

Fort Wilderness Fun Facts and Information

Note, all photos have been removed form this printable document.

This page is, and probably always be a work in progress. Please feel free to drop me an e-mail with any suggestions, corrections or additions.

Fort Wilderness at Walt Disney World

Actually, my first camping trip ever was to Fort Wilderness. We lived in Miami at the time (around 1974) and Miami was not know as the camping capitol of the world. I was in high school and on the baseball team. As a team "field trip" we went to FW for a few days.

We packed up the old yellow school bus and trucked up the turnpike to this new place to check it out. We reserved 3 campsites if I remember correctly, and ended up on the Little Bear Path.

For those who never camped there in the early days, neat things happened.

For one, instead of busses they ran trams like the parking lot at the Magic Kingdom around the campground loop until around 2AM. Busses to the park (remember it was just the MK then) only ran from the settlement or reception outpost. The trams were neat because you could ride round and round all night.

The were still running the steam train then and that was a lot of fun to ride.

Who would ever think 30 years late I would still be going to FW.

Until you visit and look around, you may have difficulty understanding the impressiveness of Fort Wilderness. Many have said that Fort Wilderness is the standard by which all commercial campgrounds should be judged. I do agree with this! The campground boasts over 700 camping sites with a wonderful canopy of trees throughout. With swimming pools, arcades, marina (sorry you can't bring your own boat) and activities galore there is something for every camper. With so many sites, the campground is divided into individual camping loops of 30 or 40 sites. Each loop has both a number (i.e. the 1900 loop) and a name (i.e. Conestoga Trail). It is hard to imagine the size and scope of Fort Wilderness until you have been there.

Reservations

Reservations at Fort Wilderness are easy to make as Disnev has a large full time

reservations center which handles reservations for thousands of rooms on the WDW property. No toll free call here, 1 407-W-DISNEY (1-407-934-7639) is central reservations.

Up until 2003, as with all resorts at Disney World, the years was broken down into four seasons, with a different price during each season. They were (from highest cost to lowest) Holiday Season, Peak Season, Regular Season and Value Season.

Starting in 2004 they have added a "Pre-Holiday" season for the November/December time frame. The Pre-Holiday season will be priced just above the Value season (\$4 more per site) So with this in mind, be careful how you make your reservations. Disney bills all days at the rate for the first day of your stay. If you start in Value season and extend into a higher priced season this is a great deal. But, if you start in a higher priced season and extend into a lower priced season you can be a loser. A way to get around this, make two reservations, one for the peak days and one of the off peak days. You will have to check out and then back in but usually can stay on the same site. When you check in for the first reservation, make them aware of your situation.

2004 Site Pricing

(tax not included) **Campsites**

Type	Value	Regular	Peak	Holiday	Pre-Holiday
Partial Hook-Up Site	\$ 36	\$ 52	\$ 60	\$ 69	\$ 40
Full Hook-Up Site	\$ 41	\$ 62	\$ 71	\$ 81	\$ 45
Preferred Site	\$ 49	\$ 67	\$ 76	\$ 86	\$ 53

2004 Season Dates

Cabins

Pre-Holiday Season: 11/19 - 12/19

Many people ask what to do if Fort Wilderness is booked full. I have been lucky and have always been able to get into Fort Wilderness. If you are told that there are no sites available you can always call back. You can try as often as you like - cancellations are very common. The computer system seems to release the cancellations at 7AM, so an early morning call is usually best.

When calling for reservations remember you are talking to WDW Travel or WDW central reservations (*see more about these groups below*), not Fort Wilderness. Any questions about the campground itself should be directed to Fort Wilderness staff.

Campsite pricing is usually posted in June for the following year. So in June 2004 the prices effective January 2005 should be posted by Disney. Prices generally remain firm for the entire year once posted. Discounts are available most of the year and change regularly. The best site I have found for discount information is MouseSavers.com

WDW Travel and CRO

When calling 1-407-W-DISNEY two groups answer the phones

CRO = Central Reservations

WDW Travel = WDW Full Service Travel Agency

In the "olden days" the only group that existed was CRO and all they did was book rooms/sites. As the need for a full service travel agency arose for things like packages, airfare, cruises and the like WDW Travel was created. WW Travel books complete packages including air, cruises, tickets and other stuff. *Trip cancellation insurance* has been a big moneymaker for travel agencies for years, especially in the cruise industry. Recently, folks have been complaining that insurance has been added to their reservations.

