

A large Disney cruise ship, the Disney Treasure, is shown from a low angle, emphasizing its height and multiple decks. The ship has a white upper hull with many balconies and a dark blue lower hull with a gold stripe. The name "Disney TREASURE" is written in gold on the side, with "WASSAU" below it. There are also small figures of Disney characters on the side. A large flag is flying from the top. The ship is docked at a rocky pier.

MERKER TRAVEL DESIGN

IS A DISNEY CRUISE WORTH IT?

The Disney Difference at Sea Aboard
The Disney Treasure

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Our Guide to Disney Cruise Line
And Our Week Aboard the Disney Treasure

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INTRODUCTION

Is a Disney Cruise Worth It?

As a travel advisor, I am often asked to help travelers sort through an increasingly crowded world of vacation options. Cruise lines are no exception. Some brands are known for value and nonstop activity while others emphasize refined dining, attentive service, or sophisticated spaces. When the conversation turns toward premium cruising, names like Celebrity, Princess, or Viking may naturally come to mind. And they should. But what about Disney?

Disney is more commonly associated with children, theme parks, and animated films. Putting Mickey Mouse in a polished martini lounge, Elsa in an elegant dining room, or Nemo in an upscale stateroom may initially feel like the forcing together of two worlds that belong apart. Disney Cruise Line proves otherwise.

My family and I recently spent a week aboard the Disney Treasure, sailing a

June 2026 seven-night Eastern Caribbean itinerary from Port Canaveral with stops in Tortola, St. Thomas, and Disney's Castaway Cay. Traveling with me were my wife and our 11-year-old son.

We have sailed with several cruise brands, so I boarded with a mission beyond simply enjoying our vacation. I wanted to examine what Disney Cruise Line does differently, how those differences affect the overall cruise experience, and ultimately answer the question I am frequently asked: **Is a Disney cruise really worth what it costs?**

Some observations throughout this article apply broadly across Disney Cruise Line, while others reflect the newer Wish Class ships or the Disney Treasure specifically. We'll begin with the larger Disney Cruise Line experience—ships, dining, drinks, entertainment, families, and value. After that, we'll take a closer look at some of our

favorite spaces aboard the Disney Treasure itself.

So, whether you're completely new to cruising, considering your first Disney cruise, or wondering whether Mickey ears belong anywhere near your next premium vacation, let's adventure aboard together.

The Disney Difference

THE SHIP ITSELF

Disney ships are instantly recognizable. The dark hull, gold detailing, bright red funnels, and uniquely yellow lifeboats create an exterior that is classy and clean rather than flashy and complex. Look closely at the stern and you'll also find character sculptures unique to each vessel. Disney even received special permission to use yellow rather than traditional safety-orange lifeboats so they could match the color of Mickey's shoes. The attention to that little detail tells you quite a bit about what is coming once onboard.

Each Disney ship has its own interior theme and design language. On the Disney Treasure, the centerpiece is the Grand Hall, but the theming extends far beyond the atrium. Throughout the ship, spaces draw inspiration from Disney films, characters, attractions, and stories. And Disney is exceptionally good at this.

When you enter one of these environments, you don't merely see decorations related to a movie or attraction. You feel as though you've entered that world. One moment you may



be sitting inside something resembling a favorite childhood movie; the next you could be exploring the deep in a submarine or settling into a haunted lounge inspired by one of Disney's most beloved theme-park attractions.

There is Disney everywhere, but I don't find it overwhelming. In its best moments, the theming feels surprisingly natural and sophisticated. That distinction is important because Disney Cruise Line is sometimes mentally placed alongside more mainstream family cruise brands simply because children and cartoon characters are so central to Disney's identity. Once onboard, the actual experience is more nuanced. This isn't a budget cruise ship with Mickey Mouse added to it. The design, maintenance, service, food, entertainment, and attention to detail combine to create what I consider a distinctly **premium cruise experience**—just one that happens to be wrapped in Disney storytelling.

The Disney Treasure itself is a large ship, though not among the largest vessels sailing today. We spent our week in a Deluxe Oceanview Stateroom with Verandah, and one of my favorite Disney stateroom features was something decidedly unglamorous: the bathroom. Many Disney staterooms use a split-bathroom design. One room contains a sink and toilet, while the other contains another sink and the tub/shower. Yep. Two bathrooms. That may sound like a small thing until three or four people are trying to get ready for dinner at the same time. Someone can shower while someone else brushes their teeth or uses the toilet without the usual cruise-cabin choreography or uncomfortable closeness. Even for our family of three, the added flexibility makes a noticeable difference. The stateroom theming is considerably

more restrained than elsewhere around the ship. Artwork and smaller design touches connect the room to its assigned theme, but Disney wisely gives you somewhere quieter to retreat after spending the day surrounded by elaborate environments. That is not to say Disney staterooms are not well-appointed, well-designed, and comfortable—they certainly are.

There is another difference I experienced aboard Disney that is harder to quantify. On many traditional cruises, I find myself continually looking outward. I seek balconies, promenade decks, windows, railings, and places where I can reconnect with the sea and the destination around me. Disney pulls me inward. I find myself spending more time exploring lounges, restaurants, theaters, entertainment venues, and themed spaces. Even on the pool deck, I may find myself facing inward toward a Disney movie playing on the giant Funnel Vision screen instead of staring toward the horizon. The ocean is still there, of course. So are verandahs and outdoor decks. But Disney Cruise Line creates such an immersive world onboard that the ship itself becomes part of the destination. The best way I can describe it is a combination of a Disney movie, a Disney theme park, and a cruise ship—and I intentionally put “cruise ship” last.

THE DISNEY DIFFERENCE:

Other cruise ships may be beautiful. Disney's strength is making the ship feel like somewhere else entirely. If immersive environments and storytelling appeal to you, that difference can be substantial.

Dining

DISNEY WANTS TO CONTROL YOUR EVENING — AND MOSTLY, THAT'S A GOOD THING



Dining is one of the first places where experienced cruisers may need to adjust their expectations. You won't find the same "Anytime," "My Time," or flexible main-dining structure offered by many other cruise lines. Instead, Disney generally asks you to choose between early and late dining. Early dining is typically around 5:45 p.m. Late dining is typically around 8:15 p.m. Neither may sound perfect at first. Early dinner can feel very early, particularly if you're coming from another time zone. Late dining can sound even worse if, like some of us, you're increasingly interested in a comfortable bed rather than a full dinner after 8:00 p.m. Stick with me, though. There is a method to this.

Disney's evening entertainment is a major part of the cruise experience, as you will hear later, and the dining schedule is

designed around it. Two dining seatings allow Disney to offer two corresponding performances of its main theater shows. If you have early dining, you'll generally attend the later show. If you have late dining, you'll attend the early show. No dinner reservation to juggle. No theater reservation to coordinate. No staring at your watch wondering whether dessert means missing the opening number. It just works. Disney can also put roughly half the ship at dinner while the other half attends the show, naturally reducing congestion. You will still find guests lining up early for popular performances—this is Disney, after all—but we found that arriving approximately 20 minutes ahead usually left reasonable seating choices.

