

Entertaining Evenings: Disney Cruise Line Review

by Bernie Edwards, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Cruising with any ship on the Disney Cruise Line is a fabulous experience.

Before I went on my first cruise, however, I was concerned about going. I knew the Disney ships visited great ports of call throughout the world on the various cruises and that I would love whatever excursion I did, but I was worried about not having anything to do at night or on a day at sea on my family's first cruise (a 7-Night Western Caribbean Cruise onboard the Disney Magic). I have been and always will be a Disney theme park fanatic and thought I would be bored on the ship. Well getting bored never happened, and now after going on several cruises, I proudly say that cruising with Disney is one of my favorite Disney experiences in my life.

There are a lot of activities to do onboard the ship. On your first day, and then every night thereafter (for the next day), you will be given a Personal Navigator. The Personal Navigator is a newsletter-type document (with a part that reminds me of a TV show listing) which outlines all of the activities on the ship. It's impossible to do everything and there is literally something for everybody!

□ In the evenings, the big family entertainment takes place in the beautiful Walt Disney Theatre. The Disney Cruise Line is famous for its Broadway-style shows that are offered on select evenings during the cruise (and sometimes there are matinee performances, so look for them in the Personal Navigator). Current Broadway style shows are:

- * □□ Disney's Believe, on the Dream □
- * □□ Disney Dreams, on the Magic and Wonder □
- * □□ The Golden Mickeys, on the Dream and Wonder □
- * □□ Toy Story -- The Musical, on the Wonder □
- * □□ Twice Charmed, on the Magic □
- * □□ Villains Tonight, on the Dream and Magic

□ I've had the privilege of seeing all of these shows, except for Toy Story -- The Musical, and they are all great family entertainment. Disney's Believe and Disney Dreams are definitely something that should not be missed. If you have something scheduled that will cause you to miss seeing Disney's Believe or Disney Dream (such as a Palo reservation), I suggest changing it to another time or night; these shows are that good! I've gotten misty eye while watching a few of the shows over the years.

There will be more shows added once the new Disney Fantasy arrives

(her Maiden Voyage is scheduled for March 31, 2012): "Disney's Wishes," and "Aladdin -- A Musical Spectacular." I wonder how similar the Aladdin show on the Fantasy will be to the spectacular and long-running Aladdin show at Disney California Adventure; seeing Aladdin is a "must do" on all of my trips to the Disneyland Resort and I suspect it will be a "must do" on the Fantasy as well.

☐ My youngest son's favorite evening activity is participating in "Mickey Mania," a game show-type Disney knowledge quiz that everyone can participate in. On the Magic, it generally takes place in Studio Sea, but only on select evenings. Four teams, consisting of one adult and one child each, are chosen by the host to go up on stage and stand behind a podium. Questions are then asked by the host and the first team that gets the answer right gets points; it's a little bit like playing the game "Disney Scene It" or the Nintendo Wii video game "Disney Think Fast." One of the popular segments during the game is watching a silhouette of a Disney character out of focus or just "jumbled," slowly come into focus; each team wants to be the first to identify the character correctly. We attended Mickey Mania three times on our last cruise, but never got selected, though one lucky family got selected to play twice. That said, there is a lot of audience participation in the game, so you don't have to be one of the chosen teams to have fun!

☐ An activity similar to Mickey Mania,, but geared more towards adults, is "Who Wants to Be a Mouseketeer." Instead of just winning a medal, like on "Mickey Mania," contestants can win things like hats, pins, glass paperweights for the office, plush Disney characters, etc on Who Wants to Be a Mouseketeer. This game is more like the TV show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," with lifelines and everything.

☐ Children may also choose to participate in various organized programs at night. There's the Oceaneer's Club and the Oceaneer's Lab for younger children, and Edge and Vibe for older children. Families can also watch movies via the movie channels in the staterooms or by going to the Buena Vista Theatre to see recently released Disney films. However, one of my favorite family activities is swimming in the pools at night. If you are cruising on the Dream, be sure to try the AquaDuck at night. It's a completely different experience at night than during the day!

☐ There are places for both families and adults-only to dance or listen to live music at nightclubs and lounges throughout the Disney ships. My family and I often strolled on Deck 3 of the Magic, and I always loved stopping and listening to the live music in the Promenade Lounge; there was live music or some other activity in the lounge every evening. There are bars located deep in the heart of the ship in the adults-only area (it's

adults-only at night) and on the top deck of all of the ships. All of the ships have such places, but the Dream (and the Fantasy when she joins the fleet) has more, and in my opinion, better-themed offerings, than the Magic and the Wonder. My favorite bar on the Dream is Skyline, an adults-only cocktail lounge with sweeping views of some of the world's most famous cities; the skyline magically transforms from time to time. Another great bar on the Dream is Meridian, an adults-only bar located between Palo and Remy; I don't think many guests know about it, so it's typically less crowded than the other bars on the ship.

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□ One of the more popular nights on most cruises is Pirates IN the Caribbean Night. You start off with a special dinner and "parade" at your regular rotational dining room and eventually make your way upstairs to a deck party and fireworks. A lot of guests, especially children, will dress up in pirate attire. Don't worry if there's no room in your suitcase to pack anything more. You can pick up pirate gear onboard and Disney even gives each guest a special souvenir bandana at dinner.

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□ No doubt about it -- there are a lot of activities to enjoy in the evening on a Disney cruise. I didn't even get a chance to touch on a lot of other things to do, such as visiting the onboard spa, going to one of the cabaret-style shows, playing bingo, going to special character meet and greets, and working out. Another favorite activity of many guests is just ordering room service and sitting out on your private verandah overlooking the ocean! I can't believe I ever thought I might be bored on a Disney cruise! There are simply too many fun things to do and not enough time! Bon Voyage!

About The Author: Bernie Edwards lives in Maryland with his wife and two children. He is an engineer for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and a member of the Walt Disney World Moms Panel. He enjoys visiting both Walt Disney World and Disneyland, and sailing on the Disney Cruise Line.

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