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## More information about Square Feet Tours

### Why did you develop Square Feet Tours?

Thanks to my life-long career in the travel industry, I have had the good fortune to visit most of the places that I've dreamed about. These include works of architecture, landscape architecture and town planning. People travel for different reasons; I like to learn new things when I travel...to enrich the travel experience and expand what I know. As such, I am always keen to take an interpretive tour of the places that I visit. Sometimes the tours are led by a docent (Fallingwater in Mill Run, PA) sometimes they are recorded tours (The Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles). But some of the less-visited places don't offer any type of tour. It's precisely those places, the ones that are incredible but not as well known, that I thought should have something to offer visitors like me who see travel as a chance to enrich their knowledge of the designed world.

In my professional life, I have developed skills as a teacher, story teller, and presenter. It's the *story* that really interests me; what was the designer thinking at the time? What were the influences? What was happening in the world at the time of the site's design? I think those aspects really help to bring the design to life. I thought I could put the skills that I developed at work to help fill the gap in offering enrichment to travelers to sites that I think are worth exploring. So I set out to research the stories of the sites and their creation, write the narrations, and then record the tours. It's really a labor of love.

### How do you select the places that are the subject of your tours?

That's simple; I have to love the place! There are those rare places that I've visited that actually *exceed* my expectations. They completely blow me away. Fallingwater, the Frank Lloyd Wright masterpiece in Mill Run, PA, is one of those places (but since they offer great tours, I won't be covering that with a Square Feet Tour). The town of Seaside, Florida is another example. The TWA Flight Center at JFK is a third. In every case, each is a place that is so incredible that I generally walk around in awe when I visit; precisely the kind of places that I want to learn more about, and then to share that knowledge through a tour.

### Why was the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin your first tour?

The idea for Square Feet Tours really began after my first visit to Seaside, Florida. I *happened* to visit Seaside over a weekend where a local Landscape Architect offered a walking tour of the town. What's more, soon after the tour started we were interrupted in a surprise visit by Robert Davis, the founder of Seaside. It was an awesome experience to get to meet Robert Davis, to talk to him, and to ask him questions about Seaside. Seaside is an absolute wonder; it's the best of everything I've learned and experienced about town planning and design, and far exceeded my expectations.

When I returned home, I started to think about people who might visit Seaside when there was no tour offered. While students of architecture or town planning and professional groups might exert the effort to pre-arrange a tour before a visit, anyone with a casual interest in town planning, architecture, landscape architecture, or design might never have a chance to learn more about the story and design of Seaside. I thought I could create a tour and sell it to visitors. That was the original concept...and it stuck with me for a few years.

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### **Why was the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin your first tour? (Continued)**

In the spring of 2015, I started to explore the idea of offering a tour of Seaside more fully. As much as I love Seaside, I thought creating a tour that involves an *entire town* might be a bit too ambitious for my first attempt. So, I created a list of other places that interested me. Then I learned that my favorite contemporary architect, Michael Graves, had died. That news is really what put the Swan and Dolphin at the top of my list. I also did a bit of research and discovered that Orlando receives 64 million visitors a year. In fact, I estimated that the Swan and Dolphin resort accommodates about 1 million guests each year. If even a miniscule fraction of the 64 million people who visit the Orlando area, or a small fraction of the hotel guests of the Swan and Dolphin are interested in Architecture, it would be a good test of the tour concept. Plus, the tour is FREE, and a free thing to do at the Walt Disney World Resort is a rare thing. Also, you can be sheltered from the sun or rain throughout the tour, making it a great thing to do when the weather might not be ideal for exploring a theme park. And finally, since the Swan and Dolphin are designed to be convention hotels, the percentage of adults to children is higher here than at most Disney resorts, and I really think this type of tour is intended more for adults than children.

### **What is your background?**

I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Planning and Design (Landscape Architecture) from Rutgers University. I have spent my career in the travel industry, both on the travel seller side by running a mid-sized, corporate travel management company, and on the travel buyer side as a corporate travel manager. The travel career has allowed me to visit most of the places in the world that I studied as a student of Landscape Architecture, as well as the places and buildings that I've admired. I love books, and have a library full of books on design, architecture, landscape architecture and town planning.

### **Where did you find the photos used on your website?**

I took all of the photographs on the Square Feet Tours website. Amazingly, they were all taken using my iPhone. I have never been much of a photographer, but the phone makes snapping pictures easy. The photos are really a testament to the quality and ease-of-use that Apple has built into their phone.

### **Why are the tours free?**

The tours are free because I really think its good karma to simply put something out there for any interested person to enjoy. I am always looking for ways to bring in a bit of revenue to offset the cost of researching and producing the tours, but I hope to always offer the tours for free.

### **What's next?**

I am currently working on a walking tour of the Chrysler Building in New York and a driving tour of Upper Greenwood Lake, NJ. My family has had a house on Upper Greenwood Lake since 1946, and I am fascinated by the history of the early development of this mostly man-made lake. I really want to try my hand at a driving tour, since there may be an opportunity to do additional driving tours in those instances where walking is not practical (for example, a driving tour of the towns along Highway 30A in South Walton County, Florida). I am also continuing to work on the website. I really hope to optimize the site for access by mobile devices. And finally, I am still trying to find the most practical way to spread the word about Square Feet Tours so that others can enjoy learning about the places presented.