Fixed dining also helps Disney accomplish something else: **dinner itself can become entertainment.** Some rotational dining restaurants incorporate live performances or interactive elements into the meal. Because everyone arrives at approximately the same time, Disney can coordinate service around what is happening in the room. You can order, enjoy your courses, watch the entertainment, and continue your meal without feeling as though the restaurant and show are competing against one another.

Which dining time is best? During our Disney Treasure sailing, late dining was all that remained when we booked. It turned out to be one of the best things that could have happened to us. We discovered that the early-show, late-dinner combination works exceptionally well for our family. On other cruises, we have missed evening theater productions because we were still eating dinner or because, after a big meal, everyone suddenly discovered just how comfortable the stateroom bed looked. With late dining, we went to the theater while we were still energetic. The earlier show did not interfere with excursions or daytime activities, and afterward we could transition naturally into dinner. I also found that late dining generally created a somewhat older atmosphere during both dinner and the associated showtime. Families with infants and very young children tend to favor earlier dining, for understandable reasons.

That doesn't make late dining universally better though. Families with younger children who often require earlier bedtimes, travelers accustomed to eating early, or those who want dinner completed so they can spend the rest of the evening enjoying activities may strongly prefer early dining.

My advice is simple: **choose based on your evening priorities, not merely the clock.** If your preferred seating isn't available when you book, request a change. Disney may be able to accommodate it before sailing or onboard, and waitlists are available when a particular seating is full.

ROTATIONAL DINING:

The dinner schedule is only half of Disney's dining difference. Disney Cruise Line also uses rotational dining, which is one of my favorite features of the brand. Rather than dining in the same main restaurant each night, you'll rotate through several distinct restaurants during your cruise. On the Disney Treasure, there are three main rotational dining venues, each with its own design, menu, atmosphere, and—in some cases—entertainment.

You learn your rotation once onboard. On our seven-night sailing, we visited two restaurants twice and another three times, with menus changing throughout the week. But here's the clever part: **Your serving team rotates with you.** Instead of meeting a new waiter every evening, the same team follows your party from restaurant to restaurant. As the cruise progresses, they begin to learn your routine. They know preferences, dietary requirements, who drinks what, what the kids enjoy, and sometimes what you might want before you even ask. That continuity creates a personal style of service that feels much more polished than simply moving between three unrelated restaurants.

Disney's main dining rooms are generally “cruise casual.” Special evenings such as Pirate Night or more formal nights give guests opportunities to dress differently, but participation isn't mandatory. You'll see everything from casually dressed families

to guests who enthusiastically embrace the evening's theme—and yes, some people take Pirate Night very, very seriously.

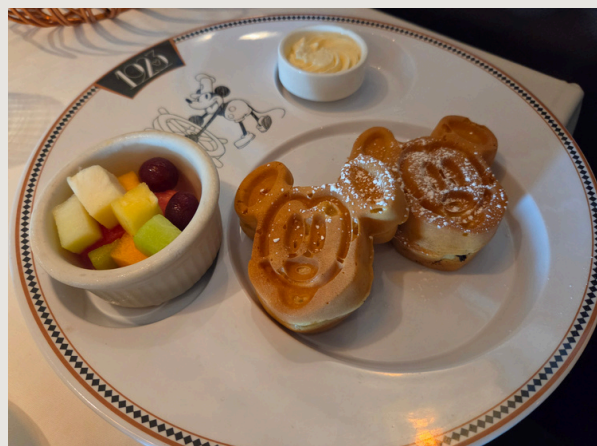
BEYOND ROTATIONAL DINING:

Disney also offers adult-only specialty dining at an additional cost, sometimes greater than \$200 per person. These venues provide a quieter, more sophisticated experience with elevated menus and a more polished dress expectation. Because these experiences can become quite expensive, they are best viewed as optional additions rather than necessary parts of the Disney dining experience.

For breakfast and lunch, you'll find familiar cruise staples including table-service dining in one of the rotational dining restaurants, a buffet, and casual options. The specific venues vary by ship. On the *Treasure*, for example, Mickey & Friends Festival of Foods provides several casual pool-deck choices including pizza, barbecue, Mexican food, grilled favorites, and included soft serve ice cream. The buffet itself was comparable to other good cruise buffets we've experienced, with one notable difference for those accustomed to eating at the buffet at night: Disney's buffet is not typically open for dinner.

Disney also knows its audience when it comes to snacks. Popcorn, candy, specialty desserts, baked goods, and elaborate ice cream creations are easy to find, though many come at an additional charge. If you're a popcorn person, buying a souvenir bucket early in the sailing can make discounted refills worthwhile throughout the cruise.

And then there is room service. While



many cruise lines have reduced complimentary room service offerings or introduced delivery fees, Disney continues to include a good selection of room service in the cruise fare. My tip: ask for a Premium Mickey Ice Cream Bar. It may not appear on the menu. Order one anyway. You're welcome.

As for the food itself, taste is obviously subjective. Among comparable cruise lines I have sailed, however, I place Disney's overall food quality at or near the top. The line also does an especially good job accommodating younger diners without making adults feel as though they're eating at a children's restaurant. Kids will have their own menu available at most restaurants, on most evenings.

Disney dining is structured. If you're accustomed to complete flexibility, that may initially feel restrictive. In practice, I think the structure is one of its greatest strengths.

THE DISNEY DIFFERENCE:

Fixed dining sounds less flexible on paper. At sea, it allows dinner, entertainment, and service to work together unusually well. Don't automatically fight the structure. Choose the seating that fits your family and let Disney's system do what it was designed to do.

Drinks and Lounges

NO BEVERAGE PACKAGE REQUIRED



Let's talk about a subject that can generate surprisingly passionate cruise conversations: Drink packages. Disney doesn't offer the traditional unlimited beverage-package model. No unlimited alcohol package. No typical soda package. Most alcohol, specialty coffee, and premium nonalcoholic drinks are purchased individually. For cruisers accustomed to prepaying for drinks and then ordering whatever strikes their fancy, this can require an adjustment.

Disney does, however, include a fairly generous beverage selection. Water, regular coffee, tea, juice, and fountain soft drinks are available in various included settings onboard. In particular, complimentary fountain soda

distinguishes Disney from many competitors that charge separately or bundle it into packages.

I am not a huge drinker, but I do enjoy trying different wines, beers, cocktails, mocktails, and specialty coffees when I'm traveling. On most cruises, I prefer having some type of beverage package because I simply enjoy the freedom it offers. If a cocktail sounds interesting, I order it. If I don't like it, so be it. When the package is already paid for, I don't find myself mentally assigning a price to every sip. Disney changes that behavior for me. If a cocktail costs more than I think I want to spend at that moment, I might order a beer or skip an added-cost beverage entirely for a soda or lemonade. Instead of a specialty coffee, I may drink regular black coffee. Instead of experimenting with an unfamiliar wine or cocktail, I'll choose something I know I'll enjoy. My son even noticed the difference. One of his favorite vacation drinks is an alcohol-free piña colada. Once he realized it carried an extra charge, lemonade suddenly sounded better.