Now, we do have to remember to compare apples to apples. Most times when WDW Travel quotes an all inclusive price (i.e. trip insurance has been added) they have already added taxes also. Taxes at WDW are a big part of the "add on" price.

When I recently called to book my next trip I was quoted \$186.70. I asked if that included taxes, the reply NO. Knowing full well that I was in Value Season (\$40 a night) I knew right away I was talking to WDW Travel.

When I questioned the price and who I was talking with the CM state that she was

with WDW Travel and it included trip insurance. I asked to be transferred to CRO. CRO then booked the same 4 days for \$178.40 + tax.

So the insurance on my 4 night stay was going to be \$8.30. As the insurance is sold as a percentage of the total cost, the insurance fee can add up quickly on a cabin with tickets and other stuff included.

Park Tickets

In the past I have purchased tickets from both AAA as well as Orlando based ticket brokers. This has provided up to a 5% discount from face value. I never purchase from roadside stands, e-bay as they tickets may be no good. This year Disney began selling tickets (both online and through the reservations phone system) at up to a 10% discount. So far this seems to be the best deal I can find. I tend to buy 7 day park hopper Plus tickets. This allows me to move between parks on any day I use them, and with the 7 day ticket you get 4 "plus" options. This can include water parks, Pleasure Island or may other Disney activities. As the tickets never expire, I use the same ticket over several trips. If you don't want to have days left over, they do sell shorter duration tickets. In most cases you just need to purchase them a few days before you arrive and can pick them up at Guest Relations at any of the four parks.

Specific Site Requests

When making reservations you can ask to be assigned to a specific loop, and they will even note a specific favorite site, but remember nothing is guaranteed! While I could give specific instructions, I would just recommend reading one of the best articles I have found regarding site/room requests is "[Faxing Your Room Preferences To Your Disney Hotel](#)" by Jack Marshall. This and other great information is found on the [All Ears Net/Walt Disney World Information Guide](#).

Check In

The easiest way to get to Fort Wilderness is to follow the signs for the Magic Kingdom (MK). When you see the toll booth for the MK, move all the way over to the right and try to use the first open toll booth on the right. It works easiest if you have your reservation confirmation available, just pull up to the toll booth and show your reservation. You will be waived through, no charge. Turn right at the very first corner (it comes up quick) which is Vista Blvd. You will follow this all the way to the fort. Look for the sign for check in and turn into the drive. You will again stop, this time at a kiosk where Disney security will again confirm your reservation and direct you to the proper location. If camping in a cabin, you will be directed to the parking lot so you can go inside the reception outpost to check in. If you have your home with you, you will be directed to the "drive through" check in lanes.

Check in time is 1PM (check out is 11:00AM). If you arrive prior to 1PM and your site is not ready, you can still get your resort ID's and enjoy the campground. There is a very large parking lot at the reception outpost, so you can stash the camper there and check out the pool or other activities. If you want, you can go to a park and make a day of it. When you return, get your site assignment and set up camp.

Fort Wilderness Phone Numbers

Location	Phone Number
Reception Outpost	407-824-2900
Reception Outpost Fax	407-824-3508
Bike Barn	407-824-2742

Campsites

There are 3 levels of campsites at Fort Wilderness:

Standard, which includes electric and water This includes the 1500 and 2000 loops

Full Hook Up, which includes electric, water and sewer (most of them are this way) This includes the 600, 800, 900, 1000, 1100, 1200, 1300, 1600, 1700, 1800, and 1900 loops.

Preferred, which includes electric, water, sewer and cable TV The preferred sites are also in loops situated closer to the settlement which includes the marina, beach, restaurant, petting zoo and many other activities. Also, if you plan on using the cable TV hook up, remember to bring a long coaxial cable to hook up with. If you don't have one Disney will be happy to sell you one. This includes the 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 700 and 1400 loops.

