

Disney Wonder Reimagined: Live Report on Changes

by Dave Marx, PassPorter Guidebooks Author

Though not exactly a vacation, the Disney Wonder returned from its dry dock in Cadiz, Spain refreshed and rejuvenated. In a real sense, the 17-year-old Wonder is playing catchup to its older sibling, the Disney Magic, and her younger-but-bigger sisters, the Disney Dream and Disney Fantasy, in the cruise line's ongoing efforts to ensure guests a consistent cruising experience, whichever ship they choose for their vacation. The Disney Wonder reimagined is a sight to behold! <

Disney Wonder ReimaginedThe renovation of the Disney Wonder is the culmination of a process begun in 2011, when the Disney Dream entered service. Since then, names, features, and designs first seen on the Dream have now propagated fleet-wide. Those include Senses Spa, the teen Chill Spa, "it's a small world" Nursery, the Edge tweens club, D Lounge, and the Mickey's Mainsail, Sea Treasures, and Whitecaps retail shops. The cruise line will no doubt continue to tweak and refine its facilities, but we may not see a similar set of sweeping changes until the cruise line's fifth ship enters service in 2025.

We originally expected to see these updates to the Disney Wonder a year or two ago, but since one of the ship's upgrades would have made her too long to pass through the Panama Canal on her way to Alaska, and the expansion of the Panama Canal was delayed (the canal's new, larger locks finally opened earlier this year)… the Wonder had to wait, too. One thing in particular that couldn't wait was the redecoration of the Wonder's staterooms. That was done in 2015, without taking the ship entirely out of service.

When we learned the Wonder's major makeover had finally arrived, we promptly booked passage on the second cruise following her return from Cadiz, a four-night jaunt to Cozumel from Galveston. I'm now onboard (and reporting LIVE) to compare the press releases and rumors to final reality, to ferret-out surprises (if any), and to deliver my particular (and perhaps peculiar) slant on the whole thing.

Changes to Kids Areas on the Disney Wonder ReimaginedThe denizens of the kids clubs, Oceaneer Club and Oceaneer Lab, now have play areas and character experiences featuring [Marvel Superheroes](#) (check out our [video of Super Hero Academy!](#)), friends from the [Toy Story films](#), and for the first time on the cruise line, Club Disney Junior and [Frozen](#) (see our [video of the animated windows in Wandering Oaken's Trading Post!](#)). New hands-on activity zones in Oceaneer Lab are dedicated to

animation, navigation, and crafts. Edge, the club for tweens ages 11-14, has moved up from deck 2 to the former arcade on the pool deck. Kids 12 and under can now get done-up (at extra cost) in Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique, which on Pirate Night morphs to Pirate's League, as on all the other ships. Teens are not forgotten, though they don't get the dramatic upgrades the younger set received. Chill Spa, the teens-only outpost in otherwise adults-only Senses Spa, is finally available on all four Disney vessels. Flounder's Reef Nursery also has been decorated and renamed, unifying the "it's a small world" theme fleet wide.

When it's time to head outdoors, toddlers have an enhanced and protected splash play zone, Dory's Reef. Once they've outgrown diapers, kids through age 12 can frolic in AquaLab, a dynamic splash play zone that replaces the Mickey Pool. Check out our [video of Aqua Lab and the kids water play areas](#). New Stage Show and Revamped Nightclub The whole family will enjoy a new live stage show, Frozen, A Musical Spectacular (today, Disney Wonder, tomorrow, the Great White Way?), which replaced Toy Story-The Musical in the entertainment lineup (more on that in a future post, as well). There's also a revamped and renamed family "nightclub," D Lounge, which replaces the identically-purposed Studio Sea (again, D Lounge is now found on all four Disney ships). Shopping is also a family pursuit (to some parents' chagrin). Every retail venue on board has been re-dressed and renamed to match the shops on the other ships as well. Most noteworthy is that the main retail shops on deck 4 are larger and less claustrophobic.

Also family-friendly is the new Twist 'n' Spout water slide on deck 9, which replaces the less elaborate (and kids-only) Mickey Slide. However, the Wonder did not get a second, more extreme water slide, so she remains the only ship with a single slide. Dining Changes on the Disney Wonder Reimagined Dining changes are also something the whole family can enjoy. Of course, there's [Tiana's Place](#) (mentioned above). Animator's Palate finally has updated technology to support the same multimedia dinner shows seen on the Wonder's sister ships. The old, classic Animator's Palate show is now merely a memory, though it lives on in countless unauthorized YouTube videos.

The biggest dining improvements are reserved for the no-reservations-required deck 9 eateries. Beach Blanket Buffet was gutted and expanded, emerging with the same Cabanas name and Finding Nemo theming as its counterpart on the other ships. No more bottlenecks at the entrance, easier access to the buffet lines, more elbow room at the tables… hurrah! And snack bars Pluto's Dog House and Goofy's Galley re-emerge as Pete's Boiler Bites and Daisy's De-Lites, names found on the Disney Magic as well. We may never know what office politicking went on among Disney's cast of classic

characters, but clearly Pete's and Daisy's assertive personalities triumphed over those easy-going pooches. Renovated Adult Areas on the Disney Wonder Reimagined Grownups don't fare badly at all, with a substantially redecorated adult entertainment district and rejuvenated spa. The retro-themed Route 66 district gave way to suave and sleek After Hours. The main nightclub is now Azure, a name that alludes to the deep, blue sea. Diversions sports pub has taken a more British bent, emerging as Crown & Fin Pub. Only Cadillac Lounge retains its identity and decor, though the piano has been moved to a platform at the far end of the room.

The adults-only Vista Spa is now nearly-adults-only Senses Spa, bringing that brand name to all four Disney ships (as well as land-based spas at other Disney Parks and Resorts locations). The exception to adults-only status is the teens' Chill Spa (really, just a single treatment room near the spa's entrance). That, too, is now a presence on all four ships. We'll discuss the enhancements to the spa in a later post.

The Disney Dream may as well be renamed for Frozen; not only does she spend her summers in Alaska and have that new, Frozen-themed area in Oceaneer's Club; the Walt Disney Theatre has the new Frozen stage show, and after the show there's a kids-only after-party in the Oceaneer Club with Frozen-themed activities and character visits. To top things off, summertime cruises feature a Frozen-themed day at sea--special activities, deck party, character experiences, merchandise… the works! If you don't enjoy Frozen, you'll just have to let it go. And we have a ducktail! To bring things full circle… the upgrade that delayed the Wonder's major overhaul is a fuel-saving and stability-improving extension to the stern of the ship called a ducktail. Though Disney-focused cruisers may think this has something to do with Donald (who certainly has one), it's a feature found on many other ships, and it's actually named for the 1950s men's hairstyle. It'd be a hoot if the Disney character statues that dangle from the ships' sterns had black Ace hair combs in their back pockets!

Well, enough for the overview of the Disney Wonder reimagined! In coming posts I'll share more details, my first-hand impressions, photos, a bit of video, and if I can ferret any out, perhaps some surprises, too. Stay tuned! Want more Disney Cruise Line information? Check out the brand new [PassPorter's Disney Cruise Line 2017](#) in our amazing LIVE! Guide format (it's always up-to-date!). The LIVE! Guide is in soft opening, but you can [request an invitation to the soft opening here](#).

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Article last updated: 11-17-2016

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<http://www.passporter.com/articles/disney-wonder-reimagined-changes-dcl.html>

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