That may sound like a negative. Surprisingly, it really isn't. We ultimately **spend less** on drinks aboard Disney than we would purchasing beverage packages on many other cruise lines. And I have generally found Disney's à la carte beverage pricing reasonable by cruise-ship standards. The quality is also there. Cocktails are thoughtfully prepared and presented, specialty coffees may arrive with Disney artwork in the foam, and themed beverages frequently feel like an extension of the venue rather than

something poured simply because you're sitting at a bar.

There are also ways to stretch the beverage budget. Depending on what is offered on your sailing, look for options such as the Drink of the Day, refillable souvenir beer mugs, wine savings through the Sommelier Bin, beverage bundles, and specialty-coffee loyalty cards.

But drinks are really only half of this section.

WHAT'S IN THE LOUNGES MATTERS MORE THAN WHAT'S IN THE GLASSES

One of my favorite things to do aboard almost any cruise is find a comfortable lounge in the evening, order a drink, people-watch, and listen to live music. Disney gives me plenty of opportunities to do that. What changes is the environment. Disney's lounges aren't simply attractive rooms with a bar dropped into them. Many are heavily themed spaces designed to transport you into a Disney story, film, or theme-park attraction. These venues also become multipurpose entertainment spaces throughout the cruise. You may encounter live music, trivia, tastings, comedy, games, art activities, or other programming depending on the ship and schedule.

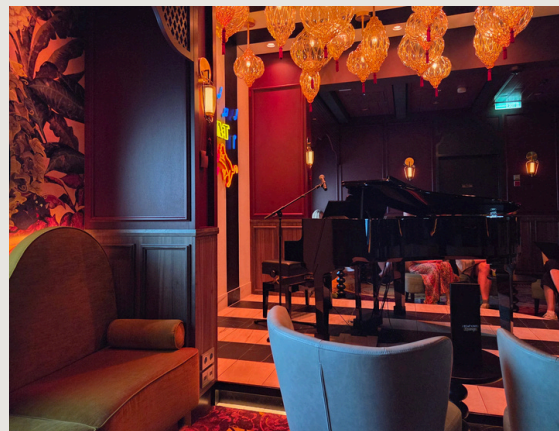
This gets to the heart of Disney's beverage philosophy for me: **The drink is an accompaniment to the experience. It isn't the experience itself.** You can absolutely enjoy an excellent cocktail, wine, beer, mocktail, or coffee. But what I remember afterward is often the room I was sitting in, the pianist playing nearby, the people I was with, or the unique world surrounding me. That feels very different from cruise environments where alcohol

itself can become one of the central activities.

Disney certainly serves alcohol, and adults aren't treated like second-class citizens for ordering it. But this remains a family-first environment. You're less likely to encounter a cruise atmosphere centered around all-day drinking, unlimited packages, and the pursuit of the next round. For some travelers, that's a drawback. For others, it's one of the reasons Disney feels more premium.

THE DISNEY DIFFERENCE:

Disney's lack of an unlimited beverage package changes how you order, but generous included choices and reasonable à la carte options can keep total spending manageable. More importantly, Disney designs its lounges around the experience—the cocktail is usually supporting the setting, not competing with it.



Entertainment

WHERE DISNEY EARNS ITS REPUTATION



Disney is an entertainment company first. So perhaps it shouldn't be surprising that entertainment at sea is one of the areas where Disney Cruise Line separates itself most clearly from the competition. The interesting thing is that Disney doesn't necessarily reinvent what a cruise line offers. You'll still find theater productions, comedians, live music, trivia, games, movies, deck parties, character appearances, sports, fitness programming, and countless activities. Disney's advantage is execution.

The main theater productions are the clearest example. These aren't typical cruise ship variety shows built around a collection of pop songs, dancing, acrobatics, and flashy effects. Disney's major productions are legitimate theatrical pieces, often inspired by Broadway or

West End storytelling. Aboard the *Treasure*, we saw productions of *Beauty and the Beast* and *Moana*. The staging, costumes, performers, writing, music, and technical production were exceptional. Rather than feeling like a cruise activity you attend because you're looking for something to do, these shows feel like legitimate events around which you might plan your entire evening. And because Disney has already coordinated your dinner seating with the corresponding theater performance, attending them is remarkably easy.

Beyond the major productions, Disney brings headliners aboard such as comedians, magicians, singers, and other entertainers. These performances tend to feel more familiar to experienced cruisers, but they add variety to the schedule.

Entertainment also spills beyond the theater. On our Treasure sailing, performances happened in the Grand Hall, lounges, Sarabi entertainment venue, and on the pool deck. Disney movies played in dedicated cinemas and on Funnel Vision. Character performances drew children to the atrium floor while adults could find live music or adult-focused comedy elsewhere.

There is no shortage of daytime programming either. Depending on your sailing, you may find trivia, karaoke, drawing classes, character greetings, scavenger hunts, spa and fitness activities, sports competitions, shopping, games, and more. If you are bored on a Disney cruise, you've probably made a conscious decision to be bored.

One thing you generally will not find is a casino. For some experienced cruisers, that is a major omission. For others—particularly families or travelers who dislike walking through smoke-filled gaming areas—it is a welcome absence.



THE POOL DECK:

Disney's pool decks are one area where I find the experience more mixed. Rather than one enormous resort-style pool, Disney often uses several smaller pools and water areas. That can help spread guests around, but the overall layout is not my favorite part of the ships.

There is still plenty happening outdoors. You'll find family pools, adults-only spaces and hot tubs, splash areas for younger children, water attractions, deck parties, and other activities. On the Treasure, this includes the AquaMouse attraction. My water-slide advice is simple: don't follow everyone else. Try attractions during less obvious times—during popular activities, meals, or port time—and you may find dramatically shorter waits.

Disney also turns the pool deck into an entertainment venue. Sail-away festivities occur here, as does the famous Pirate Night celebration complete with entertainment and Disney Cruise Line's fireworks at sea—another special permission granted only to Disney Cruise Line.

THE DISNEY DIFFERENCE:

Many cruise lines offer shows, music, trivia, movies, and water slides. Disney separates itself through production quality and integration. Entertainment isn't simply scheduled around your cruise; in many ways, it helps structure the entire experience.

Families and Kids

WHERE THE PREMIUM BECOMES EASIER TO UNDERSTAND

Let's acknowledge the obvious. **There will be children** on your Disney cruise. Probably lots of them. Disney is a family brand, and Disney Cruise Line embraces that identity rather than trying to hide it. That doesn't automatically make the experience chaotic or unsophisticated. In fact, I would argue that Disney's ability to design exceptionally well for children is one of the reasons the overall product feels more premium, not less. The difference is that kids aren't merely tolerated aboard these ships. They are given spaces, entertainment, activities, and environments created specifically for them.

