

Our First Four Night Cruise on the Disney Dream: A Disney Cruise Line Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

These days, with four ships, the Disney Cruise Line offers a bewildering set of itineraries throughout the year.

However, there are still those that I consider their "core" itineraries, and I'm sure many others will agree. Those are the regular cruises out of Disney's home port of Port Canaveral, now offered on the Disney Dream and Disney Fantasy, although originally they were operated by the Disney Wonder and the Disney Magic.

You can choose from three-night and four-night Bahamas-bound Disney cruises, or seven-night Caribbean Disney cruises, along with some more special itineraries. We'd previously taken two three-night cruises. The first was our inaugural cruise with Disney, all the way back in 2004, and it didn't feel as if it was over too soon, given everything was new to us and we were fascinated by all we were seeing. Plus, before boarding we weren't sure how we'd adapt to life out on the water, so "short" seemed a better choice. By the time we did our next three-night cruise in 2011, it felt like it was over and done with almost as soon as it started. We figured at that point three nights was a bit too short for us.

□ Now we prefer to take Disney cruises of seven nights or longer, but sometimes that doesn't fit into your plans, which was the case on our most recent vacation. We were visiting Walt Disney World, but also had a number of other theme parks that we wanted to spend time in, so a shorter cruise was required. We opted for our first four-night cruise, in the hope that it would be just about long enough for us to enjoy, without feeling as if we'd only just boarded.

□ So, first for the stats: If you take a three-night Disney cruise, your actual time at sea is a mere 68 hours, but move up to the four-night version, and you'll get 92 hours instead. You've got it -- a full additional 24 hours! How do the prices compare? It's hard to say, as prices vary throughout the year, so at some points, you can find a four-night cruise that's cheaper than a three-night cruise just a couple of weeks earlier or later. As a rule of thumb, expect to pay another 25%, which roughly equates to the additional time you'll be at sea.

That extra day is spent at sea, and the nice thing is that, on the vast

majority of four-night itineraries out of Port Canaveral, it comes after your visits to Nassau and Disney's private island, Castaway Cay. That means, if you're so inclined to get off and explore at both ports of call, you have a nice, relaxing day to end your cruise. Trust me, having been on a number of cruises, particularly longer ones, where you visit one port after another in quick succession, ending it all with a day at sea is something to look forward to.

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□As the extra day is at sea, it immediately opens up more on-board activities, and for us, it was a wonderful opportunity to enjoy brunch at Palo, always a must for us. If shopping is your thing, then you'll find the shops open during your day at sea, whereas maritime regulations require they be closed when you're in port.

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□The day also gives a good opportunity to sample lunches on board the ship, which you may miss if you're on a shore excursion. We were very impressed by our lunch at Enchanted Garden, and I'd recommend it in a heartbeat. Cabanas was very nice, although we learned that they do change the menu during the four-night cruise; the day we had lunch there, sadly it wasn't offering the sushi that had been on the menu on the other days.

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□Another nice bonus of having a four-night cruise, rather than a three-night one comes if you want to squeeze in a special adults-only dinner at either Palo or Remy. On the three-night, as you already have the three regular restaurants to rotate through, to eat at either of the adults-only offerings, you'll need to miss one of those dining rooms. That's a shame, particularly if it's your first chance to experience them. Whether three- or four-night cruise, it's hard to know what night to choose for Palo or Remy, as you don't learn your dining rotation assignment until you step on board. At least with the extra night, you won't have to miss a dining room. Interestingly, we ended up with a rotation that put us in the same restaurant two nights in a row. Given it was our first four-night cruise, I'd expected the repeat night to be our final one on board [Editor's Note: Normally, the second and third nights' meals are served in the same dining room].

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□So did the four-night cruise feel rushed? Not as much as the three-night version for us. I think that's where the extra day made a huge difference. With the three-night, because your first night comes so soon after you've boarded, it does feel by the second night as if it's over as soon as it's started; suddenly "tomorrow night" is your final night on board. At least we didn't have that feeling quite so soon on the four-night itinerary.

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□Another nice thing for us was that we actually felt it was worth our

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while to unpack our things. On the three-night cruises, we'd tended to live out of our suitcases, as it seemed like too much trouble to bother with getting everything out and settled in your stateroom.

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□So would we do the four-night cruise again? Definitely! Of course, if our plans only allow time for the three-night, then we'll always take that over no cruise at all, but the longer we can be on board, the better, even if it is just for the one extra night.

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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