

Top 5 for Tracy Arm, Alaska: A Disney Cruise Line Review

by Michele Dakho, PassPorter Message Board Guide (Moderator)

Although I've taken 14 cruises, Alaska was the cruise I felt the most unprepared for. When you're packing for a Caribbean or Bahamian cruises, it's pretty simple: tank tops, shorts, and bathing suits. The biggest concern with the weather is rain; Alaska is an entirely different story.

Not to mention the entire experience is different; exchange the umbrella in the fruity pool-side drink for a shot of rum in your hot cocoa on deck, and swap the bathing suits for multiple layers. So with this "once in a lifetime" cruise upon us, and the added pressure of Alaska being the #1 destination on my parents' bucket list ... I was in a frenzy by the time we set sail. After extensive research and input from my friends here on the Passporter Boards, I felt as prepared as I could be for this adventure.

□ Sea Days are often among my favorites, but the Alaska itinerary includes an unusual "day at sea," it's more like a floating port of call. Sailing through Tracy Arm Fjord turned out to be my favorite day of the trip and truly was a once in a lifetime experience.

□ There's a lot of hustle and bustle preparing for the Tracy Arm day; the ship is buzzing with virtually every passenger out on deck to see what he or she can see. There's a morning rush to claim a "good spot" on deck to watch the ship pull into the narrow passage. Not a morning person as it is, I was motivated only after my morning coffee delivery and by the knowledge that this truly was something I'd probably never be able to experience again. I was ready to roll. All that fresh air and my perspective of the majesty I was about to take in had my senses heightened, and I wanted to take in every second. After several hours of freezing on deck, and thousands of photos and memories.... my deep official analysis (read: scrapbooking) broke down to five tips that I'd like to pass on to fellow cruisers.

Here are my top five tips for enjoying Tracy Arm:

□ Be a see-er, not a sardine - There's an infectious energy on the ship that starts early in the morning, with the early birds racing to get the worm...or rather the view. The most popular spots on the ship as you pull into Tracy Arm are the forward and aft sections of deck 9. With roughly 2,000 people trying to cram into the tight space, unless you're right against the railing you likely won't be able to see. At 52" on my

"tallest' day, I knew I had no chance of a good view. I knew that standing = sardine status, so instead of being caught in the net, I channeled my inner Dory and "just kept swimming," which brings me to my next tip.

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□ Keep "swimming," a.k.a. move around! - The ship is moving, and so can you. There literally is not a bad view from anywhere on the ship, and there's enough splendor for all to enjoy. Roam around and take in the views! Bundle up and enjoy lunch on the deck, while chefs prepare a BBQ fit for the most carnivorous wildlife. If you're looking for bears....grab your binoculars and head to the views of the trees, if you're interested in the glaciers, grab a spot by the railing and take it all in.

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□ Respect the silence - Disney Cruise Line is all about environmental responsibility and preservation, and Tracy Arm is no exception. You'll find a blissful serenity you're unlikely to experience anywhere else, so enjoy it. There is a level of solitude that is essential to the wilderness environment, so don't expect to hear the awesome Disney tunes from the ships horns, open announcements or Funnel Vision; these are all minimized during this time. There is a narration from an Alaskan naturalist, but if you're out on deck, you likely won't be able to hear it - even at its maximum volume it's very difficult to hear. The narration is also broadcast on one of the TV channels, so you can listen in your stateroom. If you want to be informed but not chained under a speaker or locked in your stateroom, there is a book available in the gift shop that has "mile markers" to reference as you experience it live. "The Alaska Cruise Handbook, a Mile-by-Mile Guide by Joe Upton," is the book I purchased in the gift shop. It includes information on various ports of call, local history, excursions, planning tips, and also a large fold out map with mile markers. My stepson enjoyed the map and got a kick out of listening for the mile markers and trying to figure out where we were.

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□ Bundle up - If you're expecting to be outside for the majority of the day, layer up and bundle up. You're standing outside to look at glaciers...dress accordingly. Don't forget the mittens, hats, earmuffs, scarves, extra scarves, and hoodies...you get the point. There is of course an array of attire to choose from in the gift shop, but the zip-up jacket my Dad fell in love with we found in port for a fraction of the price. So if the DCL logo isn't important to you, you may want to check in port for some affordable layers if you're running low.

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□ Grab a seat - Eventually you'll get tired (and cold) and you'll want to snuggle up and be cozy (and warm). If you have a verandah, this is the perfect time to put it to use! Order some afternoon room service, or a pot of coffee, grab the comforter and take advantage of your verandah. If you didn't splurge for a room with a view, most likely Crew

Members will be on deck handing out warm fleecy blankets (instead of pool towels). If you're lucky you can find a chair on the deck 4 promenade or take in a game of shuffle board while you glacier watch.

□ Whether you're looking for relaxation, adventure or the sheer splendor of what Tracy Arm has to offer, the decks of your Disney ship have exactly what you're looking for!

Want to read more about Tracy's Arm? Check out this review of [Tracy's Arm Fjord](#).

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