

# NHShorty & Buffalobill's between Christmas & New Year's

## Cruise and Visit

### Day 6 and 7, December 30 and 31, 2013

#### **Trip Overview:**

In case you've forgotten, this trip was a combination 3 day cruise on the Dream, followed by 3 days/2 nights at the WL.

#### **Day 6:**

For those of you with short attention spans, here are the highlights of Day 6, we make an amazing food discovery, we discover Zombies at EPCOT, and we actually send back food at the Cali Grill. Day 7 is a short visit to HS before flying home, so there are no highlights.

We slept in a bit and did our usual breakfast routine at the WL. I went to the Roaring Fork QS and brought a croissant, a muffin, and a ½ pint of skim milk back to the room. NHShorty made coffee in the villa's coffeemaker and I brewed a cup of tea (we always bring tea bags). The weather was overcast and rainy again.

Before hitting the road I took some pictures from our villa's balcony.



Then I tried to be like you talented folks and took some "artsy" photographs.



For those of you who do not drive at WDW, there is no easy and legal way to get to southern half of WDW from the MK area resorts. I would use the easy and illegal routes, but that would involve driving through the MK parking toll booths the wrong way and crossing the median. So, with the attempted artsy stuff completed, we cranked up the rental car and exited the WL parking lot, drove down Timberland Drive, drove straight across World Drive to Seven Seas Drive, passed the Poly, turned left onto Floridian Way, passed the Hess gas station where Floridian Way turns into World Drive, took the EPCOT Center Drive exit off of World Drive, and then took the first exit off EPCOT Center Drive to the EPCOT parking lots.

With little or no effort and in very short order we were whisked through the turnstiles by our MBs.



Even though I didn't have a ten foot pole with me, I touched Beverly.



Yuck!

Even with cloudy skies, EPCOT looked great!

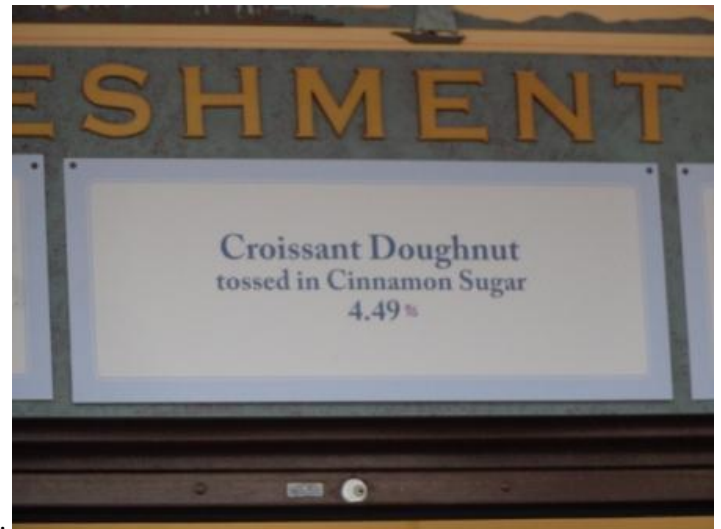




It also seemed the door decorating craze we observed on the Dream had caught on at EPCOT. Here are the doors of the Exit and Enter families.



And now, today's highlight #1: Forget cupcakes, pretzels, turkey legs, and Mickey Bars. Here is the best thing EVER!



Yes, a Croissant Doughnut tossed in Cinnamon Sugar!!!!!! We shared just one, because they were running out of them. They are sold at the coffee stand just inside of the WS on the right side near Canada. You have to try one or ten.



Our plan was simply to take a leisurely stroll towards France. Then jump on a boat to the BW area to check out the Christmas decorations, have lunch on the BW and resume our WS tour. Many pictures were taken along the way.





Lunch was at the ESPN and it was very good.



Following lunch, we hopped back onto a boat back to EPCOT. Once off the boat we continued our stroll around the world. One of the few stops we made was to check out the PDA couple in the gazebo in the train garden near Germany. The PDA couple was still in their room at the village inn, and the town square was decorated for the Holidays.



As we were leaving the train garden a slight movement caught my eye and revealed Highlight #2 for today, Zombies!!!!

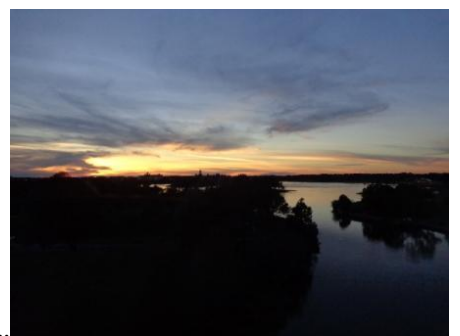




Yes, these two little figures in the town square periodically raise their arms and their eyes glow. What a hoot!

