

June 08 2011

**"Midwest Paradise!"**

Paradise in Wisconsin?!?! Who knew! The Wilderness Hotel and Golf Resort, America's largest waterpark resort, is as close as it comes to a Midwest paradise. From the moment our family of four drove up, we were amazed at the thought and care that went into creating and operating such an enormous wonderland. The entry doors to the lobby were intricately carved with owls and trees, and once inside, the fun continued with a themed lobby complete with waterfalls and a giant stuffed bear, which thrilled our 2 year old daughter. At this point, our kids were totally psyched. Our four year old son shouted out, "It's even cooler than I thought it would be!" before he had gotten 3 feet in the door. You can only

imagine his reaction upon seeing the arcade and playland just beyond the lobby windows. And when we got up to our room and they looked out on our balcony to one of the eight waterparks the resort features...well, I'm pretty sure I've won "Mom of the Year" in his eyes.

We'd been looking for a vacation destination that meets three criteria- 1. Affordable, my husband is a grad student so frugality is a necessity. 2. Relaxing, is that even possible with a 2 yr. old and 4 yr. old? And 3. Kid friendly, after all it is a "family" vacation. The Wilderness Hotel and Golf Resort met those criteria above and beyond.

The Wilderness resort has so many amenities, you would expect it to be ridiculously expensive, but that's just not the case. They offer special rates throughout the year as low as \$99 a night, waterpark passes included! For a resort of this caliber, that's unheard of! With eight waterparks, a giant indoor playland, and special kids activities all included in your stay, your vacation dollar goes a long way. The separately priced activities such as their three mini golf courses, laser tag, bumper boats, etc. are all extremely reasonable as well. Our kids are so used to us saying "no" to all of those extra things that they were delighted to hear us say "yes" this time. Who can turn down \$10 for mini golf for the whole family, or 25 cent skeeball?!?! We really felt like we were able to spoil the kids without breaking the bank. Even the dining options were reasonable. Poolside hamburgers ran \$5.99, a bag of chips was \$1.25 and the pizza special (2 pizzas, breadsticks and a 2 liter of pop) was only \$29.99. And if you prefer to make your own food in your room, they have on site grocery items that were kid friendly and also decently priced (89 cents for a cup of ramen noodles and \$1.69 for a can of spaghetti'os.) Each room has a fridge and microwave, so we enjoyed making our favorites from home and eating on our balcony.

As far as relaxation goes, the staff here are incredible and make your stay very carefree. Need a crib? They'll set up a pack and play in your room for you. We were always greeted with a smile, and our kids were as well. I'm kind of a nutcase when my kids are around water, and because of that I'm always observing the lifeguards and how closely they're watching. The lifeguards here watched like a hawk, not even taking their eyes off while switching shifts. It was very impressive! Our room was pristine, gorgeous and very relaxing. It was spacious enough that a family of 5 or 6 would be quite comfortable. It was also very quiet. Even when the waterpark directly outside us was in full swing, if the sliding door was closed, our room was quiet. And as far as crowds go, it was a summer weekend at 97% capacity and we never had to wait in line for more than a few minutes, and we could always find lounge chairs at the parks. There was plenty of space for everyone to relax and enjoy!

Kid friendly? Absolutely. The lifeguards were giving our kids high fives and telling them to have fun on the way down. There is an abundance of water activities for all ages. If you have an infant or toddler, there are water bouncers and swings (our two year old LOVED them!) For those under 48", there are a ton of slides that are big and exciting enough to be cool for your preschooler or lower elementary age child but small enough for them to handle. And since there are so many, they don't feel deprived at missing out on the bigger slides. As for teenagers, this place is wicked! I talked with a lot of teenagers and while they each had their favorite slide, they seemed to disagree on which one was best. I tested out several thrill rides myself, and they were the sweetest, fastest ones I've ever been on. My favorite was Black Hole, which has lights and music to set the mood! Our kids' favorite was Lil' Chutes, which is great because there is no height restriction, it's just the right length and speed, and parents are even allowed to catch the kids at the bottom. Our 2 yr. old asked to go again and again, and I overheard a bunch of 11 year olds talking about how fun it was as well!

All in all, I'm not sure why we're planning a trip to Disney with the kids, because the Wilderness Hotel and Golf Resort is closer, much cheaper, and equally entertaining! A five star experience for our whole family!

This review is based on a complimentary stay at the Wilderness Hotel and Golf Resort. I received no other compensation besides the hotel stay and the hotel did not state any requirements that I express a particular point of view.