

Renting A Vacation Home: A Walt Disney World Lodging Review

by Amanda Warner, PassPorter Guest Contributor

We are a family of six. At the time of our last trip to Walt Disney World our children were ages 5, 7, 10, and 12. When we were planning our trip it became clear to us that the most cost-effective way for us to have a comfortable place to stay was for us to rent a vacation home. It was hard for us to give up on the idea of total immersion in the Walt Disney World magic, but we knew that a vacation home would give us much more space, cost us less, and give us the added benefit of being able to prepare some meals in our vacation home. Since we were going to drive to Florida and would have our van with us, staying off-property was a viable option for us.

Once that decision was made part of the fun of our vacation planning choosing our vacation home with our kids. We looked at several beautiful homes offered by many different vacation rental companies, but the ones that we really wanted cost a little bit more than we wanted to spend. We had just about decided that we needed to settle on a house that was a little less "wow" than we had wanted when I ran across the name "Florida Spirit Vacation Homes" in my PassPorter. I immediately looked up their website and found some stunning vacation homes located in Davenport, FL. After making sure that Davenport was within a reasonable driving distance from Walt Disney World, we picked a house.

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□The house we chose was called, "Serrano". Our trip was in August, 2016 and the total price for 10 nights was (tax included) was \$1,707.00. The house had two master suites, one with a king size bed and a one with a queen size bed. Both en suite bathrooms were large and modern. The bathroom attached to the bedroom with a king size bed had a shower, a soaking tub, a double vanity, and a water closet. The bathroom attached to the bedroom with the queen size bed had a large shower, two vanities, and a water closet. The house had two other bedrooms, each with two single beds. It also had a full bathroom in the hallway. The house had a big living room, a dining room, a breakfast area, a full kitchen, a washer and dryer, and a game room. It also had a screened in pool with an attached hot tub and a lanai, which was accessible from the living room and from the king master suite. There was also a door from the patio/pool area into the hallway bathroom. There was a mesh fence between the pool and the lanai so that if a family using the house had young children, the children would not be able to access the pool without an adult.

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□Booking the room was very simple and I was pleased with the detailed communication that I received from Florida Spirit Vacation homes. We communicated primarily by e-mail, but the one time that I had to call them during the booking process, they were easy to reach and helpful. They also had an app, which made it easy for me to keep track of the details of our vacation rental.

When we arrived at our vacation home, we were thrilled by how it looked on the outside. It was in a beautiful and quiet neighborhood and the outside of the house looked exactly as it had in the pictures. When we walked into the house we were not disappointed. The inside of the house also matched the pictures from the website. It was spacious, nicely decorated, and very clean. Our first impressions of the house made us feel like we were in store for a very luxurious vacation! Our oldest daughter loved having her own room and bathroom!

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□One of the things that we loved about our house was having our own pool. Our children are capable swimmers, so, if they wanted to go swimming, they could just go. At a regular hotel, if they had wanted to go to the pool, one of us would have had to accompany them, even if we were tired or had something else that we needed to do. In our vacation home, they could go out to the pool any time that they wanted to and we could keep an eye on them through the many windows/sliding doors in the back of the house.

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□Another advantage of the house was the money that we saved on meals. We ate most of our breakfasts and some of our lunches and snacks at our house and the money that we saved by doing that enabled us to splurge on some exciting (and expensive!) dining experiences at Walt Disney World.

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□We found traveling between our vacation home and Walk Disney World very convenient. It was a short and easy drive to the parks. There was also a grocery store, gas station, and pharmacy close to our house.

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□I wish that this review could be an unqualifiedly good one, but we did have a concern when dealing with the rental company. For some reason, the pool stopped circulating while we were there. When it didn't start again after a full day I was concerned that something had gone wrong with the pool's filtering mechanism, so I called the rental company's help line. I explained the problem and the woman on the phone said that she would have someone look into it. While I had her on the phone my husband also spoke to her to let her know about some mildew that he had found in the ice maker. Unfortunately, no one ever showed up to address our concerns and we never heard back from the company

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(except in terms of generic follow up after our stay).

□ In spite of this concern, we would definitely feel comfortable renting from Florida Spirit Vacation Homes again. For a family our size a vacation home is a great option in terms of price and space. At no point did we feel like we were missing out on the magic by staying in a vacation home. Serrano was a beautiful house and having such a lovely and comfortable place to stay really helped us to rest and relax whenever we needed a break from our busy and fun days at Walt Disney World!

About The Author: Amanda lives outside of Boston, MA with her husband and four children. She is a Lutheran pastor and enjoys scrapbooking, choral singing, and travel. She and her family took an amazing 10 day "trip of a lifetime" to Walt Disney World in 2016. They are looking forward to the opening of the new Star Wars land.

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