

## What's the deal with time shares?

Contributed by The Geek  
Tuesday, 23 September 2008  
Last Updated Friday, 16 January 2009

So you know the deal with Time Shares, don't you? You get some little prize to sit and listen to a presentation, maybe take a tour, and then get the hard sell on why you just can't live without a Time Share. Oh, and by LAW you have to make a decision THAT DAY.

So here's the deal. I decide to take my kids on a little trip up to the Orlando area. We stay in and around Disney alot, so I've been looking at other options to liven things up a bit. So I hear about this place called LIKI TIKI (yes, Im serious). Liki Tiki is a time share resort owned by a big time share company called Club Navigo. It's about 5 miles from the entrance to Disney, and it has its own water park on the premises. And, if I agree to sit through a 90 MINUTE presentation, my stay is free.

Ok, so ninety minutes gets me a free weekend in a condo (living room, kitchen, washer/dryer) at a place with it's own waterpark? Well, DUH! Let's check it out.

So up I go to Orlando. For some reason they like to book your tours in the middle of the day. This actually keeps you from going out and spending a happy day in Orlando. My tour was at 11am.

My tour person was named Efrain. He was a nice enough guy, from Chicago. I know this because he did almost nothing except talk about himself the whole damned time. When I finally got him ON topic, and he began explaining how the system worked, it sounded pretty damned good. Here's the lowdown he gave me.

Modern timeshares now work on a point system versus a fixed week system like they used to. The cost in points to stay in a resort depends on both the resort itself and on the season. Seasons are either Low, Mid, or High. Low being the cheapest, high being the most expensive. For our talks, we met in the middle and used Mid-Season as a standard for our discussions.

So, Efrain told me that the average cost to stay in a 2 bedroom condo across ALL of their properties was about 2000 points. If I wanted a more popular place, it might be more. Less popular might be less. Smaller accomidations were also cheaper.

We was pitching me a 3000 point plan. For \$10,900 I could OWN (with deed) a 3000 point/year plan for the rest of my life. It would be mortgaged over 10 years for approx \$139 a month. After it was paid off, I would continue to receive 3000 points a year forever, and could pass it down to my children, and their children, etc. The only recurring fee would be the maintenance and taxes, payable every 2 years at approx \$600 for both.

So, after the initial thing was paid off, we're talking about \$300 a year forever to maintain this thing. Doesnt sound too bad. Plus there is a free travel company that comes with it, hotel affiliations which can supposedly get you 60% off on any hotel stay (including Disney's Grand Floridian), Roll-over points from year to year, etc, etc.

Well, Im not an impulse buyer especially when it comes to so much money. So I told Efrain that I wasnt ready for such a long term commitment and he handed me over to a "closer", who was supposed to just invite me back again in about a year so they could try again.

NOT.

This guy immediately went for the hard sell. I wasnt buying it. You get hard sell with me, I get mad, which he quickly learned. So he backed off and said, "Listen, why dont you try our explorer program. You get to see what its like to be an owner before you actually commit".

Ok, tell me more.

It works like this. Put down \$50, and then pay \$53 a month for like 11 months. What you get is 4000 points to use at a limited number of resorts (Like 5 resorts in Florida, and one in St Croix). All you get though, is the points. Not all the extras.

So I sat there with the guy (Sam is his name) and figured out that based on the average number of points per night, i could get 10 nights, or 5 weekends out of the deal. I do most of my trips over weekends, so thats what works for me. Anways, Sam sat there and HELPED me figure this out. I then figured if I stayed at a hotel for those 10 nights, it would

cost me approx \$100-\$120 a night anyways. So figure \$1,000 for hotels on the low side, and here I'm getting a condo for all of those for approx \$900. It even worked out better that way.

So I said yeah, I'd like this. Lets do this deal. He came back with paperwork, which I signed, and I paid the deposit. He brings me over a bottle of carbonated apple cider for the kids, and my new tour book which he stuck right into a Club Navigo pouch. He even gave me a free voucher for a "6th weekend" in Daytona. We shake hands, and I leave.

Now, most people probably wait until they get home to read their stuff. Not me. I went to the pool where the kids were swimming and opened it up. Inside I find the following distasteful facts:

1) On one of the pages of the contract that he kind of sped by, they "Guaranteed" me the current price of the full package I was being offered. So if I finished the explorer package, I could move up to the permanent one and the rate would stay the same. EXCEPT they cut the number of points IN HALF. So for the 10,900 they would give me 1500 points a year. (This is one of those bait and switch tactics that they hope you dont realize. They told me afterwards that the 3000 points were every other year just like the maintenace, which is NOT what I was told.)

2) When an "Explorer" member, you must stay at the resorts a MINIMUM of 3 nights per visit. Well, there goes the whole concept of weekends. Sam KNEW this and helped me do the math. What a prick.

3) Worst of all, each time an "Explorer" member visits a resort, THEY MUST SIT THROUGH A TOUR PRESENTATION!!! So much for being treated like an owner!!!

I go back up to the front and confront the people. They acknowledge these three items and tell me that I can't cancel the deal in person. Florida law permits for 10 calender days for to cancel the contract, and they must be notified IN WRITING at a DIFFERENT address.

So I got home on Sunday night late, wrote the letter on Monday, and had it in the mail first thing this morning. Thats 3 calendar days. What about the people who dont read the fine print until they get back, or the following weekend or even later? They're SCREWED! And after my dealings this weekend, I've come to find out that even though it seems like a good deal, the time share people (especially the salesmen) are in the business of screwing as many people as possible.

A NOTE TO THE WISE - Timeshares still have potential, just NEVER BUY DIRECT. There are timeshare resellers around that you can buy someone elses packages at a hugely discounted price (50% or more).

So does it seem, in this day and age, everyone is out to screw everyone else? This industry is just a reflection on our society as a whole. And I'm not liking it.