The preferred and full hook up sites provide a full length concrete parking pad for the tow vehicle and camper. Behind that is a compacted sand/gravel pad on which you will find a full sized picnic table. On the standard sites you will find a smaller concrete pad and larger sand/gravel pad. Also on each site is a charcoal grill. You are allowed a camping vehicle and 1 tent on the site, so the kids can have a tent to themselves. Most sites are under a full canopy of trees with bushes shielding you from adjoining sites. While you will still see your neighbors, you are not in a field like many campgrounds, you are truly in the woods. Conveniently spaced around each loop are trash cans and recycling containers (aluminum, glass and plastic). The loops are lighted at night by soft low to the ground lights allowing you to actually see the stars at

night. My biggest disappointment at Fort Wilderness is the rule against campfires at each site as we do love to have one. I do understand that it would be a lot of smoke for 4 or 5 hundred campfires to be burning at the same time. Phones are not available at any level site but the cellular coverage inside the campground is quite good.

Prior to your occupancy Disney cast members go over the campsite cleaning the grill, raking the sand area and cleaning off the concrete. Unless there is a mix up you never have to worry about dealing with the previous campers trash.

Site Decoration

If you feel up to it remember to bring along any tacky lights or site decorations you may have. During holidays (i.e. Christmas, Thanksgiving...) people tend to pull out all the stops. Lots of lights and other decorations abound. So decorate the trees and bushes on your site and have at it.

Site Electric Service

Each site has an electric power pole that provides 20a, 30a and 50 a service. In addition to the RV power pole, FW is adding electric outlets to every site number pole to make it easy to plug in a golf cart.

"Original" electric service poles were themed to appear to be tree stumps

Here is the working side of the "tree"
One 50a, one 30a and two 20a outlets. These "tree" poles are being replaced with standard RV electric poles that only have one 20a outlet.

Site Number Pole

Campfire Sing Along and Movie

Each night Fort Wilderness hosts a campfire (ves. bring your marshmallows). sing

along and Disney movie in the Meadows area. For those who do not have marshmallow, a "smore kit" is sold at there. Adult beverages are allowed, so bring them along or buy them there. At the beginning of the month the movie schedule is posted, so check out what is playing during your trip. This activity is held every night, weather permitting. When you check in ask about the time as it changes seasonally due to the differences in sunset.

Hayrides

Nightly hayrides begin in the settlement area. Cost is around \$6 per person and they leave when the wagon is full. For those who want a little more privacy or romance they also offer carriage rides during the evening for around \$30.

Tri-Circle D Ranch

Open daily in the settlement area is the Tri-Circle D Ranch. This includes a petting farm, barn tour area and pony rides. While the petting zoo and barn tour area are free, the pony rides are around \$3

Comfort Stations (Bathhouses)

Bath houses, know as "Comfort Stations" are well placed around Fort Wilderness, with 2 loops usually sharing 1 comfort station. They are air conditioned, have private hot showers, laundry facilities and ice machines. In several trips to Fort Wilderness I have never found them anything but clean. While they can get busy during the morning rush, I usually shower at off hours and was usually alone. Both house (all Disney Properties) and pay phones are outside of every comfort station. If you have a need to hook up your laptop to the internet a phone jack is available at the reception outpost.

Emergencies

All comfort stations, as well as other high activity areas (like the pool area) have phones to allow calls for all types of emergencies. New this year are AED's (automated external defibrillator) in most of these same locations. These are devices meant to be used by lay persons to assist victims of cardiac arrest. But just like CPR, training is always helpful. Check out the [American Heart Association web page](#) for more information.

Meals at Fort Wilderness

One of the nice things about camping is saving a few dollars on food. For those times when you don't feel like cooking several options are available right inside the campground. Located in Pioneer Hall in the settlement area is the Trails End Buffet.

Croquets Tavern and the Hoop-Dee-Doo Musical Review. As the name implies, Trails end is an all you can eat buffet while Croquets is a "finger food" type place. The Hoop-Dee-Doo Musical Review has to be seen! A family style meal and a wonderful country dinner show. Seating for the Hoop-Dee-Doo is assigned by the date you reserve, so book early.

