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Fireworks Light the Sky for Fourth of July at Walt Disney World Resort

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – Walt Disney World Resort will pixie dust the night skies July 4 with special pyrotechnic shows, including a patriotic display at Magic Kingdom, a rock'n'roll spectacular at Disney's Hollywood Studios and a classic sky show at Epcot infused with an Independence Day finale. Here's how you can celebrate America's birthday – Disney-style:

- Magic Kingdom will present “**Disney's Celebrate America! A Fourth of July Concert in the Sky.**” This patriotic fireworks spectacular, paying homage to the hopes and dreams of America's forefathers, will light the skies at 9 p.m. July 4 – and for guests who would like to begin the Independence Day celebration early, the show also will be presented July 3 at 9 p.m.
- At Disney's Hollywood Studios, traditional Fourth of July fireworks take on a different spin when Mulch, Sweat, and Shears perform for the all-new “**Rockin' 4th of July Celebration.**” These resident landscapers – with serious rock and roll ambitions – take Disney guests on a musical road trip across America that will highlight each region's contribution to rock and roll. Fireworks, lighting and special effects – backed by the driving live rock and roll of Mulch, Sweat, and Shears – combine to bring a new twist to celebrating Independence Day. Showtime July 4 is 9:45 p.m. Before the show, Disney's Hollywood Studios guests can catch Disney's **Fantasmic!**, performing July 4 at 9 p.m.
- At Epcot, sky-watchers can check out “**IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth**” bursting high above World Showcase Lagoon. IllumiNations is a 14-minute spectacular during which pyrotechnics, lasers, water and music are all used to tell a story about the past, present and future of our planet. On the Fourth of July, the show will be enhanced with “**The Heartbeat of Freedom,**” an overture of traditional Americana themes displayed in a pyrotechnic and laser light event. The show is at 10 p.m.

In addition, Epcot guests may lend their ears to “**Voices of Liberty 4th of July Concert**” and meet with Benjamin Franklin, Betsy Ross and Disney characters adorned in patriotic dress at American Adventure.

Theme park hours on July 4 (subject to change without notice): Magic Kingdom, 8 a.m.-1 a.m.; Epcot, 9 a.m.-10 p.m.; Disney's Hollywood Studios, 9 a.m.-10 p.m.; and Disney's Animal Kingdom, 9 a.m.-8 p.m.

Disney's Water Parks Dive Into Summer 2012 with New Entertainment,

Eats and More

Typhoon Lagoon Packs in New Seasonal Offerings, Both Parks Offer Extra Magic Hours Through Late August

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – Summer 2012 brings a splash of fun for the whole family at Disney's Typhoon Lagoon and Disney's Blizzard Beach water parks, with new entertainment and dining options at Disney's Typhoon Lagoon and Extra Magic Hours at both parks.

New Entertainment

The relaxing atmosphere at Disney's Typhoon Lagoon is enhanced with new sounds of summer. For the first time, Calypso band "Tropicals" brings Caribbean steel drums to Disney's Typhoon Lagoon from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. every Friday through Sunday until July 15. The band can be found near the Crush 'n' Gusher water coaster pool area. Returning this year every day through September 8, characters Lilo and Stitch can be found just outside of the High N' Dry sundries shop at Disney's Typhoon Lagoon; at Disney's Blizzard Beach, guests can chill out with Goofy, who can be found roaming the water park.

New Dining Option

Disney's Typhoon Lagoon guests looking for summer fare beyond the normal park offerings may visit Tropicalamity. The new temporary food and beverage tent, located near Crush 'n' Gusher water coaster pool area, features a variety of eats, including chicken jerk pita wrap, citrus chicken salad, hot meatball sub and cold Italian sub.

Summer Extra Magic Hours

Guests staying at Walt Disney World resort hotels can take advantage of Extra Magic Hours on select days and times at both Disney's Typhoon Lagoon and Disney's Blizzard Beach through late August.

Disney's Typhoon Lagoon

- Currently, Wednesday mornings before the park opens, from 8-9 a.m. through August 22.
- Starting July 7, guests can take advantage of additional extra magic hours Saturday mornings before the park opens, from 8-9 a.m. through August 18.

Disney's Blizzard Beach

- Currently, Thursday mornings before the park opens, from 8-9 a.m. through August 23.
- Starting July 3, guests can take advantage of additional extra magic hours Tuesday mornings before the park opens, from 8-9 a.m. through August 14.

For more information about Disney's Water Parks, guests can visit disneyworld.com/waterparks.

Sounds Like Summer Concert Series Brings Classic Hits to Epcot through July

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – The good ole days return to Epcot as select summer nights heat up in July with the some of the world's greatest tribute bands. Classic hits from the likes of U2, Bon Jovi and more will rock during Sounds Like Summer concert series. The high-energy performances take place at the open-air American Gardens Theater in World Showcase.

