

The Best Western Plus Stovall's Inn Good Neighbor Hotel at Disneyland: A Disneyland Good Neighbor Hotel Review

by Sarah Donohue, PassPorter Guest Contributor

One of the first things I said when we learned we would be moving to Vegas was, "We'll only be four hours from LA!" (Read: "We'll only be four hours from Disneyland!") Having grown up in the Midwest, I have had several opportunities to visit Walt Disney World, but had not (yet) made the pilgrimage out west.

My sister realized quickly that her 30th birthday would arrive shortly after our move -- and what better place to celebrate the big 3-0 than the happiest place on Earth? Done and done -- vacation days approved, sister trip planned to "Walt's park!"

□ And that was it. For as much planning as we've done in advance for our WDW trips, we really took the idea of Disneyland as a "local's park" to heart. While where we'll stay is one of the very first decisions made when heading to Orlando, we didn't even decide where we were staying in Anaheim until a month out from our trip! Airbnb? Friend's home? Hotel somewhere between Anaheim and Hollywood?

□ The walkability of many Good Neighbor Hotels proved too tempting, so we began exploring these options. The Best Western Plus Stovall's Inn jumped out to us -- it was in our price range and appeared to be one of the closer, prettier walks to the park (thanks, Google Street View!). So we finally made our first decision of the trip -- four weeks before we walked into the park.

Stovall's Inn is located by Katella Avenue and Disneyland Drive, just under a one mile walk from the security gates into Downtown Disney and thus into the parks. If you're striving for a shorter distance, some of the hotels on Harbor Boulevard are probably going to be closer for you. But if you don't mind or even enjoy walking, the trip from Stovall's Inn to the park gates is incredibly pleasant! As you head down the winding sidewalk in the shade of large trees, you will pass Paradise Pier Hotel. Soon after, you also get glimpses of the Grand Californian and Disneyland Hotels before turning toward Downtown Disney.

□ The morning we walked from the hotel to the parks (at about 7:30 am), the security at Downtown Disney was a breeze and a stroll through Downtown Disney first thing in the morning is downright relaxing! How

much did I enjoy this walk? I even gushed about how beautiful it was as we were returning to the hotel after logging 25,000 steps at Disneyland! As lights twinkle on the trees while you admire Mickey's Fun Wheel, you can't tell me that the Good Neighbor Hotels put you "outside of the Disney bubble." This bubble just has a slightly different look. The area felt safe, even late at night after Disneyland closed at midnight. There is Disney security stationed as you make the turn toward Downtown Disney who are happy to help you with directions if needed. For those who do not enjoy or are unable to make long walks, the hotel is also served by the Anaheim Resort Transit system.

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□ Prices for a standard room range from approximately \$100-200 per night, depending on the nights that you book. The parking lot is gated and parking will cost \$10/night. The parking lot feels quite narrow so be cautious as you are maneuvering your car. We were initially concerned about having a spot to park as other reviews we'd read complained about parking being scarce, but we found plenty of spots available when we arrived shortly before 8:00 on a Friday evening. Your parking permit is only good until 3:00 pm on your checkout day, which means if you are planning to spend that day in a park, you will need to move your car to Disney parking. We were told that it is possible to ask the front desk as you're checking out if you can leave your car -- pending capacity for the following night, they may allow it. They were fully booked the night we checked out, however, so this wasn't an option for us.

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□ The guest rooms have exterior doors and look out over the hotel's parking lot. We booked a standard room with two double beds. This trip was focused on the parks so we did not spend a lot of time in the room aside from sleeping and showering, but we enjoyed it while we were there and I would not hesitate to book again should we plan a trip with a bit more down time. The room felt quite spacious and I particularly appreciated that there were multiple "work" surfaces -- a small round table by the window with two arm chairs as well as your standard hotel room desk. There was a refrigerator and microwave as well as a coffee maker stocked with both tea and coffee options. The bathroom offered standard toiletry needs -- such as shampoo, soap, conditioner and a hair dryer -- and as sisters who have spent too many years fighting over limited bathroom space, we particularly appreciated the very large counter as we got ready at the same time. The room was clean and the bed was one of the more comfortable hotel beds I've slept on -- and I've traveled often for work, so I'm picky over hotel beds! In the morning, as we were getting ready, my sister connected to the free wi-fi to play a YouTube video of the Disney World park hours channel (one of our favorite Disney morning traditions!) and we didn't experience speed or connectivity issues at all.

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□ The only downsides that I experienced with the room were some louder groups outside our door late at night that we could hear very well, which makes me think that the doors are on thinner side. It was only for a short time though, and did not keep me awake for long. In addition, the air conditioning for the room is a window unit inset to the wall. Because of the size of the room, the unit took a bit of time cooling down the room when we returned from the parks at night. I don't believe this would be an issue for most of the year, given Southern California's extremely temperate climate. We were visiting during an unseasonably warm weekend. I would not consider either of these deal-breakers for me. The small issues or discomforts that they presented were easily resolved and were minor compared to all the positive aspects of the hotel.

□ Before we headed to the parks, we had the opportunity to check out the free breakfast served just behind the hotel lobby. We were surprised to see how busy it already was when we went downstairs at about 7:15, but tables seemed to be changing over quickly. I loved the "Make Your Own Breakfast Sandwich" station, stocked with English muffins, scrambled eggs, bacon, and cheese. Perfect for a one-hand breakfast as you head to the parks! There is also a water filter just off the dining room to fill your water bottles before heading out.

□ Unfortunately, the only thing we didn't get a chance to experience during this trip was the pool area -- which is disappointing, as the topiaries surrounding it were a major selling feature for us! It looked like a very nice area and is near the top of my list for a return trip.

□ If you're looking for a clean, standard hotel with a leisurely walk to Disneyland, I would undoubtedly recommend Stovall's Inn. Being used to staying on property while at Walt Disney World, I was unsure what a Good Neighbor Hotel would be like, but I could not be more pleased with our experience. While I would love to try other hotels in the area, after our experience with Stovall's Inn, it will be difficult to justify going someplace else! Guess we'll just have to increase our visit frequency... all in the name of research, of course!

About The Author: Sarah Donohue has loved dreaming of Disney trips since she was a child, regularly sneaking off with her mom's guide books to dream up her perfect vacation! Now an adult, she loves being able to plan her own trips, but still finds herself dreaming in between! She lives in Las Vegas with her husband and their dog, Perry (the Platypup)!

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