

Parasailing at Castaway Cay: A Disney Cruise Line Port Adventures Review

by Rebecca Pearson, PassPorter Guest Contributor

We had the opportunity to book the Parasailing excursion at Castaway Cay on our last cruise.

This excursion is listed as extremely limited for availability, so if you plan to book it, plan to do so as early as possible, and check back again if necessary. We were lucky to be sailing concierge on this particular cruise, so I'm not sure if that was why I was able to snag this excursion, as we were able to book 120 days out. I was lucky to book the first excursion of the morning, so upon disembarking from the ship, we were simply able to walk down past the front of the ship about 100 yards and wait. If you're familiar with the island, just as you disembark the ship, there is a post office, and almost directly across from it is a small deck area with tables. Formally called Marge's Barges & Sea Charters Dock, these are the docks where the excursion boats are located. While we got of the ship promptly and were there and checked in about 10-15 minutes in advance, we had to wait as none of the excursion operators were there yet, and actually left late for the excursion. Besides the slightly late departure, the rest of the experience was seamless.

Once we were called, we followed the two boat operators down to the actual dock just beside the deck area, and loaded into the boat. Our excursion was very small, it was myself, my mother, my two children, another family of four and one other woman. Based on the size of the boat, which is really what I would describe as a basic speed boat, I would guess this excursion is booked only in groups of 8-10 normally, as I don't see how more than 10 adults could fit comfortably and safely on the boat. In addition, according to Disney's website, the minimum age for this excursion is 8, and there is no price difference between children and adults. Regarding availability, I would suggest that if your group can and is willing to be split up, you may be able to snag this excursion more easily (if there is only one spot left for each time slot for example). There was one other boat doing parasailing excursions at the same time that we were doing our excursion, so your party may be able to manage this easier by splitting up, but being in separate boats if necessary. This excursion is currently running at about \$102 per person, and everyone does have to pay (there are no ride-alongs just to watch). There are two excursion operators, and they were friendly, but not overly animated as some excursion operators seem to be (I personally found this refreshing). As we talked to them on the ride at sea, we learned that as you'd expect, they are not employed by Disney Cruise Line, but are

excursion operators based off another Bahamian Island.

□

□The kids both donned life jackets, but for the adults, they were optional. In my opinion, one of the neatest parts of the excursion is that in order to head out to sea, you ride in the smaller speedboat right along the side of the cruise ship. It's a great view to look up and see if from the surface of the water just how large the ship is and it's a good photo opportunity.

□

□Speaking of cameras, I did take two cameras along, my DSLR (in my camera case), and a smaller cheaper waterproof camera. Unfortunately, on the ride out to sea, as well as initially, I was unprepared for how rough the boat ride would be. The guides did tell me I'd want to stow my camera case, so I did. The underside of the seats in the boat are open to allow you to stow clothing or belongings, and I'm glad I put the camera there. Because it was a windy day and the seas were somewhat choppy, the boat ride just off shore and during the parasailing was rough. We were bouncing over and through the waves, and did get splashed slightly. I will say that if you had a back or neck problem, the boat ride itself, not the parasailing, may be jarring for you, particularly if the boat hits a wave just right (or wrong as the case may be!). We were fine and even thought it was fun, but again, be prepared. Depending on your condition and how comfortable you would be with that risk, you may want to re-evaluate or speak to the operators about the conditions prior to leaving.

Once we were slightly offshore of the island, the guides gave us a brief overview of parasailing, and paired me up with my daughter, and my son with my mother. They explained that there are weight guidelines (two people riding tandem cannot be more than 375), and on the flip side, a person riding alone can't be too light, (less than 90 pounds), but based on my experience I believe there may be times that they may be more cautious with this. In a bit, you'll see how with only 5 people on the boat, the weight guidelines and discretion played in my son's favor.

