

Cruising at the Holidays: Disney Cruise Line Review

by Mary Augustine, PassPorter Guest Contributor

We have cruised with Disney at several different times of the year, but find that November and early December cruises are some of the most magical cruises of all.

Have you considered cruising at these times? Allow me to list some great reasons to consider cruising near the holidays.

If cost is a consideration for you, this can be a less expensive time to take a Disney cruise (excluding Thanksgiving week). In addition, last minute special rates are sometimes available, including restricted guarantee rates (IGT/OGT/VGT), Florida resident rates, Military rates, and others. We have found that airline tickets may also be a bit less expensive during this time period. Sailing during the actual holidays of Thanksgiving or Christmas is usually very expensive. But, during the weeks just before Thanksgiving and between Thanksgiving and Christmas, it can be a much more economical time to sail. Cost savings are one of the reasons that cruising in November or early December can be advantageous.

□ Disney Cruise Line ships are being decorated for Christmas even earlier this year, starting on November 9, 2013, and continuing through December 31, 2013. Christmas decorations on Disney Cruise Line are breathtaking! Virtually every public area is adorned, often with themed Christmas decor. Enjoying the festive decorations is one more reason that sailing during this time is especially pleasant. From the time you enter the terminal building at Port Canaveral, you will be greeted by charming holiday Disney touches. There is a large Christmas tree near the embarkation area, wreaths on the walls, large red bows on the light fixtures, and ornaments and greenery adorn the 'Mickey' hands.

□ Once you embark, you will be greeted by a beautifully decorated twenty-four foot tall Christmas tree, a life-sized gingerbread house (assembled after Thanksgiving), numerous garlands, poinsettias, and twinkling lights. We also loved the Christmas background music playing, including classical Christmas music as well as contemporary pieces. The Cast Members too are decked in holiday hats and festive red or green costumes. Each area of the ship seems to have themed Christmas decorations, from the suitcase ornaments on the tree in the Bon Voyage bar, to the tea cup ornaments on the tree in the Cove Cafe. The children's areas are also decorated, with Christmas trees, wreaths,

ornaments, and lights. The nursery has a baby themed Christmas tree -- one of my favorites. There were some special holiday activities in the clubs for children, such as decorating Christmas stockings, and making Christmas cards. Adult areas were not left out, with themed holiday decorations in the nightclubs and lounges. The 687 sports bar had vintage sports equipment ornaments on the Christmas tree, and Pink had garlands, lights, and ornaments in delicate pink colors. Palo and Remy were decked in elegant garlands and wreaths. In all, each area of the ship had wonderful decorations, and it was very entertaining just to walk through each area to see the decor.

If your cruise includes a stop in Castaway Cay, you will be treated with island themed Christmas trees, ornaments, snowmen, holiday music, and even a reindeer themed tram.

□ There are a number of special activities during cruises in November and December, including King Triton's Tree Lighting Ceremony, complete with 'snow' falling in the atrium. This is held in the evening on the first night of the cruise. Gingerbread house decorating is offered in Animator's Palate. There is no additional charge to attend the gingerbread house decorating event, but tickets must be obtained for this, at Guest Services. Because tickets are limited, I recommend going to Guest Services to request them early on your embarkation day. If you are unable to obtain tickets, we noted that a similar gingerbread house decorating event was offered in the Vibe and Edge youth clubs (for children attending the clubs). For the Animator's Palate event, one of the pastry chefs led the decorating, and tables were set up so that families could work together on their gingerbread creations. After decorating the houses, we were allowed to keep them for the duration of the cruise. Because they are made of perishable food, the gingerbread houses could not be taken off the ship. Thus, you may want to take photos of your completed masterpieces!

□ The Disney Characters are dressed in holiday attire, and photo sessions with them are very popular. Holiday story time was offered in the Lobby Atrium, and even Santa Claus may make an appearance! We also noted some Christmas themed items in the shops, including ornaments. This offers an opportunity to obtain a special Christmas souvenir from Disney Cruise Line.

□ In sum, November and early December cruises offer special festive holiday decorations and activities. Castaway Cay is transformed into a winter wonderland. If you avoid the actual holidays, the cost of cruising at this time can be reasonable. If you can work out school schedules/make up work, this might be a perfect time for cruising with Disney Cruise Line.

About The Author: Mary is a Disney Cruise Line fan preparing for another pre-Christmas cruise with Disney Cruise Line next month.

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