CHARACTERS:

Characters are a major part of the experience. Mickey, Minnie, princesses, Marvel heroes, Star Wars characters, and many others can appear throughout the cruise through scheduled greetings,

special events, performances, breakfasts, and other experiences. If meeting a particular character matters to your family, don't treat it casually. Check the Disney Cruise Line app once onboard, identify the scheduled appearances you care about, and plan accordingly. Lines can form early and grow long, particularly for popular characters and princesses.

YOUTH CLUBS:

Disney's youth programming is where things get particularly impressive. I have sailed ships with very good children's spaces and activities. Nothing I've experienced compares with what Disney creates.

For very young children, *It's a Small World* Nursery provides supervised care for an additional fee. Then comes Disney's Oceaneer Club for younger children.



This isn't simply a room with toys, televisions, and coloring supplies. On the Disney Treasure, children can move between immersive spaces inspired by worlds such as Marvel, Star Wars, and Disney princesses. They may train alongside superheroes, encounter characters, create art, hear stories, play games, or simply explore spaces designed to make them feel as though they've stepped inside their own Disney adventure.

Older kids aren't forgotten. Tweens have Edge, while teens have spaces such as Vibe, with more relaxed environments for games, music, movies, competitions, socializing, and meeting other travelers their age from around the world. Wish Class ships also include The Hideaway, another social environment geared toward older guests in the youth and young adult programming spectrum. These spaces become progressively less “little kid” as children get older, which matters. A 14-year-old generally doesn't want to spend the week in a room designed around the same philosophy as a 6-year-old. Disney understands that.

On the Treasure, the Hero Zone provides another large indoor recreation space with sports and games, and at times transforms into an *Incredibles*-themed inflatable obstacle course.

What impressed me most isn't any one activity or space. It's the degree to which Disney has built **entire worlds for different ages**. This can also benefit adults. When children genuinely want to spend time in the youth clubs, parents can enjoy dinner, a lounge, spa time, an adults-only area, or simply a quiet hour knowing their children aren't reluctantly being “watched.”



They're having their own vacation experience. That's a meaningful difference.

Families still have countless opportunities to enjoy the ship together through movies, pools, water attractions, deck parties, shows, character experiences, games, and other events. Disney doesn't solve the family-vacation problem by giving children something to do while adults enjoy themselves. At its best, Disney gives everyone something to do—sometimes together, sometimes apart.

THE DISNEY DIFFERENCE:

Disney's family focus doesn't automatically make the product less premium. The investment in age-specific spaces, counselors, entertainment, and programming is one of the clearest places where you can see what the higher fare is paying for.

What Will Feel Different

FROM A MORE “TRADITIONAL” CRUISE

If you're new to Disney Cruise Line—particularly if you've sailed other brands—several differences are worth understanding before you book.

- Disney has **no traditional unlimited alcohol package** and generally does not build the onboard experience around drinking.
- There is **no casino**.
- Main dining is **structured**, with assigned early or late seating and a rotational dining system rather than the flexible model common elsewhere.
- **Theater entertainment** plays an unusually important role in the evening schedule.
- Disney **characters and storytelling** are integrated throughout the ship, although much of the design is more polished and sophisticated than first-time Disney cruisers may expect.
- There will be many **families and children** onboard, but adults have dedicated venues and activities of their own.
- Disney places an enormous amount of emphasis on **immersion**. The ship isn't merely transporting you between ports. Disney wants the ship itself to become part of the story.

None of those differences is inherently better or worse. Their value depends entirely on the traveler and their travel party.

Which brings us to the question that really matters...

So, Is a Disney Cruise Worth It?

Let's get something out of the way: **A Disney cruise is not cheap.** To illustrate the difference, I compared several real sailings. I assumed a family of four sailing in early June 2027 in a standard balcony/veranda category stateroom. The pricing below is real, and was published and available at the time of this article.



The Disney Treasure and Royal Caribbean Icon of the Seas sailings were both 7-Night Eastern Caribbean itineraries. Because I consider Disney a premium cruise product rather than merely a mainstream family line, I also looked at Celebrity Cruises. The Celebrity Beyond sailing was an 8-Night Caribbean itinerary.

Examining the graph, you can see that the same family of four could theoretically sail back-to-back on the Celebrity Beyond for 16 nights and still spend less on the cruise fare than seven nights aboard the Disney Treasure. **That is meaningful.**

There is no reasonable way to evaluate Disney Cruise Line without acknowledging its price premium. But price alone cannot answer whether a vacation is worth it.

Travel is an investment of money, certainly, but also of time, energy, anticipation, and opportunity. Most of us have a finite number of vacations we can take. We travel with the people closest to us because we want to be together to rest, reconnect, celebrate, explore, laugh, or simply escape normal life for a while.

Two vacations with similar itineraries and cabin categories can produce completely different experiences. That's why "worth it" is ultimately a question of **fit**. And yes: **I absolutely believe a Disney cruise can be worth it.** But only for the right traveler.

DISNEY IS WORTH IT IF YOU ACTUALLY APPRECIATE DISNEY

This sounds obvious, but it matters. If you've enjoyed Disney theme parks, grew up with Disney films, love Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars, princesses, Mickey Mouse, or simply appreciate Disney storytelling, a Disney cruise gives you an opportunity to enter that world in a way few vacations can. You become part of the story rather than just a passenger.

And you don't need young children to enjoy it. Disney fans of virtually any age can appreciate the environments, entertainment, restaurants, characters, and tiny details hidden around the ship. There is a certain “young at heart” quality to the experience that Disney executes extremely well. As I once heard the famous pianist Lang Lang say, everyone can have their own young at heart moment no matter how old or young they are.

If Disney means absolutely nothing to you, though, a large portion of what you're paying for loses its value.



DISNEY IS WORTH IT IF YOU WANT PREMIUM WITHOUT STUFFY



This is where I think Disney Cruise Line is frequently misunderstood. Disney is not a traditional luxury cruise line. It isn't Silversea, Regent Seven Seas, Seabourn, or The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, and travelers shouldn't approach it expecting that type of product.

I place Disney much more naturally within the premium cruise conversation. What makes that unusual is the subject matter. Children. Animation. Princesses. Superheroes. Mickey Mouse. None of those things naturally sounds “premium.” Disney's accomplishment is that it handles them in a way that can be.

Yes, children will be laughing, running around, meeting characters, and occasionally having a meltdown. Some adults will too, frankly. But those things don't erase the polished service, thoughtful dining, beautiful spaces, excellent entertainment, immaculate presentation, or remarkable attention to detail. A foodie can still appreciate a great dinner. A theater lover can still become completely absorbed in what's happening onstage. An adult can still sit in a beautifully designed lounge with a well-made cocktail and listen to live music.

Disney has found a way to build sophisticated spaces while still making children feel that the entire ship was created for them. It isn't stuffy. **It is elegance you can interact with.** And I think that is one of Disney Cruise Line's greatest strengths.

