

family

B E A U T I F U L

Quaint and Glamorous in Orlando!

When I think of Orlando, quaint and glamorous are two words that do not come to mind. Noisy, chaotic, fun, wild, crowded and fantastic are more along the lines of what we experience. While there is a time for all of these things, at the Celebration Hotel, quaint, artsy and boutique are the rulers of the day. As you drive along the well maintained streets, noticing the particular effort that has gone into the redefinition of small town America, you understand that you have arrived someplace special. Not at all far from the maddening crowds sits Celebration, a master planned community with gorgeous golf courses, traditional homes, and a lovely main street with lots of dining choices. This antidote to suburban sprawl appeals to folks from all over the world and many have chosen to make this their permanent home.

The Celebration Hotel is perched at the end of the lake like a decoration on top of a wedding cake. Old Florida style at its best, this jewel of a joint hosts local and international art work in the lobby as well as a jazz pianist. The feel is like that of a friend's lodge in the Adirondacks, overlooking the sparkling waterfront, casually elegant and just the right amount of luxury. The staff will pamper you, remember your name and make you feel at home in the faceless Orlando landscape.

Dining is a treat at the Bohemian Bar and Grill, located in the airy and fresh in the lobby area with views of the art collection. The meal was easily one of the best I have had in Orlando or even anywhere. The calamari appetizer is superb, as is the iceberg salad which is infused with candied walnuts and a jalapeno ranch dressing. The entrees are equally great. The expertly prepared blue cheese crusted filet mignon is divine and the grouper with the risotto is out of this world. This is all topped off with an excellent, eclectic wine list and super service. The experience is a must do.

After all this relaxation and pampering, we needed a fix of thrills. Wet 'n' Wild had been on the radar and it was just the thing to rev up the engines. Right on International Drive, this monster of a water park is sure to thrill even the most seasoned veterans. There is something for everyone, with a lazy river, a kiddies (under 5) area, a water ski and beach area and over a dozen thrill water rides. My favorite is the Disco H2O! Four people ride on a large raft down into a tube that has flashing club lights and loud disco era music. This hurls you into a bowl type structure where you spin around and get dumped out into a wading pool! Excellent! Another mega ride to consider is the Black Hole. Hurl through a wet and wild intergalactic experience with black lights and more music with many twists and turns. It is not for the faint of heart! I seriously recommend purchasing the Express pass. This saves a lot of long wait time on lines, at \$10 extra per person, and is very reasonable.

Celebration is a wonderful family or couples destination, a grand getaway that is close to home, yet full of energy and life. The balance of tranquility and fun is the perfect antidote to everyday stress. —SUSAN SHORT

Wet 'n' Wild www.wetnwild.com • 6200 International Drive • Orlando, FL

Celebration Hotel www.celebrationhotel.com • 700 Bloom St • Celebration, FL • 407-566-6000

