

## Our Decade of Disney: Reflecting on Ten Years of Magical Milestones

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

We recently celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary, and when you reach milestones like that, it does get you thinking. As well as remembering our wedding day, and all the wonderful things we've done in that decade since then, my mind couldn't help thinking about Disney as well. For a Disney fan, that's a fairly natural process, but in this case, there was a good reason for that.

For our honeymoon, we took three weeks off work, spending two of those at Walt Disney World, followed by a few days each in Washington DC and New York City. It was the first time that we'd been to Disney together, although we'd each visited the World a couple of times before with our families and I'd been fortunate enough to also visit Disneyland in California and Disneyland Resort Paris in the past as well.

It was during our honeymoon that our joint love affair with Disney really took off. For both of us, it was also a trip of firsts, particularly the fact that it was the first time that either of us had stayed on Disney property before. After lots of research, we opted for Port Orleans Riverside, or Dixie Landings, as it was known in those days, and we weren't disappointed with it. Before we left, we agonized over spending that much money on our accommodation and I remember many conversations where we coughed and spluttered at the price of the deluxe Disney resorts, wondering why on earth people would ever spend that much money on a hotel.

A few days into our stay, we visited the Beach Club and instantly we know how people could spend that much. Our love affair with that resort was born, with a booking to return to stay there coming not long after we returned home. On our honeymoon, we did even look into the Disney Vacation Club, which at that time, was selling units at the BoardWalk Villas -- remember, then, the Villas at the Wilderness Lodge, Beach Club Villas, Saratoga Springs, Animal Kingdom Lodge Villas and Bay Lake Tower were all still to come. This just goes to show how massively the DVC has expanded in recent years. We weren't sure about the BoardWalk Villas, thinking perhaps they could be a bit noisy to stay in -- something that turned out to be totally untrue when we stayed in them a couple of years ago -- but we were sure a few years later, when the Beach Club Villas arrived on the scene. We looked around them and were instantly sold, buying in to them and then adding on three times afterwards, as we found our points to be like chocolate, there was never

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enough!

Ironically, we had a great plan when we bought into the DVC in 2002 that we would "only visit every other year." but that quickly turned into "once every year" and, on some occasions, "twice a year." It's amazing how many opportunities that decision opened up for us. Since then, despite our love affair with the Beach Club Villas, we've stayed at most of the DVC resorts, enjoying the luxury that they have to offer. Very ironic for a couple who weren't sure about the money they were spending on a moderate resort on their honeymoon!

The accommodation isn't the only thing that's changed for us over the years. I'm almost appalled now to admit it, but on our honeymoon, we tried very few table service restaurants. I think we probably didn't expect much from them, thinking it would just be standard theme park fare, but we couldn't have been more wrong. That first taste of Disney dining opened our eyes completely and, by the time we got to future trips, we had so many wonderful table service choices that we literally couldn't fit them all in to our stays. It seems very funny now to look back and think how satisfied we once were with counter service dining, not knowing that anything else actually existed. It's been a great discovery and one that's really enhanced our subsequent vacations and something that very much keeps us coming back to Disney.

Of course, restaurants have come and gone in that time. Think back 10 years and the Winnie the Pooh characters were having breakfast daily at Artist Point, something I still miss to this day. However, many new delights have opened up in that time, including all the wonders at the Animal Kingdom Lodge and I, for one, now can't imagine going to Disney without visiting Boma at least once!

Each of the theme parks has continued to evolve, with new attractions being added into the mix. It's hard now to imagine Epcot without Soarin' or Mission: Space, but 10 years ago, neither of them were in place. Equally, recent additions to Animal Kingdom include Expedition Everest and the Finding Nemo show, replacing the former Tarzan show. It's not all been big glamorous rides and shows though, fortunately for us, as neither of us are really thrill seekers.

Some of the changes have been a lot more subtle, such as the improvements to Pirates of the Caribbean and the Haunted Mansion. To me, there's something just as wonderful as adding to and expanding old favorites. Certainly the changes to Spaceship Earth weren't universally liked, but we've enjoyed them and I look forward to seeing for myself what they've done to the Tomorrowland Transit Authority. And then there was the superb addition of perhaps one of the best attraction at

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the Studios, One Man's Dream, which was originally conceived as a temporary addition, but fortunately has now been made permanent.

Perhaps the biggest change for us was the discovery of exactly how many other Disney fans there are in the world, thanks to the big World Wide Web. The Internet community of those who love Disney is something we had no concept of 10 years ago, but since then, PassPorter and other names, such as AllEars.net, MouseSavers and WDW Radio have become common entries in our vocabulary. I'm sure most of you will agree that it's encouraging to find like-minded people, especially when so many others merely roll their eyes and say "you're going there again?" when Disney is mentioned.

Now looking back 10 years, I still see an instantly recognizable Walt Disney World. Yes, things have changed. Some things have gone and others have arrived in their place, but much of it remains the same. I think what's probably changed more in that time is actually our way of vacationing. From trying out a stay on Disney property for the first time ever, we're now DVC members. From enjoying counter-service offerings at the parks, we now love all the wonderful gourmet food on offer at the numerous table-service restaurants. And, of course, every time we visit, we meet lots of wonderful people, many of whom have become friends, through the wonder of the Internet and the PassPorter message boards.

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)*

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