DISNEY IS WORTH IT IF YOU WANT SOMETHING MEMORABLE

Many excellent cruise lines compete directly with one another. One may have slightly better food. Another may offer a stronger beverage package. One ship has a better pool deck. Another has a newer show. The differences matter, but the underlying experiences can sometimes feel interchangeable. Disney doesn't feel interchangeable. There simply isn't another cruise experience quite like it.

That's why I especially like Disney Cruise Line for meaningful trips: birthdays, graduations, anniversaries, honeymoons, major family vacations, or those increasingly important “we've been talking about doing this someday” trips. It can also be an excellent choice for experienced cruisers who already know they enjoy cruising but want to experience it in a genuinely different way. If a family tells me they're looking for a **bucket-list vacation**—something they'll still be talking about years from now—Disney deserves consideration.



Who Should Probably Choose Something Else?

OVERSPENDERS

I would not stretch someone's comfortable vacation budget just to put them aboard a Disney ship. If the price creates **financial stress**, the answer is simple: choose another excellent cruise line or vacation. There are too many good options available to believe that anyone must overspend simply because Disney has tremendous brand recognition or to keep up with the Joneses.

UNSURE CRUISERS

Likewise, if someone tells me, “We've never cruised before and **just want to see whether we like cruising**,” Disney would not automatically be my first recommendation. A less expensive line may allow them to discover what they value at sea before paying Disney's significant premium.

INDIFFERENT TO THE BRAND

I also wouldn't steer someone toward Disney if they have **little interest in the brand itself**. You don't need to own Mickey ears or know every Disney song. But if characters, Disney films, storytelling, and immersive theming actively annoy you, you're paying quite a lot for things you don't value.

PARTIERS

Lastly, travelers primarily seeking **a party cruise**—unlimited drinks, casino time, late-night clubs, and a high-energy adult atmosphere—have plenty of alternatives that will fit them far better.

This isn't a criticism of any of these travelers. It's simply the reason matching the right cruise line to the right person matters more than declaring one cruise line universally “best.”

The Final Verdict

So, is a Disney cruise worth it? For the right traveler, yes.

The price premium is real. Disney is frequently more expensive than mainstream competitors and can even cost considerably more than other premium cruise options. You should notice that difference. You should question it. And you should understand what you're receiving in exchange for it.

You are paying for immersive environments that few cruise lines could duplicate. You're paying for unusually polished family programming, exceptional theatrical entertainment, distinctive rotational dining, well-designed staterooms, thoughtful service, and the extraordinary attention to detail Disney has spent decades perfecting.

Most importantly, you're paying for a cruise experience that doesn't feel quite like anything else at sea. When you step aboard a Disney ship, you enter worlds that are difficult to fully explain until you've experienced them yourself. You eat great food, enjoy carefully crafted drinks, watch exceptional entertainment, meet characters, try activities, explore beautifully designed spaces, and spend time with the people you came with.

But somewhere along the way, something else happens. You smile more. You laugh more. You engage a little more completely with what's happening around you. You make new friends and meet people like you. And when you eventually step off the ship, you may realize that what began as a cruise somehow became something more exciting, more rejuvenating, and far more memorable.

It became Disney—**Quite possibly, the happiest place on...sea.**

THE DISNEY DIFFERENCE:

Disney Cruise Line isn't the right value for everyone, and it doesn't need to be. Its premium price makes sense when the things Disney does uniquely well are the same things you value most in a vacation.





INTRODUCTION

The Disney Treasure and Our Favorite Spaces Aboard

Now that we've explored how Disney Cruise Line differs from a more traditional cruise experience—and who I believe will find that difference worth the price—let's turn specifically to the ship we called home for the week.

The Disney Treasure is the sixth ship in Disney's fleet and the second vessel in its newer Wish Class. She set sail on her maiden voyage in December 2024 and measures just over 144,000 gross tons. Double occupancy is around 2,500 guests, though with families filling additional berths, a typical sailing can carry closer to 4,000 passengers. Taking care of all those Disney fans is an attentive crew of more than 1,500. Our sailing was full, and the Treasure handled that crowd well—though not perfectly.

First, the good. Even a relatively new cruise ship can begin to show signs of wear after thousands upon thousands of guests pass through it. The Treasure looked immaculate. Throughout our week onboard, heavily trafficked areas remained polished, clean, orderly, and fully functioning. Considering the amount of intricate décor, interactive elements, and themed environments Disney maintains throughout the ship, that level of upkeep is quite impressive.

The ship's overarching theme is **adventure**, and you begin to see that story before even stepping aboard. Peter Pan and Captain Hook adorn the stern, while the Grand Hall draws its inspiration from *Aladdin*. At its center, Aladdin and Jasmine soar together aboard their Magic Carpet. From there, your own adventure leads

through environments inspired by classic Disney films, beloved characters, and iconic theme-park attractions.

Wish Class vessels have developed a reputation among some cruisers for being confusing. I didn't find that to be a major issue aboard the Disney Treasure. Modern cruise ships in general are becoming larger and more intricately designed, and almost any unfamiliar ship requires some orientation. Give yourself a day aboard the Treasure to learn the major pathways, pay attention to the abundant signage, and things begin making sense fairly quickly.

The bigger issue for me was not finding the venues. It was fitting everyone inside them. Many spaces felt undersized for the ship's capacity and the popularity of the activities held within them. We felt the crowds in certain restaurants, lounges, pools, and entertainment venues. BINGO could become standing-room-only. The piano lounge regularly filled beyond comfortable capacity. Popular bars were sometimes difficult to enter. And during peak periods, the pools could resemble

cramped vats of human soup. There's really no elegant way to put that.

This isn't a problem unique to Disney, particularly as cruise ships grow larger and more activity-driven, but I had hoped Disney might have managed crowds slightly better in some of these spaces. Fortunately, the problem was manageable. We quickly learned that patience and timing mattered. If a lounge was full, we came back later. If AquaMouse had a line, we rode another time. If everyone appeared headed toward one activity, we found something else to do. Over a seven-night cruise, you have time. And because the crew maintained every space so exceptionally well, waiting until later in the week never felt like settling for a diminished experience. A venue we finally explored on day six looked every bit as polished and carefully presented as it had on embarkation day.

Now, let's get into some of the restaurants, lounges, entertainment venues, and spaces aboard the Disney Treasure that stood out most to our family.



The Grand Hall Atrium



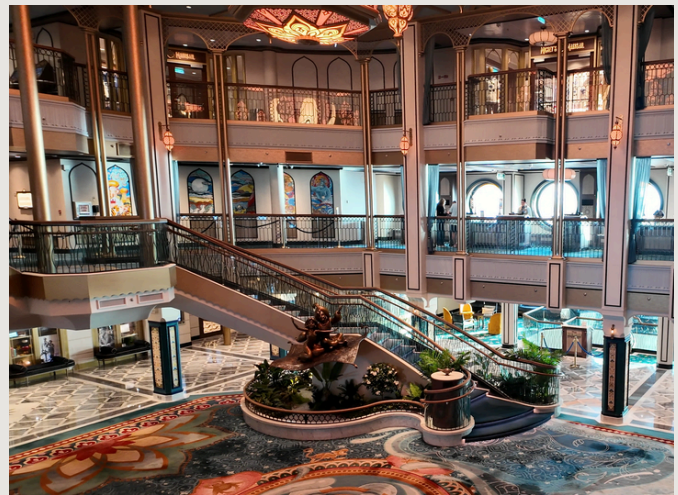
Ships don't have heartbeats, but if the Disney Treasure had one, it would undoubtedly be the Grand Hall. An homage to Agrabah from *Aladdin*, this soaring atrium is the centerpiece of the ship and one of the first places you'll experience. As your travel party enters the Grand Hall on embarkation day, your name is announced. It is a small theatrical moment, but it immediately signals that this won't be any ordinary cruise.