The schedule (entertainment subject to change without notice):

- July 1 to 7: Slippery When Wet ~ The Ultimate Bon Jovi Tribute
- July 8 to 14: The Police Experience ~ A Tribute to the Police

- July 15 to 21: SouthBound and Company ~ A Tribute to Lynyrd Skynyrd
- July 22 to 28: 2U ~ A Tribute to U2

Show times are 5:45, 7 and 8:15 p.m. – except on July 4 when show times are 5:15, 6:30, 7:45 and 9 p.m. Sounds Like Summer concerts are included with Epcot admission. Additional information is available at disneyworld.com/soundslikesummer. For the latest information and updated show times, guests may pick up an Entertainment Guide when entering the park.

Save on Summer Expeditions on Wild Africa Trek

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – For a limited time, Disney’s Animal Kingdom guests can enjoy a discount on Wild Africa Trek adventures when booked for 11:45 a.m. or later. The summer promotion, running through August 25, 2012, offers guests a \$50 discount off excursions across untracked terrain of the Harambe Wildlife Reserve featuring close encounters with exotic wildlife.

As part of the journey, guests board customized open-air vehicles for an extended viewing of Kilimanjaro Safaris with an animal specialist before unwinding at a private safari camp overlooking wildebeest, giraffe, elephants and gazelles. At this station elevated above the savanna, guests savor sample tastes of Africa as their adventure draws to a relaxing and satisfying close. Reservations for the three-hour, expert-led experience (ages 8 and up) can be arranged by calling 407/WDW-TOUR. More information: disneyworld.com/trek.

ESPN Wide World of Sports Attracts Top Youth Basketball Players

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – For four weeks in July and August, the nation’s top youth and high-school athletes will meet at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World Resort to compete in the AAU Basketball National Championships. The competition features elite boys and girls and has historically been among the premiere collegiate basketball recruiting events in the nation. Hundreds of teams and thousands of players will participate July 3 through Aug. 4 with the hope to follow in the footsteps of previous AAU stars like Dwyane Wade, Dwight Howard, Carmelo Anthony and O.J. Mayo.

Savor Global Tastes with Special Events

Epcot International Food & Wine Festival Reservations Open

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. – Beginning August 14, guests can make reservations for Party for the Senses and other special wine and culinary programs offered at the 17th annual Epcot International Food & Wine Festival at Walt Disney World Resort. Party for the Senses grand tasting events will take place Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27 and Nov. 3 and feature tempting bites from eminent chefs, more than 50 wines and beers and live entertainment. Additional programs, also requiring separate admission, feature a lineup of renowned winemakers, guest chefs and speakers participating in elegant dinners, luncheons, seminars and wine schools. To make reservations, guests can call 407/WDW-FEST (939-3378).

The Epcot International Food & Wine Festival, just named one of the Best Food and Wine Festivals by the Travel Channel, will take place for a record 46 days beginning Sept. 28. Authentic taste seminars, HGTV seminars, special book signings, Eat to the Beat! concerts, cultural adventures, Marketplace Discovery Passport and all attractions and park entertainment are included with regular Epcot admission. Information about select events and programs taking place during the festival will be updated periodically at www.disneyworld.com/foodandwine.

It's "Hakuna Matata" For Vacationers at Lion King; Newest Phase to Open at Disney's Art of Animation Resort

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. -The Pride Lands of Africa is the scenic setting for the "Lion King," the third phase of Disney's Art of Animation Resort set to open Aug. 10 at Walt Disney World Resort. The new Lion King wing celebrates the journey of Simba, with landscapes and theming that reflect playful and poignant scenes from the Academy Award-winning Walt Disney Pictures animated film "The Lion King."

In the new Lion King wing, guests embark on a journey through Africa with encounters with characters and scenic moments from the film at every turn. King Mufasa towers atop Pride Rock while his evil brother Scar slinks in the shadows beyond the elephant graveyard. There's Pumbaa and Timon with a young Simba dancing across a log bridge in true carefree "hakuna matata" fashion. Scar's crazed and comical hyenas "guard" the elephant graveyard, a play area sure to delight youngsters.

The storytelling comes to life inside the 320 family suites. Zazu takes center stage on the headboards while Pumba and Timon decorate the shower curtain. Youngsters can rest on a leaf-shaped chair or sleep alongside Simba who slumbers at the head of one of the beds.

Earlier this summer Disney's Art of Animation Resort opened 320 "Finding Nemo" family suites and 480 "Cars" family suites. Opening in phases, each of four distinctly designed wings of Disney's Art of Animation Resort celebrates rich storytelling, spirited characters, original sketches and playfulness with colorful icons and whimsical theming inspired by classic Disney and Disney•Pixar films.

The whimsical property, situated adjacent to Disney's Pop Century Resort, offers rates from \$248 per night. The 1,120 family suites include two bathrooms, a kitchenette and three separate sleeping areas that can sleep up to six. The 864 standard rooms at the "Little Mermaid" wing, opening in September, sleep up to four, with rates as low as \$94.

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