

## NHshorty's and BuffaloBill's May 30, 2012 Trip Report – Part III

Thursday 5/31 - Here's what our plan was for the day:

Breakfast: Trails End (walk or boat over)

Lunch: Grazing or Crystal Palace or Casey's Corner

Dinner: ADR at California Grill @ 7:40

Morning to Mid Afternoon: Magic Kingdom

Afternoon: Pool & Down Time and/or Hollywood Studios

Evening: Monorail Bar Crawl after dinner & fireworks

Want to do list for the MK:

- Jungle Cruise
- Buzz Lightyear
- New Dumbo
- Crystal Palace
- Casey's Corner
- Space Mountain
- Haunted Mansion
- Railroad
- Let the memories begin
- Wishes Fireworks

Before I begin my diatribe about our first full day in the world, I wanted to share something that NHshorty made for our trip. She made our own, personal, Mickey pillow cases. Pretty cool!

FYI – the WL pillows were hard as rocks, so we asked housekeeping for some softer ones and of course, they delivered them almost instantly.



The weather was beautiful when we left the WL around 9:30 and walked to FW using the jogging/bike path that runs between the WL and FW. The path starts near the WL bus stop and is a paved walkway about 6 feet wide and very smooth. The scenery is beautiful. The path ends near the FW petting zoo and stables.



Jogging/Bike path. Service Road for buses is just visible on left.



CM washing a pony at the Tri Circle D Ranch inside Fort Wilderness

It's a short and easy walk from the petting zoo area to Pioneer Hall where the Trails End Restaurant and the Hoop-Dee-Do Review are located.



Hoop-Dee-Do Review is on the left side and the Trails End is further down on the left.

NHshorty and I hit the buffet and thoroughly enjoyed everything just like we had a more than a few times before. For those of you who haven't been to the Trails End, it's rustic, it's simple, it's a comfortable buffet with comfort food. If you want anything drizzled on your plate you have to do it yourself. Breakfast for the two of us came to around \$35 plus tip.



Trail's End Restaurant rustic seating area. Note the rustic Cat5 Ethernet cable attached to the rustic beam.



Pictures are of our first trips to the buffet. Desert items are also available at breakfast.



That's Crockets Tavern behind NHshorty. Note the rustic canoe hanging from the rustic ceiling.

We also chatted with the CM's and talked with the manager. FYI – the manager has heard all the rumors about a DVC project and he doesn't believe any of them. He is also DVC member and previously managed the 50's Prime Time Café. It was his idea to go to an al a cart menu at lunch to reduce the amount of wasted food.

After breakfast (around 11ish), we walked past the lawnmower tree to the marina dock for the 10 minute boat ride to the Magic Kingdom.



The famous FW Lawn Mower Tree that is actually a very tall stump (the top tree has been cut down and the stump ends just out of frame). Note lawn mower partially visible at base. Also note that you can see the beach and Bay Lake in the upper right of the picture. The old Discovery Island is also visible beyond the beach.



Close up of the lawn mower. Note that a special Disney landscaping crew keeps the blade sharpened. You have to admire Disney's high level of attention to detail.



As you can see, the weather really sucked on our first day.

NHshorty was using a multi-day hopper ticket with no expiration that she had purchased last year. I was using a cast member guest pass (NHshorty's niece is a Disney employee in Austin, TX of all places) which meant I had to use the turnstiles designated for cast members.



You all know what lies just beyond this tunnel.



First line of the day.

Once we were both in the MK, the first stop was the old fire house to get our Sorcerers of the MK cards and instructions. The cards are beautiful and the game looks like fun, but we only played around with the game. We really didn't get into it very much. There were lines at the portals and people with 3 ring binders full of cards.



Ahhhhh. We're back!

After getting bathed in the Main Street atmosphere and saying hello to the castle, we got fast passes for the Jungle Cruise (NHshorty had never been on this ride) and then we headed to POC. The stand-by wait for the POC was less than



10 minutes. We then walked around to Frontier land, took some pictures, back to the hub, back to Adventure Land, and got in the fast pass line for the Jungle Cruise.

Yes, the Jungle Cruise jokes were so lame that they were funny. I liked it when the guide pointed out a wooden crate with a hardcover book on top of it in amongst some plants near the water and simply said, "Jungle Book."





Jungle explorers getting the point. Typical of the many scenes along the river.

The next ride, and another first for NHshorty, was Liberty Square Riverboat, aka the Liberty Belle. It was an interesting cruise around Tom Sawyer Island which we had thoroughly explored on previous visits.



The former Aunt Polly's on Tom Sawyer's Island. Haunted Mansion in the background

We wandered around through Fantasy Land into Tomorrow Land to check out the wait times for Space Mountain. We've done this ride a bunch of times, so seeing the long waits for stand-by and Fastpass, we moved on to the WEDway People Mover.



It's not exciting, but it's one of our favorites.

After the relaxing People Mover, we grabbed Fastpasses for Buzz Lightyear and headed back to see the new Fantasy Land and do the Haunted Mansion. Paging Mr. Morrow, Mr. Tom Morrow...



New Fantasy Land attractions seem to involve fence climbing and using heavy equipment! Couldn't find the stand-by or Fastpass entrance, so I didn't get to try my hand as a crane operator.



We did see Dumbo flying in a new direction.

