

# The Richard Petty Exotic Driving Experience: Making More Magic

by Angela Jenkins, PassPorter Guest Contributor

After our second trip to Walt Disney World, my husband was interested in checking out some of the resort's attractions outside the parks.

As a surprise anniversary present for him, I booked him six laps at the Exotic Driving Experience at the Walt Disney World Speedway. We would be having a family reunion during Thanksgiving week and this would make this trip even more special.

I didn't know anything about the Richard Petty Driving Experience, except that it featured some very cool cars. I did some research by reading reviews and watching videos online. At the time of this writing, two more exotic cars have been added to the list you can choose from, but at the time I booked, there were six: (listed in order of prices from lowest to highest)

Porsche 997 - \$169

Audi R8 - \$239

Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 - \$299

Ferrari F430 - \$299

Lamborghini Gallardo LP570-4

Superleggera - \$389 Ferrari 458 Italia - \$419

Not included in the price is a \$35 "Driver Release Fee." This fee releases the driver from most vehicle damage costs that might happen on the track. For additional fees, you can upgrade to more laps or even drive multiple cars if you want.

I choose the Audi R8 because of two reasons. First, it fit more in our budget - the 15% discount for Disney Vacation Club members covered the release fee. Second, after considering the Lamborghini, I found out on the official website that there's height restriction of 6 feet 2 inches for this vehicle. My husband is taller than that at 6ft 3in, so the safety helmet would make it uncomfortable for him to drive. During my research I read that the Audi has the same engine as the Gallardo 560 (confirmed during the Exotics class). So he got to drive a car with the Lamborghini engine, while paying the Audi price.

I called to book the appointment instead of doing it online, as I

didn't want any paperwork or clues to come in the mail to ruin the surprise. The person I talked to was very friendly and answered all the questions I had. As a bonus, after answering a quick telephone survey about the service I got, I received a \$10 gift certificate in the mail. (Luckily I got the mail that day!) She emailed me all the information, including a reservation form with all the times and details and a 5 page document containing all the legal paperwork. He was to bring the completed paperwork with him, along with his driver's license. If you don't have your paperwork with you, they can print it for you when you get there.

□ The shuttle pickup for the course was at the Transportation and Ticket Center (TTC), near the pet kennel. His reservation was at 1pm and we were told we would be picked up at 12:30. The sign wasn't very big, but instantly recognizable. The shuttle runs every 15 minutes and we did not wait long for one to come. The ride over to the Speedway was quick, no more than just a few minutes. There wasn't much to the small building - a classroom, some restrooms, a vending machine, a small area with Nascar safety gear for guests, and of course, gifts and souvenirs. There's also a cooler outside with cold water if you get thirsty.

□ We hung out while my husband got signed in. He had already filled out his paperwork and had to present his drivers license. We were allowed to go out to the track and take pictures of the vehicles outside. The exotic cars were there, along with some NASCAR cars. The group ahead of us were driving those. They had to wear special suits, but you don't have to in order to drive the exotics.

□ We watched the guests drive or ride in the NASCAR cars - they were so loud you could feel them! Then it was time for our class. Families and guests are allowed to sit in the classroom with the drivers. There's even some toys for kids to play with and big picture windows to watch the action. The instructor was engaging and knew his stuff, but like he himself said, "Everything I'm about to tell you, you'll forget as soon as you leave the class. That's why you have a driver instructor riding with you." The spectators were allowed to go out to the viewing stand while the drivers were given additional instructions. They were then seated in the driver's side of the viewing stand and each driver was able to pose with the car they were going to drive. You can purchase the photo gifts later after the drive.

□ Finally, after the introductions to the driver instructors and even more instructions and precautions, we were told to go to the main viewing stand in the middle of the track. There we'd be able to take pictures and record the driving. The drivers were called according to

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the car they picked. The group driving the Porsche went first, then the Lamborghini, and so on. There were only two drivers for the Audi R8, and Dh was the second to drive it. It was only about a half hour wait until his turn. He had a practice lap, then six driving laps. It was fun to watch, but according to him, he wished he could have gone faster. Apparently, the instructors tell you what gear to be in at certain points so that you can't really get up to cruising speed. Basically, this means they make stay in a higher gear so you can't pick up speed when it would be really awesome to do so. This is to protect you and the car (in that order). His top speed was 112 mph, not really fast for him, but it may be really speeding for someone else.

□ All in all, he had fun doing something he had never done before. He had been wanting to do experience Disney World outside of the parks and I'm glad he got to do something different. The two new cars that have been added to the Experience are the Aston Martin Virage and the Nissan GT-R. We may have to make room on our next trip for some more time at the Speedway...

#### *About The Author:*

□ Angela is a homeschooling mom of two boys. She is married to her husband of 12 years, whom she successfully turned into a Disney fan on their first trip together in 2009. They are looking forward to our first Disney cruise this year! She is known on the PassPorter Boards as "goofyboysmama."

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