

# Safari Celebration Dinner: A Magical Offering for Grand Gatherings

by Michelle Loomis, PassPorter Guest Contributor

In February 2010, I took a trip to Walt Disney World with four generations of my family.

Since there were eight of us, we could take part in the Grand Gatherings offerings, special events reserved for groups of eight or more. We decided to try the Safari Celebration Dinner. This is held at Disney's Animal Kingdom Park and consists of our own private safari and a celebration dinner at Tusker House afterwards.

To give everyone a chance to compare the Kilimanjaro Safaris ride to the Safari Celebration Dinner we would have later in the day, we planned to ride on our own, as soon as possible. We were the first people on Kilimanjaro Safaris in the morning! There we met Frank, a cast member who told us lots of interesting facts about the safari while helping us all walk at a slow pace to the ride vehicles. Why is meeting Frank important? We will see him again later.

That evening, we met for the Safari Celebration Dinner at the Flights of Wonder theater. There we were given a sticker and a special collectable pin. We also got to meet our guide for the evening, and ours was none other than Frank! He pointed out to the group that we were the first people on the safari in the morning. Frank then led us and another family to our ride vehicles for the safari. This safari was much slower than the one in morning, taking about 30 minutes. The safari trucks did stop a lot more, and Frank did the commentary on this trip, as opposed to the morning safari when the driver did the talking.

We were fortunate that when we got off the safari and headed to Tusker House for supper that the parade was still going on, so we got to stand in the front, right by the rope, and see the parade. They aren't always timed right to catch it, but this night it was perfect.

Frank dropped us off at Tusker House and we all were very appreciative of the great job he did on our safari and for remembering us from the morning. We were shown to our family's table and the server quickly got our drink order and sent us to the buffet. We all enjoyed the great selection of African foods that were available (and for the less adventurous there were American selections, too).

Then our host for the evening, "Mama," came out and entertained us. Since this is a celebration, she would announce any birthdays,

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anniversaries, etc. She called on my brother and his wife, since they were on their honeymoon. Mama wanted to know why my brother brought all of us along. He said to keep the peace, and got a laugh out of the group. They also had the children join in a dance around the room. Rafiki and Timon were available for pictures and autographs, too.

Once we were full and ready to leave, they had two cast members escort us at a leisurely pace through the closed park, to a bus that took us directly to our resort. This made for a very magical ending to a lovely meal and safari.

*About The Author: Michelle Loomis is a first time contributor to PassPorter News.*

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