

Disney Cruise Line Member Cruise: A DVC Member's Report

by Sue Kulick, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Each September, Disney Vacation Club (DVC) puts on a special event for their members: The DVC Member Cruise!

As soon as you enter the Disney Cruise Line terminal, you become instantly aware that you are in for something special. The terminal is decked out with subtle (and not so subtle) welcomes for DVC members. All the Cast Members have special shirts on that are embroidered with the theme of the cruise. This year it was Disney Inspirations. Signs and banners welcome members to the cruise, a pirate band plays, and Captain Mickey welcomes cruisers home. And DeeVee See, the First Lady of Disney Vacation Club, is there to meet and greet cruisers.

Soon, you're boarding group is called and you are ready to board. The gangway is lined with more DVC Member cruise signs, and then you are swept onto the ship! You walk to the entry, where a Cast Member not only announces you, but welcomes you home!

The Atrium Lobby is filled with more DVC touches, from banners to a three-foot high and eight-foot long ice sculpture declaring "Welcome Home, DVC Members!" You will also hear "Welcome Home" from most of the cruise staff, from your servers and stateroom hosts all the way up to the Captain.

And the ship! The beautiful Disney Wonder is a glorious ship in and of herself, but decked out in DVC finery, she absolutely sparkles. The pictures on the wall have been replaced by pictures of Disney history. The posters leading to the night club area, Route 66, have been infused with subtle DVC touches. DVC Member banners flap everywhere in the breeze.

Many DVC cruisers are repeat DCL cruisers, so chances are there will be a Castaway Club gift in your stateroom when you arrive. But wait…there will also be a DVC member gift! Our first day we received two suitcases filled with tools to inspire our imagination. There were DVC cruise-only pins. There were snow globes, picture frames, CDs, and much, much more. You will need another suitcase just to carry it all home.

At the sail-away party we began to get a taste of just how special this cruise is going to be. We were welcomed home by DVC president Jim Lewis. He revealed the wonders that awaited us! This year, the inspirations came from the world of sports, entertainment, animation, and of course, Imagineering. Some of the speakers and performers

included Ducky Williams, Floyd Norman, Linda Cohn, Tony Baxter, and Kissy Simmons. The horns played that beautiful song, and we were on our way!

You can start out any cruise with a Bahama Mama, but why not try an "Inspiration Sensation," or a "Vacation Club Cooler?" As Port Canaveral recedes into the distance, you get ready for the time of your life! Of course, there is the traditional DVC presentation, called "Vacation Inspirations," where you can find out about the latest DVC deals. However, unlike DVC presentations on other Disney cruises, this one has some pretty serious incentives and prizes. In the past, I have won a towel and a tote bag. Don't get me wrong, I love both of them, but this time they were giving away spa treatments, wine packages, shore excursions, and to one lucky winner, an Interval International exchange vacation! Plus, the incentives to add on points on the cruise were wonderful. Any add-on of over 120 points netted you a free vacation, from 4 days up to a free Adventure by Disney depending on how many points you added on.

But by far, the most compelling feeling on a DVC cruise is the member camaraderie. You are sailing with 2500 other DVC members, all of whom already know the magic of DVC ownership and are there because they love DVC as much as you do! The dinner conversation is interesting and lively, and everyone is so incredibly nice. Since the common bond is DVC, you are never short of conversation and never without the ability to make a friend.

DVC opens up their cruises for the following year in early to mid November. All DVC members receive a mailing that tells them the dates of the next cruise, and when they can call in. It's usually a short window, and they do sell out quickly. You need to be patient and be ready to hit redial over and over. And when you do get through, you will still have a wait. You can pay cash if you don't have enough points, but you need to be a DVC member to book this cruise. And another perk that DVC throws in; your gratuities are included! As a DVC member, I would highly recommend this cruise. If you ever get the opportunity to take a member cruise, do it! You will make a lifetime of memories.

About The Author: Sue Kulick is a resident of the Pocono Mountains and an avid Disney fan. She and her husband, Steve, live in a log home with their Golden Retrievers, Cody and Belle and their cat Tigger.

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