Refillable Mugs

For those people who drink coffee like I do, one of the best deals in the campground is the refillable mugs. Buy a mug at Trails End for about \$11.50 and fill it up anytime you want for your entire visit. At Trails End you can select coffee, hot chocolate or fountain cold drinks. At the Meadows Trading Post coffee and hot chocolate are the choices. By the end of my last 5 day visit, my cost for a cup of coffee was down to about a quarter.

Food Shopping

The meadows trading post has a small grocery section for emergency shopping. While the prices are not totally outrageous, they are higher than local supermarkets. If possible I would suggest stopping at a local store (my favorite is the Florida chain [Publix Supermarkets](#)) on your way in. Then if necessary stop again if you make any side trips off Disney property. There are many other stores in the local area including.

The closest Publix I have found is [Publix Regency Village Shopping Center \(Store #00812\)](#)

Driving Directions:

- Exit the Disney complex on Hotel Plaza Blvd (Lake Buena Vista) to 535, turning right on 535.
- Drive under I-4, turning left at the first light after you cross under I-4. This should be Vineland Ave.
- Continue on Vineland Ave, pass the outlet stores (nice center) and follow the signs to Publix.

This is about 5 minutes further than Goodings, but you save a bunch!

Current Store Hours:

- Sun 8:00 AM - 10:00 PM
- Mon 8:00 AM - 10:00 PM
- Tues 8:00 AM - 10:00 PM
- Wed 8:00 AM - 10:00 PM
- Thurs 8:00 AM - 10:00 PM
- Fri 8:00 AM - 10:00 PM

- Sat 8:00 AM - 10:00 PM

Ice

There is an ice machine located at every comfort station (bathhouse). If you plan to use them, bring a roll of quarters. This is one of the few areas that Fort Wilderness disappoints me in. A small bag of ice is \$2.00! As with food, I suggest picking up ice on a stop outside of the Disney property. Almost all supermarkets, quick marts and gas stations have larger bags cheaper.

Swimming Pool

While not a "theme" pool like many of the other Disney resorts, Fort Wilderness boasts a nice heated pool which is open 24 hours a day. Even on a December night I find it a nice place to unwind and relax. Just remember, no glass on the pool deck.

Arcades

Available adjacent to the pool as well as in the settlement area, arcades are available to use up all the available quarters.

Playgrounds

Fort Wilderness is chock full of play areas for kids. Most loops have some sort of play area such as volleyball, basketball, tether ball and things like that. Also in several areas of the campground are larger playgrounds, just check out the map.

Watercraft

Both canoes and paddle boats are available for rent at the bike barn. With a small pond in front of the barn as well as several canals available you can canoe to your hearts content. Just remember, not private watercraft is allowed on any Disney waterway. For a little more action, drop on by the marina area behind Pioneer Hall. Small personal watercraft (water sprites) can be rented and operated by guests. Other power boats are rented with a captain or crew running the show. For that someone special in your life, why not book a champagne cruise to watch the fireworks? But remember, for special cruises like this book early! If you plan to spend a lot of time on the water, you may want to check out the marina at the Wilderness Lodge. Currently they have a "Family Plan" special. For \$199, for a one-week period, you can have up to 4 water sprites out at a time or even pontoon boats.

Vehicle Use

Fort Wilderness restricts the use of motor vehicles inside the campground. Your "room key" allows access to the campground roads via the returning guest gate next to the reception outpost. Other than four 15 minute restricted spaces at the Meadows Trading Post, the ONLY place to legally park is on your campsite. As the campground is over 750 acres you will need a way to get around. I always bring bikes and use them. Bike racks are available at all destinations within the campground, plus a little exercise never hurt me.