We continued our stroll all the way around the WS past Mexico and into FW where the wait time for Mission Space was out of this world. We made up for that by hitting Mouse Gears to two purposes in mind. The first was to check out the smell and the second was to buy stuff. Regarding the smell, neither of us detected any unpleasant odors although there were some guests who could have used a little "freshening up". Of course we bought a few things for ourselves.

Upon leaving EPCOT, we left our car in the EPCOT lot and took the monorail to the TTC. We transferred to the MK resort loop and started an abbreviated monorail crawl to check out the Christmas decorations at the three MK resorts. First stop was at the Poly where we decided to have a libation in the lounge in homage to MrHub & Scrappy. We followed this with libation-less stop at the GF. We skipped the CR because we were coming back later to hit the Cali Grill.



It was getting close to 7PM, when we transferred back to the EPCOT monorail loop and retrieved our rental car from the EPCOT parking lot. We exited the parking lot and got onto EPCOT Center Drive heading east. We took the first exit onto Backstage Lane (this is one way to meet members of the security team) and then a left onto Overpass Road. At the intersection of Bonnet Creek Parkway we turned left and proceeded north past Port Orleans. We then turned left onto Vista Boulevard past FW, turned right on World Drive, and right again onto Timberline Drive into the WL parking lot.

After a quick shower and a change into some nicer casual duds, we drove to the CR. The turn-by-turn directions consisted of a right hander onto World Drive and another into the CR parking lot. We parked and went up to the second floor to check in for our 9:30 ADR and the Cali Grill.

This was our second visit to the California Grill, but the first since the renovations and general changes to the restaurant. We each had a beer at the small tables near the windows while we waited for our table. This gave us a chance to check out the new décor. We both really liked it, although we liked the old décor too. Just as we finished our beer our waiter greeted us and escorted us to our table.

We had researched the menu before the trip in anticipation of having another top-ten dinner at the top of WDW, so we knew what we wanted. NHShorty ordered a bottle of Sequoia Grove Cabernet Sauvignon for us. We started with the Sonoma Goat Cheese Ravioli, which we shared, followed by Baby Romaine Salads with Roasted Garlic Dressing. For our main course we each ordered the Oak-fired Filet of Beef cooked medium. Sadly, here is today's highlight 3#, NHShorty's steak arrived cooked well done and had to be sent back. Normally this is not a big deal, but we sort of expected better. It was so obviously overcooked and should have never been served.



Overall we weren't over-the-moon about the new Cali Grill. Maybe it is because our previous dinner there, before the changes, was so freaking good. The service seemed much more casual this time, our waiter was covering four tables and just didn't seem to have time to really pay attention to anyone. Pointing out to our waiter that NHShorty's steak was overcooked seemed to be more of a problem than I expected. It just wasn't the level of service we expected. Even the wait staff uniforms seen to have taken a step down from what we had seen before and that seemed to set the tone for the experience.

Maybe our expectations were set too high by our previous visit and our great experience at Palo a few days prior on the Dream. We plan to give the CG a rest for a while and try some new places including the Yachtsman Steakhouse on our next visit in May.

After dinner we jumped on the monorail and headed to MK around 11:30 for EMH. We stayed at the MK until 02:15AM when we both ran out of gas. We ended the night with a monorail ride back to the CM to grab our car and returned to the WL about 3AM. Here are some random pictures of our MK adventures.







As I said, we got back to the WL around 3AM and called it a very long day.



### Day 7: A quick trip to HS before heading to the airport and returning to the frozen north

I'd like to say we got up bright and early on our last day in WDW, but I'd be lying. We slept in, got the usual light fair from Roaring Forks, packed our bags, checked out of the WL and headed over to HS.

Entering HS was where we had our first and only hiccup with the Magic Bands. Basically, they didn't work because we had checked out of our hotel. This seemed illogical, because our MB are tied to our annual passes and should be active until our APs expire. Anyway, a CM helped us and said it was a known problem that would be corrected in the future.

Here we are in the bag check line and in line at TZTT. The same woman was standing in front of me in both lines.



And of course she sat next to me on the ride.



We stopped briefly in the TZTT gift shop where I finally realized why Disney started using the Magic Bands. Apparently Disney had run out of cool and humorous slogans for the T-shirts sold on the property. Now with the advent of Magic Bands a whole new flock of T-shirts can be produced for our purchasing pleasure.





We took a ride on Star Tours and wandered around for a while. The Osborne Lights are not the same during the day.



And before we knew it, it was time to head to the airport and close out a most wonderful trip.

OK, gang; here is my big take-away message from this trip: **TAKE A DISNEY CRUISE, YOU'LL HAVE A GREAT TIME!!!!**