

Miami, Florida: A Disney Cruise Line Port Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

In the next in this [series of articles](#) looking at some of the home ports of the Disney Cruise Line, we head to their second home in Florida, Miami.

With sailings out of here to the Bahamas, Caribbean, and also the departure point for the Panama Canal repositioning cruise of the Wonder in May 2014, there's plenty to choose from.

Miami is somewhere I'd always wanted to visit, and a couple of years ago, we were fortunate enough to head there, as part of a road trip around Florida. After all, when you spend so much time at Walt Disney World, it seems only right to explore more of the Sunshine State at some point.

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□The big draw here, as with many of Florida's towns and cities, is its beaches, and none are more famous in Florida as Miami Beach. It's very much a place to see, but also to be seen, with most of the people we saw out there falling into the "body beautiful" category. Needless to say, we weren't there to join them in sunbathing. Despite that, the beach is well worth seeing, not just for its beautiful sand and superb weather (we had some lovely hot days when we were there during December), but for the wonderfully colored lifeguard huts, which have to be unique in the world.

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□Of course, they fit in perfectly in Miami, famed for its many Art Deco buildings. We spent some very happy time cruising up and down Ocean Drive, admiring them I'm sure there are some who don't particularly like this style of architecture, but I adore it, and it was like Christmas had come for me, seeing so many preserved buildings in such close proximity. In total, there are around 800 buildings, so you can't miss them. We found that seeing them in the daylight was enjoyable, but in the twilight, and after dark, they were even more attractive.

There's much more to Miami though than Miami Beach. Head across one of the roads that link it to the mainland, and you'll pass PortMiami, home to both the Magic and the Wonder during the times they are based here. If you want to explore the waters around here, then a Biscayne Bay cruise is the perfect way to do it, giving you the chance to see the houses of the rich and famous on the manmade islands around here. We weren't able to take this cruise, after it was cancelled due to torrential rain (an occupational hazard at any time of the year in Florida), which was a huge shame, as I was looking forward to seeing

those, and the Miami skyline from the water.

□ However, there's plenty to be seen on land, including some intriguing neighborhoods. Little Havana was fascinating to see, and was full of life on all the streets, with older men playing chess in squares, and colourful murals to be seen on street corners depicting life back home.

□ More in keeping with my style was Coral Gables, one of Miami's richest neighborhoods, and you immediately get that sense as soon as you enter it. It really is a way of getting a glimpse at how the other half live, but if you do want to stay here, there is a way of doing that, with the gorgeous Biltmore Hotel located in the center of town. It's a magnificent place, and like many hotels, you can tour it, even if you're not staying there. The swimming pool is the one thing you must see here, as it's the largest hotel pool in America, and even though I knew that before we actually saw it, it didn't prepare me for the size of it.

□ A little further up from Coral Gables, located along the coastline, is Vizcaya, described as Florida's grandest residence, and from what we saw of it, I wouldn't dispute that. It was a winter retreat for the millionaire industrialist James Deerling, and his vision was to recreate an Italian estate. Wow, he certainly succeeded! We loved touring this place, and seeing the rooms, and its gardens. You could easily spend a whole day here, and it's one of Miami's biggest tourist attractions, and understandably so.

□ We only had a couple of days to sample everything that Miami has to offer, and we missed a lot during that time, as like every city, there's always more to do than you have time for. The overwhelming impression we came away with was that Miami is so much more than you perhaps initially think of. Yes, it's got a stunning beach, and beautiful Art Deco buildings, but it's also a wonderful kaleidoscope of cultures, which gives visitors a lot to take in, and appreciate. I can see why Disney selected it to be their second home cruise port in Florida.

□ In the next of this series of articles, we'll look at the newest addition to the Disney Cruise Line's list of home ports, one which only plays host to two cruises in the summer of 2014, but one of the best known cities in the world, Venice.

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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