

Mom and Daughter Bond on the Disney Speedway

By Debi Lander

I'd like to think my needs are minimal: a clean bed, food and water (maybe a little wine) a camera and computer. However, I admit my desires run toward luxury and I have developed a taste for out-of-the-ordinary travel and adventure. Feeding that hunger can be challenging.

Luck was on my side as my twenty-three year-old daughter (yes, she's spoiled) and I were presented an appetizing treat. We didn't nibble at the chance, we devoured the opportunity to drive an exotic luxury car as fast as we could handle. Decadent, for sure!

Everyone knows Disney creates magical memories and that's exactly what we received: a day of automotive dreams. We left St. Augustine in my car and drove to Orlando, then passed through the gate to enter the Magic Kingdom. We weren't headed to the theme park, but rather to Walt Disney World Speedway, which sits near the Disney parking area.

We found an official race oval, originally built and used for NASCAR events, but crowds of theme park guests and race enthusiasts caused major traffic congestion. So now Disney offers the Richard Petty Driving Experience and an Exotic Driving Experience on alternate days. Just imagine, sitting behind the

wheel and driving the world's fastest and most exotic high performance cars on a real racetrack...no traffic...no stoplights...no law enforcement. What an amazing gift this would make for someone special.

We were ready to jump into a super sexy car; however, all participants must first attend a class and watch an educational video which is supposed to make you feel comfortable. In my case, it made me anxious. Laura and I were surrounded by a number of macho guys who were on a company outing and couldn't wait to show off their skills. What if I became an embarrassing slow poke? I thought about that and then decided to forget it. Yet I knew

I wanted to race that car. Would I have the courage?

The one-mile course combines the speed of racing on an oval track with the challenge of a street-style course. You don't roar around like a NASCAR driver; instead you maneuver sharp turns more like a Grand Prix racer.

We headed out to the spectator area to watch some of the earlier students taking their laps. Whoosh. As the cars whizzed by, you could actually notice the drivers increasing the speed with each additional lap. Okay, I could do this.

We were soon told which cars we





would drive and Laura's smile grew so large, her eyes were nearly shut. We were photographed by and in the car before being fitted with helmets and introduced to our expert instructors. These brave souls would sit in the passenger seat and talk us through the course. I can't envision myself working as a driving instructor in a vehicle that can blast from zero to sixty in less than four seconds with amateurs behind the wheel. I'd choose parading as Mickey on a hot day anytime.

Laura slowly entered the seat of a flaming red Ferrari with an MSRP price of \$262,000, and I must admit she looked fabulous. Well, come on... just about anyone would look marvelous in a car like that. I was offered a silver Audi R8 that carries a MSRP sticker of \$150,000. Whoa! Together we were driving nearly half a million dollars' worth of machines.

On the first lap I was instructed to drive at whatever pace felt comfortable and just familiarize myself with the track. I was fine on the oval but the turns were tight...honestly, very tight. I actually thought I was done with the series of zigzags and hairpin turns, but completely missed the last one. I kept my car on the track -- just not the correct portion of the track. My

coach was pretty laid back, but told me to be sure to include all the turns the next time through.

With each successive lap, I did get faster and faster and felt more confident until I actually floored the pedal to the metal and let that baby take off. I was flying at 114 miles per hour. Not too shabby for a grandmother of eight! I actually wished the braking portion of the track didn't come up as quickly because I loved the adrenaline rush of speed and the reassurance that the track was safe. However, the turns were always difficult for me and by the end of my series I began to feel nauseous as I swerved around the corners.

What a blast! Laura took right to it and she couldn't wait to Instagram about driving a Ferrari. She adored her car and naturally wanted to drive it home. I told her she'd have to marry someone very rich.

If you are looking for an upscale, different kind of mother-daughter bonding experience, I cannot think of anything better. I highly recommend driving the dream cars at Disney. Magical memories guaranteed.

Disclosure: Thanks to Disney for hosting us for this amazing experience.