Skate boards, skates and scooters can be used on the camping loops and hiking train only, not on any of the roads. Motorized 2 wheel transportation, i.e. mopeds, scooters and the like are prohibited. In the Fort Wilderness Gazette (the paper they give you at check in) it states: "*Motorbikes or Cycles: No two-wheeled motorized vehicles are allowed in Fort Wilderness.*"

Transportation (Buses)

Internally, Fort Wilderness provides busses for transportation around the campground

Fort Wilderness has been divided into three colored internal bus routes: ORANGE, PURPLE and YELLOW

All internal buses stop at the Reception Outpost (Check In Area) and the Settlement Depot (Pioneer Hall Area).

YELLOW Route: 300, 500, 1400, 1500, 1600, 1700, 1800, 1900

PURPLE Route: 2000, 2100, 2200, 2300, 2400, 2500, 2600, 2700, 2800, Creekside meadows / Group Camping area

ORANGE Route: 600, 800, 900, 1000, 1100, 1200, 1300, Meadows Trading post, 2100, 2200, 2300, 2400, 2500, 2600, 2700, 2800, Creekside Meadows / Group Camping area

The Reception Outpost Bus Stop has direct buses to Downtown Disney, EPCOT, Animal Kingdom/Blizzard Beach

Settlement Depot Bus Stop has direct buses to Ticket & Transportation Center, MGM Studios

During busy periods (park opening and closing) the busses get crowded quickly! Boat transportation is available at the marina if your destination is the Magic Kingdom or the Wilderness Lodge (one of Disney's premier resorts). For transportation to other parks, I suggest taking your own vehicle. As a Disney resort guest, no parking fee is collected at any of their parks.

Transportation (Golf Carts)

The Bike Barn in the meadows area has golf carts available for rental to FW campers. At around \$42 a day the cost can add up quick. The rental carts are electric and run quite a while on a charge. There is electric available at both your site as well as some other cart parking areas to allow you to keep it fully charged. According to FW, The guest must be **18** years old (and have a valid drivers license) to rent the cart. The guest must be **16** years old (and have a valid drivers license) to drive the cart.

But, fear not for those of you who have your own personal electric cart, Disney will allow you to bring it into the campground. For a time there was a big business of commercial cart rental companies delivering rental carts to FW, but Disney no longer allows them to be delivered to the campground. If you have a means to pick them up and transport them yourself, outside rentals are still available. One rental company mentioned often is [Golf Cart Enterprises](#). As I said above, bikes are my favorite mode of transportation in the campground. Most mornings while I'm at FW, you will see me on the bike headed to the Meadows Trading Post for my first cup of coffee.

Other sources of carts in Orlando include:

EZGO 407-847-3444
Yamaha Factory Outlet 407-847-5019
Orlando Golf Carts 407-426-9727

Electric Water Pageant

Each evening there is a wonderful parade on the waters of Walt Disney World. Passing Fort Wilderness at 9:45PM (ask when you check in, times may change) is a wonder of sight and sound. So grab your beverage of choice and wander on down to the waterfront to enjoy the show.

Pets at Fort Wilderness

Fort Wilderness has an on site kennel for your standard house pets. It will probably be best to leave your tiger at home. The kennel does NOT accept reservations at all, so don't bother trying. Current 2004 rates are \$6 for a day stay and \$9 for overnight. If you check in for the week you will pay the overnight rate. Pets must be kept in pet loops which include the full hook up 1600 - 1900 loops or any preferred loop. Three "pet walk" areas include a canal pet walk off the 1800 loop, a canal pet walk off the 300 loop and a nice wooded walk behind the 700 & 800 loops. You must drive them to the kennel, you can NOT walk them to the kennel.

The FW kennel asks that you stop by to walk them twice a day

yourself, but you can pay an additional \$2.50 (each walk) for the FW employees to take them out. Most of the cages are stacking models, one over the other. Interior dividers can be removed to allow space for larger dogs. In addition to these cages which are indoors, they still have a number (I'd say 15 or 20) of outdoor cages/runs. While they have ceiling fans over them it does get quite warm during the summer.

The kennel is open from 7:30AM to 10:00PM, but if you are out late the staff at the reception outpost can walk over to the kennel to get you dog to allow them to come to the site for the night.

For pop up owners, be careful. [The Disney website states:](#)

"Q. Can you tell me more about keeping my pet at Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground?

