

Roughing It - Confessions of a Deluxe Resort Fan Staying at a Moderate Resort: A Walt Disney World Resort Review

by Leslie Wiseman, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Our first two trips to Walt Disney World consisted of staying offsite visiting my aunt and uncle who were former Cast Members. They were by our side, showing us the ropes when we visited the parks, Downtown Disney, and all the resorts. The minute we stepped into Wilderness Lodge in 1996 my husband and I were smitten. We knew someday, somehow we were staying here.

Fast forward 11 years to better jobs, and the addition of an 8- and 6-year old; we decided to plan a visit. This would be our first time staying on Disney property before our daughter started school. I began looking at resorts trying to be "thrifty," but my husband said, "Quit looking at Value Resorts, we are doing it right and we are staying at Wilderness Lodge."

I still remember the first time we drove into Wilderness Lodge, after 18 hours in the minivan. It was pouring rain, but I remember opening my van door and the bell services person saying "Welcome Home, Wiseman Family." We were hooked. It was the best vacation ever, and my husband and I still recall moments from that trip seven years later. We made many return trips to the Lodge and it seems like my kids grew up in that resort. As my kids aged, ticket prices increased, dining plan prices increased, and transportation prices increased. We had to face the fact that if we planned to visit Disney every year, then we were going to be priced out of Wilderness Lodge.

□ The search began for a more conservatively-priced resort. Our last trip staying at Wilderness Lodge, we took a morning to visit all of the Moderate resorts, but as we toured, I began to reject those resorts; I didn't want to think about downgrading and figured I would always find a way to stay Deluxe. Then I planned our surprise holiday Disney trip. Since we were traveling at a more expensive time of year than our usual summer trip, our search for a more affordable resort began again.

□ I was a "Deluxe Brat," as were my children. I believe one of them even said "Do we have to go if we can't stay at Wilderness Lodge?" We booked at Coronado Springs because my husband liked the way the rooms looked and they had queen beds. Honestly, my expectations were low. I

was excited for the trip, but not the resort.

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□A great flight, and a Magical Express ride later, we were dropped off. Check-in went smoothly and I loved the lobby's Christmas tree and fountain. We then began the trek to our room. It was quite a trek. We were placed in the Ranchos section, which is the more secluded part of the resort. We started our walk around Lago Dorado. Three hours earlier we were in spitting snow and our plane was being de-iced in Ohio. Now, it was a sunny 79-degree day. Trust me, we didn't mind the walk to our room. Though we entered the room from outdoors, and it was bit smaller than we were used to, we found our room to be well decorated. We loved the bedding and the wooden sliding door that adds privacy to the bath area. Yes, the room felt slightly smaller than Wilderness Lodge and I didn't have my balcony, or my closet with closet doors, but I was at Disney. We immediately headed to Magic Kingdom after a quick walk to the bus stop. Our bus pulled right up and we were on our way!

That evening we returned to our room and found our luggage delivered just as expected, and then headed to the Dig Site. I will have to say, this pool is awesome! My kids are older, but even for families with younger children this place is very kid friendly. A campfire and Disney movie playing over in the distance, my children had plenty of room in the "big pool" and enjoyed the slide, while my husband and I enjoyed the hot tub, one of the largest on property. The sky above the Dig Site's 46-foot tall Mayan pyramid was the prettiest color of midnight blue, and we could see every star. My husband said "Tonight's sky looks just like the Gran Fiesta Tour in Epcot. This theming is awesome!"

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□Our week at Disney included beautiful weather, and we loved the walks to El Centro (lobby, dining, and shops) and The Dig Site. This resort is gorgeous. I truly felt I was walking in a resort in Mexico. We found the food court to be good, and transportation to be quick. Our room was very well kept and we received lots of towel animals. I did miss my Wilderness Lodge H2O bath products, but I slowly adapted to the H2O Grapefruit ones. Though at first I felt like I was placed on a deserted island in the Ranchos section, by the end of the week I enjoyed how quiet, tranquil, and peaceful that area of the resort was.

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□One of our last nights of our trip, we returned "home" to Wilderness Lodge for a meal at Whispering Canyon Cafe. I admit it did make us homesick the minute we walked in the door, and I was tempted to steal H2O products from a Mousekeeping cart, but we were content to walk back into our Mexican paradise at the end of the day. Did I miss the boat ride to Magic Kingdom? Yes. Did I miss walking through the breathtaking lobby every day? Yes. Did staying at Coronado Springs

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ruin my trip? No. We had done it. We had survived a downgrade!

□ I felt our wait for the buses at Coronado Springs was even less than some of our waits at Wilderness Lodge. I also realized that the outside door didn't make things noisy; it may have even been less noisy than the hallways inside Wilderness Lodge. Yes, it was quite a walk at times to El Centro or the Dig Site, but to be honest, depending on where our rooms were located in the Lodge, we could have quite a walk to the pool and food court there, too. I learned on this trip that Disney is magical anywhere you stay, and to try to approach each new resort with an open mind.

□ I treasure the years I had gotten to stay at our favorite Deluxe resort, but found Coronado Springs to be just as memorable. In fact, my next trip is booked there again. Yes, I should probably try something new, possibly the new Art of Animation Resort? I would like to, but unfortunately I'm a Moderate Resort Brat now.

About The Author: Leslie works in the computer software industry by day, coaches a high school cheerleading squad in the evening, and is the proud mother of a 15-year-old son and 13-year-old daughter. She is always saving for or planning the next Disney getaway for her family or her friends! She is a lover of Central Florida and everything in the Walt Disney World Resort! (Thanks to Sara, her next trip is booked for November 2014.)

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