Walt Disney World News

Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa Recalls Romantic Turn-of-the-Century Vacation Paradise

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — A grand hotel with gabled roofs and Victorian balustrades typical of the fabled Florida beach resorts of the 19th century is among Walt Disney World's themed resort adventures.

Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa, nestled on the picturesque shores of Seven Seas Lagoon between Magic Kingdom and Disney's Polynesian Village Resort, welcomed its first modern-day time-travelers in mid-1988.

The 867-room hotel featuring complete resort facilities recalls the days when John D. Rockefeller, Thomas Edison and even President Theodore Roosevelt led the annual winter pilgrimage to the land of friendly sunshine, where rowboats and palm fans replaced snow shoes and pot-belly stoves. Canary palms, southern magnolias and richly colored gardens complete the historic theme.

Often referred to as "the jewel in the crown" of Disney's Vacation Kingdom, the Grand Floridian also may be the first resort of its kind since the golden era of Henry M. Flagler and Henry Plant. But this time, it has all the advantages of 21st century living — including monorail service that stops right beside the 19th century Grand Lobby.

Complementing the guest accommodations are restaurants, lounges, snack bars, an arcade, shopping, swimming pools, children's playground, marina, beauty salon and 10,000-square-foot spa and health club. The luxurious, full-service spa offers an array of fitness and beauty treatments from aromatherapy body wraps to citrus zest massages.

Like Disney's other resorts, the Grand Floridian has a distinctive theme that carries through architecture, landscape, furnishings and costumes.

The style of the buildings is reminiscent of the Victorian era but is more playful and relaxed — embellished by intricate lattice work and balustrades and 120 miles of scrolls, turnposts and curved moldings. Snow-white towers and red-shingle roofs make a dramatic first impression on guests.

The resort accommodations are among the most luxurious on Disney property. The club-level and suite rooms with private elevator access in the 225,000-square-foot Sugar Loaf Key building include in-room facilities such as a wet bar and lavish decor. One of the resort's five lodge buildings also features personal concierge service.

In the main building, the third-floor concierge lobby includes two concierge desks designed to provide personalized services such as check-in/check-out, reservations, information, etc. The fourth-floor concierge lobby includes a quiet seating area where club-level guests can enjoy, at no additional charge, continental breakfasts and evening cocktails.

Throughout the hotel, guestroom decor, as it did a century ago, enhances the atmosphere of a refuge from harsh winters and the hectic big-city pace. Features include soft, spring-like colors and printed wall coverings, armoires and other furnishings in light woods, marble-top sinks with old-fashion fittings, and Victorian woodwork.

Most rooms include two queen-size beds plus a day bed. Suites include a parlor plus one to three bedrooms.

An open-cage elevator, aviary, palms and ferns set the mood in the sitting area of the Grand Lobby, which reaches five stories to a Victorian ceiling adorned with three illuminated stained-glass domes, ornate chandeliers and metal

scrolls.

Shops carry on the theme in displays featuring turn-of-the-century toys and clothing.

Dining opportunities at the Grand Floridian are diverse — from flatbreads, pizzas and grill entrees at Gasparilla Island Grill to intimate, candlelight, gourmet dinners at Victoria & Albert's, with elegant service fit for royalty. The largest restaurant is Cítricos featuring sun-drenched Provençal colors and an open-air kitchen. 1900 Park Fare hosts character dining at breakfast and dinner plus the popular Wonderland Tea Party. Grand Floridian Cafe serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. My Disney Girl's Perfectly Princess Tea Party is offered daily in Garden View Lounge.

All major dining locations are in the main building except Narcoossee's, a seafood restaurant on a romantic shoreline location. Octagon-shaped and open-beamed, Narcoossee's features a show kitchen where cooks broil, steam, sauté and smoke the catches of the day. The new Beach Pool Bar & Grill offers a grill menu and other specialty entrees.

Hotel recreation is water-oriented — white sand beaches on Seven Seas Lagoon, a marina with rental craft. Beach Pool offers guests a natural springs setting complete with a waterfall flowing from a 27-foot-tall stone mountain. Kids can make a splash in the new "Alice in Wonderland" themed water activity play area. For the most lavish water experience, the *Grand 1* offers a pampered VIP boating experience on Seven Seas Lagoon overlooking Magic Kingdom. The 52-foot Sea Ray yacht sails on morning, afternoon or evening excursions, featuring a fireworks display above Magic Kingdom on select evenings. For the ultimate cruise, private butler service and on-board gourmet dining is available.

The new Senses, a full-service spa and health club pampers guests with a variety of personalized treatments including massage therapy, body treatments, facials, manicures and pedicures. Men's and women's sauna, steam room, whirlpool and a workout room round out the amenities.

Reservations can be arranged through the Walt Disney World Central Reservations Office: 407/W-DISNEY, a local travel agent, or at www.disneyworld.com.

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