thought they could improve on in their version. At Old

Faithful Inn, the lobby is very dark and imposing, but I personally found that added to some of its charm, although it did make taking photos quite a challenge!

Of course, there's a fire roaring away in the lobby, although they do have more use for it here, given the extremities of temperature that they experience. It's nothing like that in Florida, where most people gather around to relax, rather than to warm themselves! As you wander around the lobby, you can see where the idea for the lanterns for the Wilderness Lodge came from, with some at the original featuring moose and pine tree designs.

□ The wings to the Old Faithful Inn are not originals, having been added on a good few years after the original lodge was created. It's possible to see that, although there's still a rustic log feel to it. I guess, in some ways, that's similar to the Wilderness Lodge, which had its Villas added on to it in 2000, six years after the original first opened for business.

□ As for the rooms themselves, this is perhaps the biggest difference between the two resorts, and again I don't doubt the Disney Imagineers took the opportunity to improve on the original. While the rooms at the Old Faithful Inn are very comfortable, and there's nothing wrong with them, they certainly don't have the lovely Disney touches that you find at the Wilderness Lodge. Instead, the rooms are a bit sparse, with just the bare essentials, whereas Disney gives you a bit more, like rich colours on the bedding and sofa, details on the headboards, and on the chairs. Ironically, although both rooms have cream as a basic colour on the walls, at Wilderness Lodge, it's set off perfectly by dark blues, and reds, whereas that doesn't happen at the Old Faithful Inn.

□ The sparse guest room decor was a bit of a shame, considering how much you pay to stay there, but then again, it is the most requested resort in Yellowstone, and of course demand does drive prices, as we all know only too well. The one thing that I can say that our room at Old Faithful has over the Disney version is the view. We booked a view of Old Faithful itself, and it was an amazing sight to be able to watch it explode into action, right outside our window.

□ While we were at Old Faithful, we were able to sample their Dining Room, which is their main restaurant. Again, we could see the inspiration for Artist Point, although the original was a lot darker, with fewer paintings on the walls. The menu is very different, as the Dining Room is not a fine dining establishment, but provides a very good buffet at meal times, while an a la carte menu is also available. Although all the food here was very good, I cannot praise the dessert we had enough. The Yellowstone Sundae is made up of huckleberry ice cream, which we

had never tried before, but it was divine, along with a crumb cake, and mixed berry topping. It was absolutely delicious and definitely worthy of an appearance on the Artist Point menu!

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□ Another similarity is that if you do visit Old Faithful Inn, you can apply some Disney-style planning tactics to it, as it gets packed a long way in advance of your visit. You need to reserve as far ahead as you can, and ideally as soon as you know your dates. In our case, we made our original booking almost two years ahead of our arrival! When we booked, we were also given the option of booking dinner in the Dining Room, something I took up, and I'm glad I did, as my goodness, this place gets packed as well. During our visits there, every time one party got up and left, the servers were immediately there, re-setting, before another party was escorted in.

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□ So even in the depths of the national park system, you can find your own little piece of Disney magic.

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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