



Coming next Sunday

INN IS A REAL CATCH

Trout club allows visitors

Super city awaits

Tampa ready for football fans | F3

Be selective to get most out of trip to Disney

By Anne Z. Cooke
FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Have a birthday coming up? Mickey Mouse has a present with your name on it.

Doing his bit to vanquish the recession blues, America's main mouse plans to shower you with pixie dust, then transport you and your family from unemployment fears to a fantasy world of whirling tea cups, talking dogs and the possibility of an audition at the "American Idol Experience."

The gift — a one-day entrance pass to a Disney theme park — won't give you enough time to see all of the wide-ranging Walt Disney World complex, which is twice the size of Manhattan Island.

But you could easily merge your birthday pass with a multiday visit, one of the four- to six-day "celebration vacations" that Disney says more families are booking this year. (Register for a free ticket at www.disneyworld.com.)

How could anyone spend a week here? The truth is that seven days isn't enough to see and do everything in Disney World's six theme parks, with its restaurants, dance clubs, shows and fireworks. You really have to pick and choose.

Top choice

Tops in our family is the *Pirates of the Caribbean* ride in the Magic Kingdom. It's a sentimental choice, but as the tourist-laden boats pass a half-dozen light-hearted pirate scenes, ocean-going piracy seems like a jolly idea.

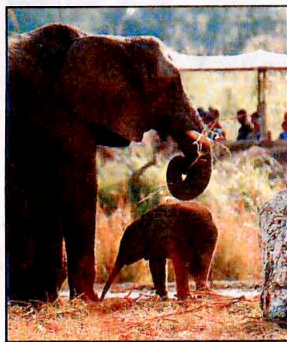
"The music hasn't changed since I was little," said Kathy Flood, from El Cajon, Calif. "I still feel like a kid when I hear that 'Yo ho, yo ho, the pirate's life for me.'"

But there are some modern additions, says 10-year-old Dillon, our family's most observant individual.

Capt. Jack Sparrow, as played by Johnny Depp in Disney's recent *Pirates* films, makes his appearance in some scenes. If the kids behind you scream "There he is!" they are probably counting Sparrow sightings.

Although Epcot hasn't kept up with some of Disney's newer attractions, we always include a stop at the Moroccan Pavilion, a reminder of the monthlong vacation we spent in North Africa.

Chances are that staff members in costume — flat-topped fezzes and flowing djellabas — will be there to welcome you. If we get there in midafternoon, we find a seat in the cafe, order mint tea and stay long enough to catch a traditional dance. Once the music begins, you'll forget you're in Florida.



WALT DISNEY WORLD

Donna and her calf, Nadirah, are in Disney's Animal Kingdom.

African safari

In our view, the best park these days is Animal Kingdom.

Although contained on 403 acres, Animal Kingdom feels as big as Africa, with 1,500 animals (most from zoos), a botanical garden, 13 guest attractions, nine cafes and restaurants, and three shows.

The 10-year-old park, resembling natural savannah and forest, shows what Disney can do when it combines a vision with intelligence, artistry and a plan.

Included in the Kingdom are five regions: Dinoland U.S.A., Discovery Island, Asia, Camp Minnie-Mickey and the Kilimanjaro Safari. But it's the last, a 25-minute ride in

FLORIDA ISSUE

DISNEY

FROM PAGE F1

an open-sided truck on a bumpy dirt road, that looks so natural.

The road winds and turns through what looks like open savannah, taking visitors past giraffes, elephants and antelopes, and farther on, past warthogs, ostriches and gazelles.

Though all are apparently free to roam, graze on the trees and bushes, and drink from waterholes, invisible barriers separate them from the road, and in some cases, from each other.

Keep your telephone lens on; you're likely to spot lions, rare black rhinos and Nile hippos.

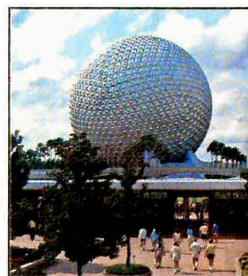
"The best time for viewing is around 3 p.m., when the animals are most active," a waiter in the park's Harambe Village told us. "That's when they start to come into the barns to be fed."

To build the Animal Kingdom, Disney workers moved 4.4 million cubic yards of dirt onto a flat site and reshaped it according to the blueprints. Four water features, including Discovery River, were designed, which use, together, 300 million gallons of water. The on-site treatment plant keeps the water clean, filtering and treating 15.6 million gallons a day.

Meanwhile, more than 4 million shrubs and grasses were planted in gardens, fields and along river banks, followed by 100,000 small trees in addition to 280 trees already growing on the site; 30 others were transplanted to other Disney World locations.

Water workout

The problem with rides is that you're always sitting. If you and your kids want to be part of the action, check out Typhoon Lagoon, Disney



STEVE HAGGERTY | FOR THE DISPATCH

Spaceship Earth is the thematic centerpiece of Epcot.

World's 61-acre water park. When the kids need to blow off steam, we spend a couple of hours here, a special treat if you're here in the summer.

Take your choice of nine short and long water slides off of Mount Mayday, each designed to resemble a mountain brook. Then move on to whitewater thrills on Gang Plank Falls, where 6-foot rafts navigate 300 feet of rapids. The rafts seat four adults; we've gone with five by squeezing the two smallest kids in together. There's also a wave pool where you can try body surfing under relatively safe conditions.

But the big attraction is snorkeling at Shark Reef, a 362,000-gallon saltwater pool stocked with tropical butterfly fish, French angels, tangs, groupers and nurse sharks.

The Shark Reef water, circulating gently, is a good non-panicky place to show your kids how to use a snorkel and mask, and it's a lot closer than the Caribbean. Towels and snorkel masks are available.

The most sedate ride is the inner tube float down Castaway Creek, through rain forests, waterfalls and grottoes. Or sit and watch the snorkelers from the shipwreck on the reef. Food is available at Typhoon Tilly's or Leaning Palms. Both serve sandwiches, salads, cookies and ice cream.