A. Specific areas of Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground have been made available to Guests with pets. These are full hook-up campsites. There is a \$5.00 per day pet charge. (This is a per day, per site charge only, not per pet.) *Sorry, Guests in tents and pop-up campers may not keep pets at their site - they must be kenneled.*

Rest assured if you are camping in a tent or pop up you can bring your pet to the site. I have spoken to FW Cast Members several times and they state that the statement should be that pets can not be left unattended in a tent or pop up. If you have any questions regarding this give the reception outpost a call at 407-824-2900.

What if I want a Preferred Pet Loop?

On 7/23/03 I talked to both central reservations as well as WDW Travel. Both now show *ALL preferred loops as pet loops!*

Tent Camping

While the only time I have tent camped in Fort Wilderness was way back in 73, I see lots of tents on every trip. While most seem to stick to the partial hook up sites to save a few dollars, I have seen them on every loop in the campground. Remember, every site has electric so bring a couple of extension cords and away you go.

I really liked this site. A partial shelter under which you will find all the comforts of home; refrigerator, microwave, coffee pot, and toaster! Sleeping takes place in the tent.

Handicapped Availability

Fort Wilderness was designed for handicapped access. Campsites have level concrete pads connecting to the loop roads with no curbs or other obstructions.

The bathhouses each have at least 1 roll in shower and 1 accessible toilet stall. The handicapped sink is equipped with an automatic faucet as well as an angled mirror.

Busses used for transportation within the campground are all equipped with wheelchair lifts

Dump Stations (i.e. where do I get rid of the [gray water](#))

Fort Wilderness is unusual in this respect, they do not have a dump station. For those of us who contain our gray water but do not get a full hook up site, just stop by the comfort station and call the reception outpost. FW cast members direct you to any vacant full hook up site to dump in.

As there are only 2 loops which do not have sewer connections this is not usually a problem. In my opinion it is just easier to pay a few extra dollars a day and get a sewer hook up.

Extra Vehicles

Fort Wilderness only allows the camping unit and one vehicle at each campsite. Any additional vehicles must be parked at the reception outpost parking lot.

Fishing at Fort Wilderness

Catch and release fishing is allowed in the canals and ponds of Fort Wilderness. As a matter of fact you can rent poles and buy bait for your expedition. No State of Florida fishing license is required. For a little more action, the marinas at most resorts can arrange a boat fishing trip including guide.

Fort Wilderness "History"

I had to go back to my old Disney stuff to figure this out, and here is the "History of Fort Wilderness" as I know it:

Fort Wilderness opened November 1971 on 750 acres between the Contemporary Resort and the Walt Disney World Village. At that time it had 231 camping sites including loops 100 - 600.

June 1973 added 481 sites, loops 700 - 1900

April 1974 Pioneer Hall opened

June 1976 added 113 sites, loops 2000 - 2100

June 1976 River Country opened

April 1979 added Creekside Meadow group camping area

December 1986 added 383 trailer sites*, loops 2200 - 2800

* the current sites of cabins had rental Terry Trailers on them

Mickey with a Musket

It appears that the last "Mickey with a musket" sign is still hanging over the Fort Wilderness marina dock. It's probably just a matter of time before this one is gone like all of the others.

The Wilderness Line Steam Train

During many of the early years Fort Wilderness had an actual railroad running around inside the campground. My 1978 *Resort Guide* states "This authentic, narrow gauge steam train provides guests with a scenic journey across the length of Fort Wilderness. Resort guests may ride for \$.50 a day."

I'm sorry to say that it did not last long. I remember riding it on one of my earlier trips to Fort Wilderness. Apparently Disney found it too expensive to retain and removed it. All that is left is a section of track bed leading from "Fort Wilderness Trail" next to the 700 loop into the woods. I followed this for about 100 yards into the woods following the back of the 700 loop until weed growth and fallen trees blocked my path. If you take a look at the 1978 maps below you can see the entire train route.

A great site giving an overview of the train is
the [Fort Wilderness R. R. web site](#).

Additional information on the Fort Wilderness
Steam Train is available at
[startedbyamouse.com](#)

Feel free to e-mail me tim5055@title-3.com