□

□With my waterproof camera strapped to my wrist, I was helped into the harness first, as the larger individual needs to ride (or fly) in the back, and my daughter was then harnessed in front of me. As a reference point, together at the time we probably only weighed 270 pounds. You are then standing on a small platform on the back of the boat, and are told to take a somewhat sitting position (picture a leaning squat sit or chair sit) and the chute is maneuvered by the operator to take on air. From there, I seem to remember being told to lean back and somewhat push off, and before you know it, physics takes over and you're flying. The first few seconds were a bit nerve wracking for me, but as you gain height (and we did quite quickly based on our combined weight), the

feeling of floating and the views completely took my mind off of it. My daughter and I both loved it, I can't express enough how amazing and peaceful it is, which was unexpected.

□ I had not considered at all how it might sound, but honestly, besides some wind, it's pretty much silent. You're so high up in the air that you can't even really hear the boat. The excursion does not take you in front of the beach, but rather starts to the right (East) of the ship, on the side of the island that is not developed and then turns to take you back toward the ship in a loop, ending where you left off (you do not circle the island, but rather stay just off the main dock and essentially travel in an oval formation). This allows for amazing views, floating and being able to view the undeveloped area of the island, then back around to view the beach area followed by what feels like right off the back of the ship, but from high above it, as you do go to heights of 600-800 feet! None of us are scared of heights, however, I'm also not the type that likes to look off the top of a tall building or glass ledge attraction, but this didn't bother any of us at all, despite being harnessed to a parachute 600 feet up!

□ The ride itself isn't that lengthy, (it may be longer than it felt, as we enjoyed it so much), but before we knew it, they were bringing us down. Unlike what you might see elsewhere, they do not dip your feet or body into the water, but bring you right back to the platform and you are supposed to land again in as much of a seated position as you can manage. From there, they handle the sail, and you step into the boat to unharness. My daughter and I were then followed by my mother and son, who I tried desperately to take pictures of. Again, with how rough the boat ride is, bouncing on the waves, and the fact that at that point I was trying to not touch my DSLR, the pictures did not turn out as well as I'd have hoped. Both my mother and son also loved this experience, and neither of them had any issues with any of it. Following their ride, the single woman with us was up, so the excursion guides asked who would like to ride again, as they didn't want her riding alone. While any of us would have loved to, my son was by far the most excited and his sister graciously allowed him to go, so he was able to fly twice!

□ From a photo op standpoint, based on where you are supposed to hold on to the chute straps when you are airborne, and how you are strapped in, I will say it's a bit difficult to take pictures in the air. I also had the camera on a bad setting with a delay, so that did not help. If you do plan to take pictures, definitely don't have the camera on a delay, and any sort of high speed or sports setting would be easiest. As far as taking pictures on the boat goes, just use caution with the jostling of the boat. You could easily lose/drop a camera, smack yourself in the face with one, or have one splashed, so a dependable but cheaper camera may be

.....

best (although that will not allow you to zoom as well as a DSLR), or just throw caution to the wind!

□

□After we had all had our turns, the boat simply followed the same route right past the ship and back to the dock, where you are able to hop off and head straight to the trams. All in all, the entire excursion only took about an hour, so in comparison to our other excursions on that trip, where we were bussed with many other people to a location and back again, this definitely felt as if it were less "intrusive" to any other free time that we had, as we didn't spend much of the excursion traveling to and from the actual destination, although I would expect that is probably true for any Castaway Cay excursion as they are right on the island.

□

□All in all, this excursion was one that we would definitely repeat if given the opportunity. I would easily say that this was by far our favorite excursion of that trip, and in my opinion, the easiest and most efficient one as well. The peaceful floating feeling, combined with the amazing views of the blue water, ship and island are well worth it at least once.

About The Author: Rebecca Pearson is the proud mother of two children and is known for "epic fails" in her every day life that inspired her to write her first articles for PassPorter. She has been to Walt Disney World seven times in the past seven years!

Article last updated: 01-05-2017

View the latest version online at:

<http://www.passporter.com/articles/parasailing-castaway-cay.html>

Copyright by Rebecca Pearson. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act. Resale of this guide is strictly prohibited without the copyright holder's permission. If you purchased this publication from someone other than PassPorter Travel Press, please call 877-929-3273.

View more PassPorter Articles online at <http://www.passporter.com/articles/>

.....