From there, the Grand Hall becomes something different depending on the hour. In the morning, it can be a place to grab a specialty coffee and ease into the day. Later, you might find character appearances or performances. You can shop or have your questions answered at guest services. Families often use this space to meet, move between nearby restaurants and lounges, or as the entrance to the Oceaneer Club via a unique and fun twisty slide to the deck below. At night, the space transforms again through lighting and music before eventually settling into Disney's version of an evening farewell—their “kiss goodnight.”

The **versatility** of the space is what impressed me most. The Grand Hall isn't simply a beautiful atrium with a pretty chandelier—though it has that. It's not just a space to walk through on the way to somewhere else—though it is a helpful navigational central point. Instead, Disney uses it constantly, turning the physical center of the ship into the emotional center as well.

OUR TAKE:

Standing next to Aladdin and Jasmine on their Magic Carpet, surrounded by the warm colors and ornate architecture of Agrabah, the Treasure's adventure theme immediately makes sense. The Grand Hall isn't merely something to see once. Linger at different times throughout the cruise, because the atmosphere—and often the entertainment—changes with the day.



The Stateroom



We stayed in a **Category 5A Deluxe Oceanview Stateroom with Verandah** on Deck 10. Our cabin accommodated three guests with a queen bed and convertible sofa. There was plenty of practical storage throughout. Luggage easily slid beneath the bed helping keep the room uncluttered during the week. We also found ample electrical outlets and device charging ports available throughout the cabin.

Our stateroom carried a *Finding Nemo* theme, though Disney showed some decorating restraint. A Nemo-inspired “fish hook” marked the cabin outside the door, while themed artwork appeared above the bed and sofa. Otherwise, the space used softer, neutral colors that made it feel calm and comfortable rather than continuing the heavier theming found throughout the public areas. I appreciated that. After spending the day inside Disney's highly immersive environments, the stateroom feels like somewhere you can decompress.

Disney cabins are often described as larger than those found on competing cruise lines, and the measurements may support that claim. In practice, though, our Treasure cabin did not feel dramatically larger than comparable verandah cabins I've experienced elsewhere. The queen bed probably contributed to that perception. Personally, I would have preferred a king.

What did make a noticeable difference was the **split bathroom** arrangement discussed earlier. Having one room with the toilet and sink and another with a second sink and tub/shower made getting ready significantly easier for our family of three.

OUR TAKE:

Don't expect the stateroom itself to overwhelm you with Disney theming. That's actually part of its appeal. The public spaces provide the spectacle; your cabin gives you somewhere comfortable to recover from it and rest for your next day's adventure. Minor criticisms aside, the cabin was thoughtfully designed, exceptionally clean, quiet, and comfortable throughout our cruise.

Plaza de Coco

Coco is one of my wife's favorite Disney movies, so Plaza de Coco came with some expectations attached. Fortunately, it delivered.

This rotational dining restaurant is visually spectacular. The décor transports you toward the Rivera family's world and the **plaza of Santa Cecilia**, with rich colors, music, artwork, and details that immediately place you within the film. You will even find a full-size Rivera ofrenda as you enter the dining room.

But Plaza de Coco isn't simply themed around Coco. It continues the story. Guests receive two distinct entertainment experiences during a seven-night rotation.

On one visit, Miguel and the mariachis of Santa Cecilia lead a lively celebration of music and family. During a second visit the atmosphere shifts toward **Día de los Muertos** and honoring those who came before. The entertainment unfolds around dinner rather than interrupting it, which is exactly where Disney's fixed rotational dining system proves its value. Music, storytelling, service, and the meal move together.

OUR TAKE:

Come expecting dinner and a show to function as one experience rather than two separate things. There's a lot happening in the room, but that is precisely what Plaza de Coco is designed to be. It is colorful. It is musical. It is celebratory. And if Coco already means something to your family, the experience becomes even more memorable.



1923

Plaza de Coco is vibrant and theatrical. The Treasure's other rotational dining venue, Worlds of Marvel, is lively and interactive. 1923 is almost the opposite. And that's exactly why I enjoyed it. Some guests may initially view 1923 as the least exciting of the Treasure's three rotational dining experiences. There isn't a stage show. Characters don't appear. The room doesn't attempt to transport you into a fictional world in quite the same way. Instead, it celebrates Disney itself with a special aura more consistent with traditional cruise dining rooms.

The restaurant takes its name from the year The Walt Disney Company was founded and is divided into **two sides**—Walt Disney and Roy Disney. You will be assigned to dine at one of these sides, but both serve the same menus and share the same overall design.



Cases and walls feature beautifully presented concept artwork, animation pieces, props, and other artifacts connected to Disney's creative **history**. Rather than demanding your attention with a performance, 1923 encourages you to look around and slow down.

After evenings filled with characters, music, and elaborate entertainment, the quieter atmosphere was refreshing. Dinner felt more **elegant and relaxed**, allowing us to focus more on the food, conversation, service, and artwork surrounding us. That contrast gives 1923 its purpose.

OUR TAKE:

Don't mistake the absence of a show for an absence of experience. 1923 provides something the Treasure needs—a more relaxed and elegant dinner. Other restaurants may be more theatrical or interactive, but 1923 can feel more refined. Those interested in Disney history and animation will take quiet pleasure in studying the displays and appreciating where so many familiar stories began.

Mickey & Friends Festival of Foods



This one surprised me. Mickey & Friends Festival of Foods may have served our favorite food aboard the Disney Treasure. That's a bold statement for a collection of casual pool-deck counters, but I stand by it. Perhaps expectations for fast casual pool food are simply lower than they should be. Or perhaps Disney understands exactly what people want when they're standing outside in a swimsuit at lunchtime. Either way, this was our go-to lunch spot.

The venue is actually **five dining concepts** grouped together: Mickey's Smokestack Barbecue serves BBQ favorites. Donald's Cantina handles tacos and Mexican-inspired dishes. Daisy's Pizza Pies serves pizza. Goofy's Grill offers familiar grilled favorites. And Sweet Minnie's Ice Cream keeps the soft serve coming. The food is very well executed. We enjoyed juicy brisket, tacos with plenty of toppings and accompaniments, cheeseburgers, sausages, fries, macaroni and cheese, chips, salsa, pizza, and more throughout the week.