At the Haunted Mansion, we went through the new inter-active graveyard. While the idea of touching the various things to make the various things happen sounds good in theory, the magic is diminished when you see a large group of high school students on a field trip in front of you, touching everything.



You hear a few notes of each musical instrument when you touch it on the gravestone.

Also, you know how they announce the flash photography is not allowed? Well, here's what the Doom Vehicle queue looks like when you take a picture with the flash still on.



Along the way we did see some mildly Stoopid Shoes!



After checking out the Fantasy Land improvements, including the new rest rooms and train station, and the Haunted Mansion, we hit Buzz Lightyear. As the picture shows, some people get pretty intense on this ride, but I won't tell you who had the highest score.



A new “find” for us was the MK marching/not marching band. In the picture below (taken by a total stranger) we are about to be run over by the aforementioned MK band.



The marching band becomes a non-marching band and performs a bunch of tunes on Main Street. Man, do these guys have some chops. I was very impressed.



Around 4:00, we decided we'd had enough, but before leaving we boarded the MK train at the Main Street Station and did a complete lap of the MK. I will probably declare the picture below "artistic" and post it.



We took the boat back to the WL and then around 6:45 we took another boat from the WL to the Contemporary for our ADR at the California Grill. Between the Contemporary's marina and the resort itself, there is this photo spot with a little pedestal to hold your camera. I have taken pictures at this spot for 20+ years. That's Bay Lake in the back ground.





NHshorty took care of checking us in on the second floor and the elevator ride to the CG was uneventful.



We took a table near the windows in the bar area. NHshorty ordered a Sierra Nevada beer and I ordered an Orlando Brewing Pale Ale which had a seriously unpleasant aftertaste.



After one of us had enjoyed their beverage and we both had enjoyed the views of the Cali Grill and the MK, NHshorty leaned forward and quietly told me that something was wrong. She had noticed that the other diners that had come up on the elevator with us had been seated and we had not. Our waitress, being ever attentive, also noticed that we had not been seated and she immediately interceded on our behalf with the majordomo. It seems that somewhere between the check-in desk on the second floor and the Cali Grill lounge we had become lost children.

Never fear, there were apologies offered and with a reasonable amount of groveling we were ushered to our table along the windows with an excellent view of the MK and a beautiful sunset.



Like MrHubs mentioned in his trip report, having a window seat with a great view is a double-edged sword. This is George whose parental unit encouraged him to go look out the windows whenever he got restless. George was a real sweetie; his mother was not-so-much.



OK, here's the food stuff:

We both sort of knew what we were going to have for dinner, so NHshorty chose an excellent wine from the extensive list. Our server, Randall, was very enthusiastic about this particular wine as well. It's called Meiomi (Me-O-My).



For an appetizer, we both ordered and received the Zellwood Corn Chowder. Strangely, there were no little individual packages of oyster crackers like I got at the ESPN bar the previous night.



NHshorty ordered the Grilled Pork Tenderloin with Goat Cheese for her entrée.



I selected the Oak-fired Filet of Beef as my entrée



For dessert, NHshorty got the chocolate with coffee ice cream tart.



And I ordered the crème brulee.



I forgot to snag a dessert menu, so I am not really sure about the dessert names. I'll try to get clarification later.

Just as we finished our desserts, the fireworks started. The lights were dimmed and the music from the MK was turned up. All and all, it's a unique way to see the MK fireworks. Because you are about 45 degrees off the center line of Main Street and probably close to a mile from the castle, you really notice that the low level fireworks (the white rockets with the long trails) originate near the castle and the aerial fireworks come from out beyond the back of the MK. Also because you're about 75 above the level of Main Street, the aerial fireworks end up being about at eye-level. Don't get me wrong, it's a great show. The combination of the Cali Grill atmosphere, the excellent food and service, the great view and the spectacle of the fireworks is true MAGIC!





Around 10:30, after the fireworks finale we settled our bill (about \$250 including the bottle of wine, tax, and generous tip) and headed down to the Contemporary's marina and caught the boat back to the WL. We were so satiated from our Cali Grill experience and weary from our day in the sun at the MK, we just shelved our plan for the monorail crawl.

Let's see how we did against the plan:

Breakfast: **Trails End (walk or boat over) - Did it!**

Lunch: Grazing or Crystal Palace or Casey's Corner - **Nope, hit Cosmic Rays and ate al fresco!**

Dinner: **ADR at California Grill @ 7:40 - Did it and it was fantastic!**

Morning to Mid Afternoon: Magic Kingdom - **Did it!**

Afternoon: Pool & **Down Time** and/or Hollywood Studios - **Sort of did it, but stayed later at the MK.**

Evening: Monorail Bar Crawl after dinner & fireworks – **Nope, too full and no energy.**

Want to do list for the MK:

- Jungle Cruise - **Did it!**
- Buzz Lightyear - **Did it!**
- New Dumbo - **Saw it!**
- Crystal Palace - **Saw it!**
- Casey's Corner- **Saw it!**
- Space Mountain – **Nope, lines too long, maybe Friday night EMH.**
- Haunted Mansion - **Did it!**
- Railroad - **Did it!**
- Let the memories begin- **Saw it from the Cali Grill!**
- Wishes Fireworks- **Saw it from the Cali Grill!**

One last bit of measured accomplishment. NHshorty wore an enhanced pedometer during our vacation. It records the number of steps and calculates the distance walked. On Thursday her total mileage was 7.98 miles!