

Disney Makes Vacationing More Affordable

Disney is chipping in to make vacations for service members and their families even more affordable.

With the “Disney’s Armed Forces Salute” offer, active and retired U.S. military personnel, including active members of the United States Coast Guard and activated members of the National Guard or reservists, can enjoy complimentary, multi-day admission into Disney’s U.S. theme parks, and additional special ticket offers for family members and friends.

At the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida, from January 4 to December 23, 2009, each active or retired member of the U.S. military may obtain one complimentary five-day “Disney’s Armed Forces Salute” ticket with Park Hopper and Water Park Fun & More options. This ticket is valid for five days of admission into the four Walt Disney World theme parks, plus a total of five visits to a choice of a Disney water park, DisneyQuest Indoor Interactive Theme Park or certain other attractions.

During this offer period, active or retired U.S. military personnel may also make a one-time purchase (up to a maximum of five) of five-Day “Disney’s Armed

Forces Salute Companion” tickets for \$99 per ticket, plus tax, for family members or friends. Although this ticket for family members and friends does not include either the Park Hopper or Water Park Fun & More options, this ticket can be upgraded to add either such option, or both, for an additional \$25, plus tax, per option. All tickets and options are non-transferable and must be used by Dec. 23, 2009.

A similar offer is in place at Walt Disney Land, in California, as well. For more information on the “Disney Armed Forces Salute,” active and retired military can contact the ITT/ITR office on their local installation, or visit www.disneyworld.com/military.

AFRCs offer four other world-class destinations for families, including Edelweiss Lodge and Resort in Garmisch, Germany; Dragon Hill Lodge in Seoul, Korea; the Hale Koa Hotel in Honolulu, Hawaii, and the Cape Henry Inn and Beach Club at Fort Storey, Va.

For more information, visit www.armymwr.com.

New Law Eases Tax Burden On Military Families

BY SYLVIA CANNON

A tax law that went into effect last fall introduces a number of tax benefits for military families and extends or makes permanent several existing benefits.

The HEART Act – the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2008 – helps reduce the financial burden on military families in several ways:

Survivors of service members who die on active duty are now allowed to place all or part of death gratuity payments into a Roth Individual Retirement Account or Coverdell Education Savings Account (CESA), regardless of the annual contribution limits for these accounts.

New rules for civilian employer plans require the employer to treat service members killed in action as if employment terminated due to death for purposes of calculating survivor benefits.

Mobilized National Guard and Reserve members may withdraw money from their personal retirement plans without incurring an early withdrawal penalty. Funds

may be replaced up to two years after the end of active duty. (The replacement of funds does not provide an immediate tax benefit, but provides basis in the retirement account.)

Guard and Reserve members who contribute to an employer-provided health flexible spending account can use unspent funds rather than lose the money, if they are called to active duty.

Military families can count most military cash allowances beyond basic pay as earned income when determining Supplemental Security Income eligibility and benefit amounts.

California and Texas are now able to provide home loans to newly discharged service members, not previously allowed because of bond-related issues.

Small businesses employing Guard and Reserve members may receive a \$4,000 tax credit to make up salary differences to employees who are mobilized for military duty.