Everything from Mickey & Friends Festival of Foods is **included** in the cruise fare, and the convenience is excellent. Grab lunch and find a nearby table, bring it back to your pool lounge, or take it to your stateroom. On the way, grab an included beverage from one of the conveniently located beverage stations. And, don't forget the unlimited soft serve.

Some of the counters also operate into the early evening, which can make Festival of Foods useful for a pre-dinner snack or even an alternative meal when your family doesn't feel like committing to another full rotational dinner. It is also an excellent alternative to the buffet.

OUR TAKE:

Don't dismiss Mickey & Friends Festival of Foods as ordinary pool-deck fare. For us, it was one of the Treasure's strongest dining options and the place we returned to most often for lunch. This is casual dining, not culinary theater, but sometimes an excellent taco or plate of brisket while sitting in the sun is exactly what the day requires.



The Rose

If someone boarded the Disney Treasure convinced that every venue would feel overtly child-focused or cartoon-driven, The Rose is where I would send them. Located on Deck 12 near the ship's adult-only specialty restaurants, The Rose is an **elegant** cocktail lounge inspired by *Beauty and the Beast*. And it is beautiful. The Rose is especially convenient before or after dinner at Enchanté or Palo Steakhouse, but you don't need a dining reservation to appreciate it. You do, however, need to be **18 or older**.

The theming is sophisticated rather than literal. Floor-to-ceiling windows create expansive ocean views, while the décor and lighting make the room feel entirely appropriate for an upscale hotel or luxury yacht.



During one sea day, my wife and I found seats along the windows and simply sat together enjoying the quiet. It was one of the rare moments during the cruise when I found myself looking outward at the ocean rather than inward toward Disney's created environments. For a while, I almost forgot I was aboard a Disney ship. That isn't a criticism. It's what makes The Rose special.

The beverage menu matches the setting. Cocktails are carefully constructed and beautifully presented, with elevated wines and champagnes also available. Some of the Treasure's most intricate and **sophisticated drinks** can be found here, supported by attentive bartenders and polished service.

OUR TAKE:

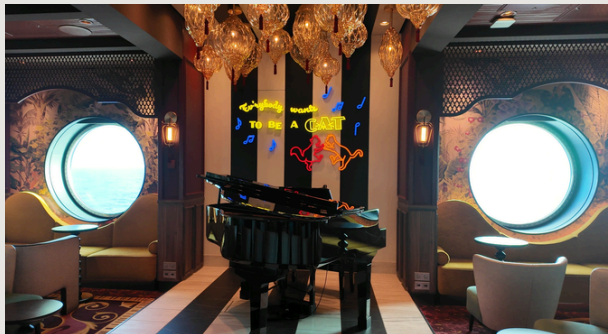
The Rose is proof that Disney can create a thoroughly adult, elegant environment without abandoning its storytelling. If you need a quiet escape from the energy elsewhere onboard, this is one of the best places to find it.

Scat Cat Lounge

Our **favorite venue** aboard the Treasure may have been the one I least expected.

Scat Cat Lounge is inspired by *The Aristocats*. I am not a particularly devoted Aristocats fan, and before sailing, several other Treasure venues had me much more excited. I wandered into Scat Cat on our first evening largely because I wanted to capture some quick video. Then I came back. And came back again. By the end of the week, we had visited every day.

The venue has **two personalities**. During the day, the smaller bar area opens toward the Grand Hall, making it an excellent place to sit with a drink while still feeling connected to the energy of the atrium.



At night, the attached **piano lounge** becomes something completely different. The lights dim. The atmosphere becomes more intimate and the room takes on the character of a stylish little jazz club.

And then the music starts. The pianists during our sailing were exceptional—world-class musicians delivering an impressively varied mix of music throughout the week. The service matched them. In our experience, Scat Cat had the best bartenders and servers aboard the ship, and the cocktails consistently lived up to the atmosphere. But again, it wasn't really about the cocktails. It was about the combination. The room. The lighting. The music. The people. The feeling of settling in after dinner and realizing you didn't really want to be anywhere else. That's the kind of cruise venue I remember long after I've forgotten what I ordered.

OUR TAKE:

Don't build your entire Treasure itinerary around the venues you already expect to love. Scat Cat Lounge was our surprise favorite, and sometimes those unexpected discoveries become the best part of a ship.

The Haunted Mansion Parlor



The reason for the popularity becomes obvious the moment you enter. The Haunted Mansion Parlor is likely the most **intensely themed** venue aboard the ship. It doesn't merely borrow visual inspiration from the attractions. It behaves like a Haunted Mansion. Portraits come alive. Spirits whisper. Madame Leota appears. A tambourine sounds. Lightning flashes. Even skeletal fish swim. The room is constantly doing something.

And then there is the venue everyone seems to know before they board. The Haunted Mansion Parlor. Calling this one of the most anticipated spaces on the Disney Treasure might actually undersell it.

As a huge fan of Disney's Haunted Mansion attractions, I was counting the minutes until I could experience the parlor myself. Apparently, everyone else was too. When the lounge is open, it is **busy**. When a sign says it's closed, people seem to gather anyway. It is, somehow, always busy. Don't panic. If there isn't a seat, come back. We visited several times over the course of our week, and patience eventually paid off every time.

So much is happening simultaneously, you'll almost certainly miss things during your first visit. That's why I recommend visiting several times for shorter periods rather than trying to spend your entire evening there once. Come back and sit somewhere different. Look in another direction. Listen more intently. Watch what happens when the room changes.

During the day, children and adults can enjoy the experience together. Later in the evening, the venue transitions to adults only. The drinks are part of the fun as well, including heavily themed cocktails and even a secret menu guests can attempt to uncover.



OUR TAKE:

Visit more than once. The Haunted Mansion Parlor contains too many details, effects, and hidden surprises to absorb in a single sitting—and the second or third visit may reveal things you completely missed the first time. For Haunted Mansion fans, this space alone will probably justify a significant amount of wandering around waiting for a seat to open.

Sarabi

The Walt Disney Theatre may host the Treasure's major stage productions, but Sarabi is where much of the rest of the ship's **entertainment** comes alive. Inspired by *The Lion King*, this two-level venue hosts an enormous range of programming throughout the day and evening. The venue itself isn't as immersive as something like Haunted Mansion Parlor, but its strength is versatility. Something is almost always happening there.

