

## How to choose a Florida Villa

We have come to realise from chatting with our guests that one of their biggest challenges is how to choose the Florida villa that is right for them! This article reflects their experience and hopefully sharing it with you will make your choice easier...Is a Florida villa right for me?? Whether you are seeking a magical Disney World Vacation or an active family holiday, a Florida villa is one of the most flexible options available to you. Many visitors decide on a hotel or motel room. This can appear to be the cheapest option but has several disadvantages. One of those is the amount of private space that you get in hotel! The amenity value of a Florida villa is much greater! The convenience and space when things go wrong were an important factor for one of our guests when 3 of her 4 children became ill shortly after arriving. She was so pleased to have chosen a luxury florida villa with the space and convenience of 5 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms as it meant that the whole family was not wakened when one member had to get up frequently during the night!

**Location:** This is the most important one! Its important to choose the Florida villa that is close to the attractions that you will be visiting frequently. First time visitors have little idea of the scale of the Orlando area and the whole thing can be more than a little daunting. Its made even more confusing by the vast choice of Florida villas available and the lack of clear details on their location. We know that this has resulted in some families travelling long distances to get from their chosen location - not ideal. That's why we have clear links to maps from our luxury villa details pages. We want you to be able to plan your vacation and spend as little time as possible in the car! always ask how many miles it is from the villa to a particular attraction - this will soon sort out whether its a real 10 minutes from Disney or if they mean "in the dead of night in a super car with no cops in sight"! **Quality:** We spent some time recently viewing Florida villas. The pictures on their web sites presented the villa very well in most cases but it soon became clear that they had been taken a very long time ago. Many of the villas were very tired, showed heavy wear and little attention to maintaining a comfortable environment for their guests. They were certainly far from the luxury villas they were being marketed as! These problems showed up much more in the properties in which the owners had clearly taken little interest and were managed by property management agencies (Large or small, and who, in turn rent them to the large holiday companies). This is one reason why we update the pictures of our properties each year. That gives our guests the confidence to know that what they see is what they will get. Whilst booking direct with the owner does not guarantee quality, it does give you the opportunity to ask if the photos on the site truly represent the condition of the villa today. Always ask when the photos were taken. **Check in/out** This is often overlooked as one of these things that has to be done but be careful! Check in and out is not usually at the villa! Its normally at the management company office where you have to wait in line with everyone else that booked through the same company. This means that you have to drive to and find the office from the airport. We know of offices that are over 15 miles from the villas. Check the driving distances and times from airport to office and from office to your villa. (Be aware that if the office is in Kissimmee, it can be very busy and take a long time especially in the early evening). **Note:** We have an electronic access system so our guests can drive direct to their chosen luxury villa and let themselves in. The benefit of this sytem is clear - and you have no keys to lose or hand back - not to mention that you'll be sipping cocktails well before others have even reached their accommodation! **Locality:** What we mean here is the area surrounding the villa. Careful examination of the photos of some villas will show where they have been doctored to hide undesirable features. One of the favourites is to block out the lower areas of screened pool enclosures to hide the fact that there are many pool enclosures very close to the villa. We do not enhance our photos. Check carefully or ask if the pool area is overlooked.

**Games rooms:** Some villas advertise a games rooms with all kinds of entertainments. If this is something that you want to have in your villa, be sure to enquire whether it is properly air conditioned. The reason for this is that some owners have simply locked the garage door and installed a carpet and a pool table or foosball table to make a games room. Its fine in December but impossible to use comfortably for much of the year.**Equipment:** Check whether the equipment you need is 'included' or 'available' and know the difference between these terms. Included usually means that the item is included in the rent for the villa. Its important to know that 'available' usually means that the item is available but you will be expected to pay an extra charge for it. For example, a gas barbeque will cost you between \$35 and \$50 per week to hire (+ sales tax). A cot, baby seat or stroller will be about the same each! That can make a significant unexpected dent in your pocket - check unless the information is explicit!**Pool Heating:** Ensure that pool heating is optional. We heard a sad story from someone who had enquired with us and decided to take another villa for his stay in June. He mailed us back to say that he thought he had made a mistake as the company he had chosen were going to charge him another \$180 a week for pool heat - he didn't realise that you don't need to have the pool heated in June - no wonder they were quoted a cheap rate!

The other thing is to make sure that the pool heat will meet your expectations. If the temperature drops below about 55 deg F, electric pool heaters struggle a bit to maintain temperature especially if you leave the covers off at night. A gas heater will maintain the temperature - but expect to pay more - they are monstrously expensive to run! **Summary** We hope that this guide helps you make your choice of vacation villa. We think that Florida villas are exceptional value for money but there are some traps which we have highlighted. Whilst we realise that checking all these details might be a pain, we think that it will ensure that you have a much better vacation!