

Our New Favorites From Our Recent Trip: A Walt Disney World Review

by Patricia Lipari, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Six years had passed since our last trip to the World and let me tell you, a lot can change in six years.

Back then there were paper Fast Passes, hidden paint brushes on Tom Sawyer Island and we zoomed around California on Soarin'. Big changes came during that time for our family too -- namely, the boys got bigger. On our most recent trip our sons were 19 and 14, which meant that my younger son now passed the height restrictions for the headliner attractions. Not only was he taller, but a whole lot braver too.

New Favorite Resort

Our old favorite resort was Disney's Pop Century Resort. We had chosen that resort on previous trips when looking at the Value category. We'd heard that it was one of the most convenient because it had a dedicated bus system, unlike the others, at the time. We especially enjoyed the main pool and spent many evenings grabbing food from the adjacent Everything POP food court and eating poolside. We scoped out the other "quiet" pools but it was the Hippy Dippy pool with all its hustle and bustle that the location provided that made it special for our boys. And the ping pong table really sealed the deal.

Our new favorite resort is Disney's Port Orleans Riverside Resort. We had heard so many good things about this resort and it had been on our short list for our previous visit before Coronado Springs and its Mayan pool and waterslide won out. But this time I wanted to make it happen. The smaller size of the resort appealed to us and Old Man Island pool area looked awesome. We were also excited to take the boat shuttle down the Sassagoula River to Disney Springs.

When we checked in we requested a room in the Alligator Bayou section because we were angling for a room with a Murphy bed. The cast member who checked us in tried to steer us to the Mansions in Magnolia Bend. But since this would likely be our last opportunity before my son outgrew the smallish Murphy bed so we decided to hold firm on the Alligator Bayou, even though it meant a wait of several hours before we could get into our room.

The grounds of Riverside are great, very quiet and private. Each building is surrounded by lush greens and trees, making it very homey and not like your typical hotel. We were situated next to a quiet pool and despite the initial draw of Old Man Island, we never dipped a toe in

it. Our younger son decided that there too many "little kids" there and so we used the quiet pool instead and shared it with at most just one or two other families.

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□New Favorite Restaurant

□We discovered another new favorite at Port Orleans -- Boatwright's Dining Hall. On previous trips The Plaza Restaurant at Magic Kingdom was our older son's favorite. He's a picky eater and when he discovered their grilled cheese sandwich he was in his glory -- it was the best grilled cheese ever! To me, it seemed pretty unremarkable but I tried at home for months to recreate it and all its glory. For those of you who also have picky eaters, you know that when your child gets excited about a meal, it's a thing.

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□Without a doubt, Boatwright's far exceeds The Plaza. We didn't have an advanced dining reservation but didn't have any trouble getting in on the same night. My husband had their Jambalaya, the boys had Jackson Square Etouffee and Cajun Bayou Catfish, all of which they enjoyed. As a gluten-free eater, I chose the Lake Charles Risotto, which was delicious. If it's one thing that Disney Dining does well, it's dealing with allergies and food restrictions. I never worry that there will be what I call "accidental glutening" at Disney.

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□New Favorite Ride

□We discovered new favorites at the parks too. My younger son now had the nerve to take on the biggest rides on this trip and he was very excited to give Rock 'n' Roller Coaster a try. We had saved our Tier 1 Fast Pass Plus for Toy Story Midway Mania so we headed down Sunset Boulevard at rope drop. The boys loved it and rode it three times despite long waits after the initial ride. My husband also rode it for the first time on this trip and it immediately became an "unfavorite" for my guy who struggles with motion sickness. It took him a while to get himself right again so when the kids looped another favorite, Space Mountain, the next day, he wisely took a pass. We also enjoyed other old favorites on this trip, including the other Mountains, Soarin', Test Track, and Buzz Lightyear, to name a few.

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□It was another great Disney experience, filled with old stand-bys and new favorites. And with so many changes coming to Disney in the next several years, it's great to know we have many new favorites to look forward to on future trips.

About The Author: Patty is the mom of two boys and a Marketing Manager living in Western NY. She always looks forward to the fun and (especially the) sun at Walt Disney World.

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