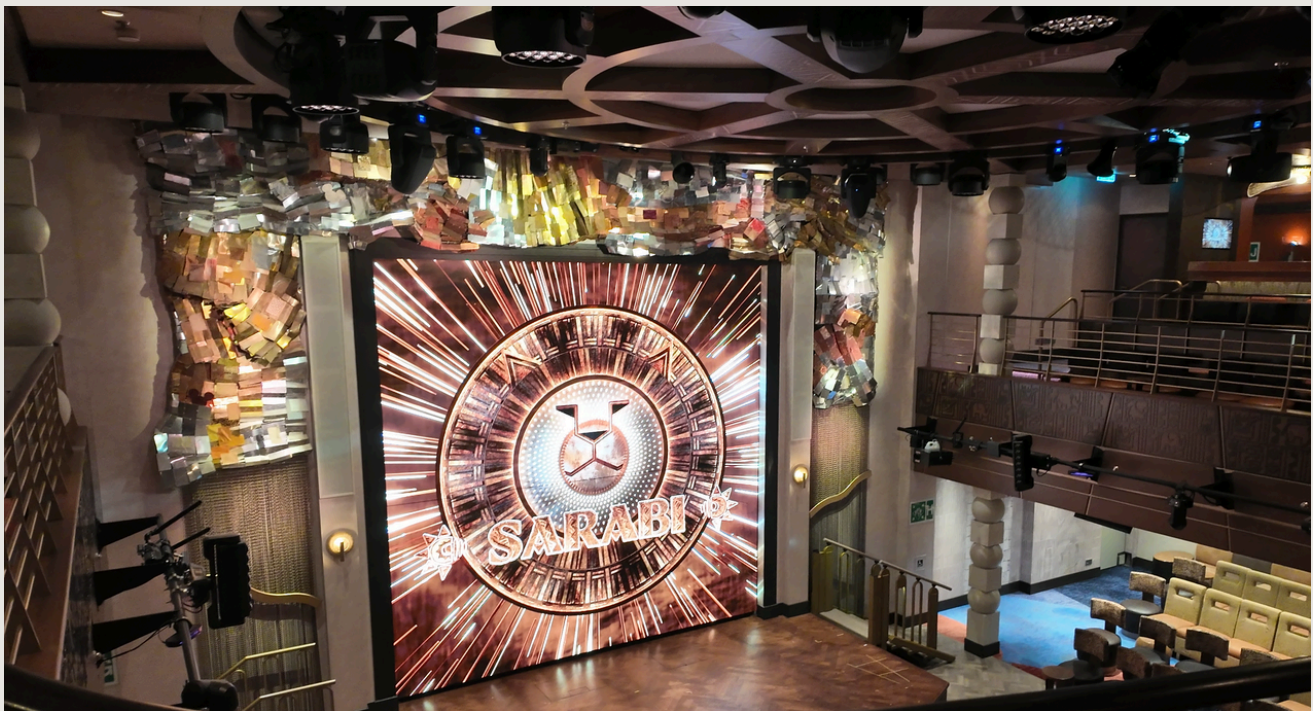
We visited Sarabi every day. Sometimes it was for a family game show. Sometimes a seminar. Sometimes entertainment. And sometimes it was for the event that can turn otherwise reasonable Disney cruisers into highly competitive gamblers: BINGO.

Because Disney ships don't have casinos, BINGO is about as close as you're going to get to traditional gambling onboard. And people take it seriously. Sessions were lively, popular, and on occasion so crowded that seating became impossible to find.

At night, Sarabi changes personality as certain programming becomes adults only. During our sailing, evening entertainment included performers with genuine Broadway credentials and a comedic retelling of the *Indiana Jones* films.

OUR TAKE:

Check the daily schedule for Sarabi rather than simply wandering in. Some of the Treasure's funniest, most energetic, and most unexpectedly entertaining events happen here.



AquaMouse



I am not normally the person racing toward a **water attraction**, but there was no chance I was sailing the Disney Treasure without riding AquaMouse. I'm glad I did.

AquaMouse combines elements of a traditional tube slide, water coaster, and Disney attraction all in one. The experience begins more like a ride than a waterslide, as your raft travels uphill past screens featuring different animated adventures while water squirts you along the way. Then gravity gets involved and the raft twists through tubing **high above the ship**. Through portions of clear tubing, you can see beyond the vessel as you curve over the upper decks.

It isn't the longest, fastest, or most intense waterslide you'll ever encounter, but that's part of why I enjoyed it. AquaMouse is playful rather than terrifying. It is fun and approachable for kids and people like me

who don't normally seek out water rides. But make no mistake, it is still entertaining enough that I rode it several times.

Lines can develop during sea days, but they aren't comparable to what you might encounter at a Disney theme park. More importantly, there were plenty of moments during our cruise when there was virtually no wait. On several occasions, including times I would have assumed would have been relatively busy, we rode more than once in succession. Again, timing matters. If the line is long when you arrive, don't assume that's your only opportunity. You're aboard for a week. Come back.

OUR TAKE:

AquaMouse is more Disney attraction than extreme waterslide. Even travelers who aren't normally drawn to water rides may find this one worth trying—and creative timing can eliminate much of the waiting around. While not necessarily a thrill ride, AquaMouse is a playful experience perfect for breaking up a day by the pool.

Final Review

Those are only some of the spaces that stood out during our week aboard the Disney Treasure. There is still **considerably more to explore.**

You can wander the corridors examining Disney artwork, watch first-run and classic films in the Wonderland and Never Land cinemas, browse Disney shops, enjoy the pools and recreation areas, experience the youth clubs, or transform into royalty at Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique. And even after seven nights, you probably won't experience everything. That's part of the Treasure's appeal. There always seems to be another detail to notice, venue to visit, show to watch, or activity competing for your attention.

The ship isn't perfect. My biggest criticism is capacity. At times, popular venues simply felt too small for the number of guests who wanted to experience them. Crowded dining rooms could be difficult to navigate. Lounges filled. Pools became uncomfortable during peak periods. Some activities attracted more people than their venues handled gracefully. That matters, and prospective guests should know about it. But it never ruined our cruise.

A little flexibility solved most of the problem. We visited popular lounges at different times. We rode AquaMouse when everyone else was somewhere else. We returned to venues later instead of standing around frustrated early in the cruise week. Over a seven-night itinerary, that approach worked extremely well and we were able to experience everything we wanted to and more, several times over.

Dinner was the one area where crowds were harder to avoid. Rotational dining restaurants can feel very full once everyone is seated. But then something interesting happens. The lights change. The music starts. Characters appear. A beautifully presented plate arrives. You notice the artwork beside you. And somehow the dining room guests around you begin to fade into the background. That ability to redirect your attention is something Disney does exceptionally well.

Fans of Disney films, characters, and theme parks will find an enormous amount to appreciate aboard the Treasure, particularly in the extraordinary attention given to design, storytelling, entertainment, and tiny but impactful details. But the ship isn't successful simply because it has Mickey Mouse onboard. It succeeds because Disney Cruise Line takes those characters, cartoons, stories, and attractions and handles them with the level of service, polish, creativity, and execution expected from **a premium cruise product.** That is what surprised me most. The Treasure can be playful without feeling cheap. Family-focused without feeling unsophisticated. Immersive without becoming overwhelming. And premium without becoming stuffy. We stepped aboard expecting to enjoy Disney. We stepped off realizing how much we enjoyed the Disney Treasure as a cruise ship.



If you're considering a sailing aboard the Disney Treasure—or wondering whether Disney Cruise Line is the right fit for your family—I'd be happy to help you sort through ships, itineraries, staterooms, dining, and the countless little decisions that can make the experience even better.

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