

One Night in Venice, Italy: A Disney Cruise Line Port Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

When Disney announced an eastern Mediterranean itinerary for the summer of 2014, I was sold on it immediately, and not just because it would take me to two new countries, Greece and Turkey, but also because of what would await us on our final night on board.

The Disney Magic would arrive back in Venice, and we would then spend the whole night there, before disembarking the next morning. As Brett, our Cruise Director, said when we got the all-clear to go ashore, "There's no all aboard time tonight!"

I can't speak of our evening in Venice without describing our arrival back in that beautiful city. When the Magic departed Venice, her route took us past the heart of the city, clearly seeing St. Mark's Square, and we followed the same route on the return journey. It was a truly breathtaking sight, and a very unique one, as the Magic loomed above the city's skyline. We were literally looking down on many of Venice's buildings, with just some of the larger waterfront churches at our eye level.

□ Sadly, it's a sight that may not be that common in the future, as from 2015, the largest cruise ships will be banned from taking this route, because of the environmental damage they've been causing to Venice. Although the Magic falls beneath that cut-off, whether even she will be able to take this route again remains to be seen, with reports saying that even the smaller cruise liners will be subject to "severe restrictions." That decision was taken after we returned home, and I feel even more grateful that we'd been able to enjoy such a beautiful view before the restrictions are introduced.

□ We arrived back into Venice's cruise terminal in the early afternoon, which surprised me, as the all ashore time was supposed to be 6:30 pm. We were told by crew members that, on the previous cruise, the first to do this itinerary, that had been about right, and it had taken around four hours for all the arrival clearances to be completed before anyone was allowed ashore. What a difference one cruise can make, as we were free to head on to dry land after just an hour or so, which was a very pleasant surprise.

Unlike many of our fellow cruisers, we had opted for a do-it-yourself excursion for the evening, as we didn't need to worry about being back on the Magic at any specific time. The friends we were travelling with

had found the [website of Alex Hai](#), Venice's first and, to date when we took the tour, only female gondolier, although there are now other women coming through the rigorous training they have to pass to enter that trade. That meant we had to make our own way to the meeting point, but that turned out to be a treat. We were due in Piazzale Roma, the main vaporetto (water bus) stop at this end of the islands. The vaporetti fill the same role as buses or subway trains do in many cities, traversing the canals with a regular set of stops.

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□The route we took allowed us to get some wonderful views of the Magic from the water, and it was lovely to see everyone on the vaporetto battling for space at the windows to get photos of our floating home. Still, there was a pang of jealousy to see passengers being collected by tender directly from the Magic. No doubt they had booked their excursions through Disney, and that convenience is part of the higher price they paid. We had looked at the excursions provided by Disney, most of which revolved around gondola rides, but they were all extremely expensive, and for what we'd have paid per couple, we got a ride for the four of us.

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□The vaporetto took us along the same route that we'd travelled just a few hours earlier on the Magic, and gave us a very different perspective of this part of Venice, as this time we were at water level, rather than towering above it. We got off by St. Mark's Square, which gave us the opportunity to make our way through it, and admire the famed location in the evening light.

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□We arrived at our meeting point, and easily found gondolier Alex, who was already waiting for us. After all, it's not often you see a woman in a gondolier outfit! As we headed off to her gondola, she explained that those water craft cost around \$40,000, and hers is around 50 years old. This is important, as the older gondolas weigh more, which means they don't bob around as much from side to side, something I was very glad to hear.

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□Never having been on a gondola before, climbing into it was an adventure, although Alex was very good at holding it steady. My friend and I immediately opted for the "comfortable chairs" as Alex called them, and from what I heard from my husband, his chair wasn't that comfortable, but heck, this is about the view -- right?

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□We were all amazed at how peaceful it was in the narrow canals that snake their way through the city, and a lot of that is probably due to the fact that these are pretty much the only things that make their way along here, although we did encounter some small power boats. Alex explained that if you're a Venetian, you can pilot a small boat at a young

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age with no training, which was a bit surreal!

□ It was also fascinating to see all the buildings from literally the water level, as you're so much lower in a gondola than a vaporetto. We saw homes with laundry hanging out, and what looked like very upmarket hotels, with steps waiting for a gondola to drop guests off at them. Ironically, we also saw a lot of Disney Cruise Line excursions as we went along, some with live music playing, which I'm not sure I'd have enjoyed for the whole time I was on a gondola.

□ Finally, we left the narrow canals, and emerged on to the Grand Canal by the Rialto Bridge, and despite my fears, the water was still quite smooth out here. I felt in completely safe hands with Alex to guide us around, and going under the Rialto Bridge on a gondola has to rank as one of the most magical moments ever!

□ I was very sad when it was all over, but it was excellent value, and as we made our way back to the Magic, seeing Venice from the comfort of a vaporetto, as the sun set, I couldn't help but think what a wonderful evening it had been.

□ When we got back to the cruise terminal, I have to say it was a very peculiar feeling to arrive back, and know that our home for the night wouldn't be sailing anywhere while we slept. However, it also made for a very relaxing evening, and even better, in one of the most beautiful cities in the world. If you ever get a chance for an overnight stay on a Disney cruise, I'd definitely take it, as it's a very different experience when compared to the rushing around that you often experience at Disney ports of call.

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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