

Preparing For Your Disney Cruise: A Disney Feature

by Cheryl Pendry, *PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)*

We all know that planning is the key to an enjoyable Disney vacation, and that doesn't just apply to the Walt Disney World resort in Orlando, the Disneyland Resort in California, or even Disneyland Paris. The same approach also works for the Disney Cruise Line, as anyone who's cruised with them before already knows.

If you haven't cruised with Disney before, then you're definitely missing out! Imagine all the Disney magic you've experienced at the parks and then transfer it to a luxurious cruise ship, where you're stuffed with food throughout your time on board, can enjoy top quality shows every night and a myriad of activities throughout the day and evening, and you get the idea. But wait -- even better, nearly every day is a new destination to sail into and enjoy!

However, with all these options on board, it can make for a daunting time in the planning stages. Having gone through it before our first Disney cruise -- a three night Bahamas itinerary just to get our "feet wet" as it were! -- and now again, as we prepare for our 11-night cruise around the Mediterranean, we've learned that there are simple ways to make planning your perfect Disney cruise easy.

Firstly, think about any previous experiences you've had on the water. Are you a good sailor or does it take you a while to get your sea legs? If you're in any doubt about your ability to enjoy a cruise, then opt for a shorter time at sea to see how you fare. That was our logic, as I knew that sea sickness was a real possibility for me and I wasn't sure how I'd like being unable to escape on to dry land. In the event, although we both experienced problems on the first night, we were fine after that and the Disney Magic and Disney Wonder are so big that you feel as if you've got a small country to explore, without worrying about not being able to get off the ship while it's sailing!

Your choice of cruise may also be based on the ports being visited. That was certainly the case with us, as we'd talked for a long time about visiting Pompeii and Florence in Italy, so when Disney announced their Mediterranean cruise itinerary and both were included, along with stops in the south of France, Sicily and Sardinia, it was clear we were meant to be on one of those cruises.

Once you decide which cruise appeals to you and you've made your booking, the first thing you need to do is check that passport. U.S.

Passport laws are changing and chances are you will need a passport no matter which itinerary you choose. For the most recent requirements, visit the U.S. Department of State web site. As a British citizen, it's perhaps more important for me to have a passport to travel around, but it certainly opens up the whole world to you and it's proved to be a great investment for us.

If you've not got a passport or your current one is close to expiring, then you need to get working on the replacement as quickly as possible. I had a close call with mine, after realizing that I would need it for a day trip to Paris in mid January, but also then remembering that I had to renew it prior to our cruise in May. Plenty of time you say? Not when the Disney Cruise Lines asks you to supply your passport numbers 75 days before your cruise. For me, that worked out to early March. Fortunately, my passport was safely back in my hands by early February, but it was a worry I could've done without and it just goes to show how easy it is to forget about checking your passport well ahead of your travel dates.

It's also a good idea to acquaint yourself with the Disney Cruise Line web site. Armed with your reservation number, suddenly the "My Disney Cruise" section of the website will open up a whole new world to you, where you check your reservation details, check-in online and book things like shore excursions, spa treatments, dining at the adults only restaurant Palo or children's activities.

You'll also be able to view prices, so you'll know how much to save up, as these various areas make up the majority of your expenditure on board and they can quickly mount up, especially if you're on an 11-night cruise, as we've discovered! Now we know exactly how much we need to save to enjoy ourselves on board, we can make sure we save enough money beforehand.

It's worth knowing on exactly which date and at what time you can make these bookings, as the online allocation tends to disappear quickly. Concierge guests and guests who have booked the Romance At Sea package can book activities, spa treatments, child care and Palo reservations online 105 days prior to their cruise, Castaway Club members (previous Disney cruisers) can book 90 days prior, and everyone else can book 75 days prior to their cruises. Mark your calendars and plan to be online at 12:00 a.m. pacific time/3:00 a.m. eastern time to secure your choice of times.

Before your booking window opens for all these activities, now is the time to learn more about what is offered and there's no better way to do that than by reading PassPorter's Field Guide to the Disney Cruise Line. It will prove to be an invaluable resource as you plan your trip. You

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won't believe how much information this guide contains about your Disney cruise. When I first got a copy, my jaw dropped to the floor as I found out about the best times of the year to cruise, the different categories of stateroom, when and how you can book your shore excursions, the restaurants and activities on board, and the various ports of call. Once you've done your background reading, then you're ready to make your bookings either online or during your first couple of hours on board. Check your PassPorter also for information on guidelines regarding dress codes and packing lists to help you get organized!

If you haven't yet booked a flight to go with your cruise, then now's the time to look into that. We played a waiting game for about two months, before we lucked out and found suitably low fares from London to Barcelona. In hindsight, we should've looked at the airline websites before we made our cruise booking to see how expensive flights would be. We'd forgotten that we were due to fly out at the start of school holidays in the UK, which of course forced flight prices upwards.

Generally, a good rule of thumb is to book a flight that gets in the day before you're due to cruise. At least then if the worst happens and your flight is delayed or even worse, cancelled for some reason, then you don't have to worry about missing your ship. Although our cruise to the Med doesn't leave until Saturday evening, we weren't taking any chances, with our flight arriving on Friday lunchtime, leaving us time to enjoy Barcelona before we set sail. On the way back, the same thing applies. Be realistic about your flight time. Once the ship docks, you need to disembark and then get to the airport, get checked in and clear security, so be sure to leave plenty of time for all those things.

Now, you're all set. Happy cruising and don't forget to say hi to Mickey from me!

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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