

Flying to Europe for a Disney Cruise: A Disney Cruise Line Article

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

The Disney Magic is right in the middle of another summer season of cruising to exciting and exotic destinations around Europe.

With even more tantalizing destinations announced for 2015, including the cruise line's first Norwegian fjords itineraries, no doubt some of you across the pond are thinking about heading over here to indulge in some Disney fun on the high seas.

Unless you're lucky enough to be on next year's eastbound Transatlantic crossing, you'll need to get a flight over here before hitting the water, and that can certainly be a challenge, especially with the "hub and spoke" system operated by many of the airlines in America. It may be an expensive challenge, too, as we know only too well how much Transatlantic flights cost, as we take them nearly every year, although sadly this year is an exception to that rule. So what do you need to know when it comes to heading to Europe for a cruise, or perhaps even for a non-Disney vacation?

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The first thing you need to think about is where you want to arrive. You may not have much choice, depending on your local airport, but if you're flying via some of the larger American airports, chances are that there are flights to destinations throughout Europe. In 2015, the Disney Magic is sailing out of Copenhagen, Denmark; Dover, England; and Barcelona, Spain. Of these destinations, a direct flight from America to Dover is perhaps the easiest to get, with London Heathrow ranked as Europe's busiest airport. Barcelona's airport is ranked 10th, and Copenhagen's is 16th, so they're less likely to be available as direct flights.

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If you can't find a direct flight that works for you, then you may need to look at some of Europe's biggest airports, which act as gateways to the continent, in a similar way to the hub and spoke system in the U.S. Obviously, Heathrow is one option, while Paris' Charles de Gaulle, Frankfurt Airport in Germany, and Amsterdam's Schipol Airport are some of the other major players.

It's worth checking the situation with connecting flights if that's the route you go down, as sometimes you can connect without the need to clear immigration. Ok, so now I've mentioned that scary word "immigration," although it's something we've become very used to with all our visits the States.

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□ Unlike Orlando International Airport, I can't promise that you'll be greeted in any European airport with the music from IllumiNations (and that is not a joke, I promise!), but entry is usually pretty straightforward. Your biggest challenge may be the wait to clear immigration. Airports all over the world do everything they can to keep these to a minimum, but from our experience, lines are more likely to build at bigger airports, as they have more people to deal with.

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□ A good rule of thumb is to ensure your passport will be valid for at least six months beyond your travel dates. If that could be an issue for you, be sure to renew your passport in plenty of time. You shouldn't need a visa for your visit, provided you have a passport that meets the above requirements, although you may need to complete a declaration form on the flight over to Europe, which you will then present when you get to the border control.

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□ Keep in mind that the vast majority of flights from America to Europe are red-eyes. Trust me, as we know only too well from many years' experience, unless you're lucky enough to afford a first class flight that includes a bed, you will arrive exhausted. We find that the longer the flight, the better; the time it takes to serve your onboard meal can really eat (excuse the pun!) into your sleep time. If your flight is only six or seven hours to begin with, then you won't have much opportunity to get some shut eye.

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□ If you can, it's always worth building a couple of days in before your cruise to acclimate to your new time zone and see the local sights. Whatever you do, plan on arriving at least one day ahead of your cruise, as a flight coming in on the morning of the day you depart is a recipe for disaster, should you encounter any delays. If you're coming into another airport in Europe, instead of taking the connecting flight straight away, you could also spend a couple of days in that city. After all, if your flight goes via Paris, how can you resist spending some time there before heading on to your final destination?

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□ Now a little while ago I mentioned first class travel and beds in the same sentence, and yes, that was correct. Having flown extensively internationally, we've become very spoiled. Despite the length of our domestic flights from Orlando to Hawai'i, those flights did not compare in any way whatsoever to the superb facilities and service you can get on international flights. While I can't promise you that all airlines are equally good, a lot are, as the transatlantic route is exceptionally competitive, with everyone trying to outdo everyone else.

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□ The things we've become used to include free meals and snacks (and

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sometimes alcohol), seat-back video screens, usually with a variety of films, TV, and radio channels available, and sometimes you can even stop and start them if you need to leave your seat. The seats themselves are usually much more comfortable than you'll find on a domestic flight. Some airlines will even supply goodie bags if you have younger members of the family, to keep them occupied during the long flight. Even better, although it's now starting to creep in, you don't usually have to pay for your luggage, which can save you quite a bit of money. However, one thing to be wary of is that airlines based outside the U.S. can have more restrictions on the size and weight of your carry-on or checked luggage, so it's always worth checking with your airline.

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□ If you are planning on or are only thinking about a Disney cruise on any of the wonderful new itineraries in Europe next year, then the best advice I can give you is to go for it! All the itineraries set sail to truly stunning ports of call, and getting here is easy -- all it takes is a little bit of thought and planning beforehand, and as Disney vacationers, we're all experienced at doing that!

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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