

All Star Vacation Homes: A Lodging Review

by Valanie Bradley, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Traveling to Walt Disney World can be an exciting, daunting and expensive undertaking. It becomes exponentially more so when you travel with a large group. This past summer I took my mom, my sister, my 4 and 12 year-old nieces, my 1 and 3 year-old nephews, and a 13 year-old cousin to Florida for a 10-day stay. My mission; try to find suitable lodging for them all without mortgaging the house.

Disney's hotel rooms mostly accommodate four to five people. If you have more than that, be prepared to pay the price or get creative. Our choices; three rooms at a value resort, two at a moderate, or two Fort Wilderness cabins (pity the adult that got stuck alone with 3 kids). We quickly decided that we needed to stay in the same room and we needed a full kitchen (or another mortgage loan to pay for Disney-priced food). I've always stayed on site with Disney; however, my pocket book would not relent, so we began our search for off-site quarters.

The Orlando area in Florida is vacation home central with an (over)abundance of condos and homes for rent. Many companies send beautiful brochures with examples of homes that they have to rent, which is the problem; they are only examples. You don't know exactly what home you're getting or what the community is like until you get there. I had, unfortunately, read reports of homes that were too far from the parks, or that looked nothing like the brochure, or worse, were in unsafe neighborhoods.

Enter [All Star Vacation Homes](#). As an experienced Walt Disney World (WDW) aficionado, I faithfully order a copy of PassPorter and the Unofficial Guide for my yearly jaunts, and I frequent AllEars.net. I do not plan a trip to the World without these resources. So when all three of these trusted sources recommend a company, I'm all ears (unintentional pun). Their recommendations pushed me to give All Star a try, and I am so glad that I did.

I searched All Star's website for homes available during my travel week. It's reassuring that you get to pick out the actual home and community -- no surprises upon arrival. We could have booked an adorable two bedroom condo with Mickey decor and a layout out similar to the DVC villas for only \$139 per night. That's the same price as a Disney moderate hotel room. We also could have rented a three bedroom town home with a small lounge pool in a community three miles from Disney for \$159 per night. Seriously -- almost 1/3 the DVC price but you get an

extra bedroom and a private pool. Look, I'm no rocket scientist, but that was a no-brainer.

As I navigated through the list of homes, I suddenly stumbled across one house that seemed to say, "Valanie! Rent Me!" I'm not sure, but I think there was a bright light and angels singing. I was completely captivated by a five bedroom, five bathroom house, with a private pool, grill, eat-in kitchen and a game room/movie theater, just three miles from WDW. It was \$259 per night and that was before the discount code from PassPorter! All Star even had its own special -- rent a home for seven days and get a free gas or grocery card and a mid-sized rental car for the week. Twice the space for almost half the price -- hmmm I like math, math is good.

All Star Vacation Homes is a management company. They do not own the homes, but they rent them out for the owners. They do not manage just any home, only the ones that meet their exacting standards. And the staff? Wow. Everyone, from the online and telephone reps to the people at the front desk, was outstanding. They were determined to be as helpful as possible and were positively Disney-esque with their customer service. I daresay, they out Disney-ed Disney.

We stayed in a gated resort community with guards at the entrance. We felt totally safe. The clubhouse had a gigantic pool with a water slide, a movie theater, arcade room, an exercise room, and a general store. There were numerous play areas and all kinds of resort activities going on.

The home we chose (or that chose us), had a king bedroom upstairs with a crib for the one year-old. He opted, however, to stay across the hall in the kids' bedroom, which featured two sets of bunk beds made out like pirate ships. There was a treasure chest with a few toys in it, and there was a bathroom decorated with Tinker Bell and Peter Pan. The children loved the beds so much; they didn't mind getting into them! (Now THAT is magic!)

The tween girls stayed in the queen bedroom downstairs with the Little Mermaid-themed bathroom. They were next to the game room/theater. It featured a movie screen, six theater seats, a bar with four stools, a foosball table and a Ms. Pacman/Galaga arcade game. Yes, there is a Playstation II in there and a Nintendo Wii in the living room, but I was in 80s gamer heaven with Ms. Pacman. Every night we would make popcorn, s'mores, or sundaes and watch a Disney movie (you can check them out from All Star for free).

The decor of the house was gorgeous. (I'm almost certain that hot dogs

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taste better in designer kitchens, but I will have to return to continue my research.) There is a computer downstairs, which was very handy. The living room had super comfy couches parked in front of the 42" television. There were two king bedrooms on either side of the living area with attached baths. Did I mention they were gorgeous?

The screened-in patio area featured a full-sized pool and a hot tub, and we used them both daily. There were no crowds, no mad dashes for loungers, and plenty of space. The hot tub was perfect for aching feet and backs after marching through the parks all day. Of course, there was that sudden boom and crack off in the distance that startled me out of my reverie and reminded me of sudden Florida showers. But to my unexpected delight, it turned out to be the fireworks show "Wishes" at the Magic Kingdom. Does it get any better than to be able to sit in your own private hot tub or pool and watch the Disney fireworks?

It takes a lot to get Disney-philes like me off of Disney property and make them happy about it. All Star did it for me and they have definitely won me over. Next time you're in Central Florida, give All-Star a try - you will be so glad you did.

For photos of the home Valanie's family stayed in, check it out on [All Star Vacation Homes' web site](#).

About The Author: Valanie Bradley is an avid Disney vacation planner, deal hunter and admitted Disney-phile. She travels each year to the Walt Disney World and assists people in making their dreams come true. The Bradleys are going back to Walt Disney World next year and ask that at least one week be left open for them to stay in this house as they have become quite attached to it!

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