

Making the Most of Castaway Cay on an Overcast Day: A Disney Cruise Line Planning Article

by Amy Wear, PassPorter Featured Columnist

With such high anticipation for a Disney Cruise, naturally it's disappointing when the sun doesn't shine on your Castaway Cay day.

All those videos of people having so much fun on the beach tend to make us forget that it's bound to rain sometime! Hot weather (and warm water) is also not a sure thing in the winter months, so we were gambling for good weather on our early December visit.

Hakuna Matata! (You know what it means - no worries!) There's still plenty to do and even some advantages. Let me illuminate the possibilities…

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□Castaway Cay 5K

□There's no better time to run (or walk) the Castaway Cay 5K! After all, it's the only "free" shore excursion and you get a very nice quality souvenir rubber medal just for doing it. Who cares if you walk the whole thing? Plus you'll be among the first to disembark the ship and feel good all day about starting your day off right.

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□While I don't normally run due to joint issues, I am a fitness enthusiast and decided to attempt to run most of it. Amazingly, there was space for me to sign up at guest services only the night before the run.

Can't talk anyone into running with you? Not a problem. I met a lovely fellow Canadian who quickly became my running buddy; however, (in the interest of full disclosure) she needed a water break early on and I must confess that I kept on running. Also note that Scuttle's Cove is open for runners to drop off the kids before the race, though some enthusiastic kids will choose to also run.

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□The air temperature was only about 70 degrees for our visit, but it still felt warm for running and we welcomed the light rain showers. The atmosphere was also very Disney-esque, with strangers high-fiving and encouraging each other along the route.

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□I finished with a respectable novice time of 36:30. Not surprisingly, hats and t-shirts are also available at the gift shop conveniently located beside the finish line. You can even buy a window decal for your vehicle.

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☐ Short lines for everything!

☐ No need to worry about a line for all those must-get photos! We waited seconds for coveted photos with Minnie and Goofy in their beach wear and narrowly missed catching Mickey and Pluto as well. Back by the ship, Captain Jack Sparrow had no line-up and families waited only moments for professional photos with the ship in the background.

☐ Hungry? Just head on over to Cookie's BBQ for lunch. No line-up again and the eating area is covered. The food alone was worth the visit to the island, with options ranging from salads, fresh fruit, burgers, corn on the cob, chili, and more. I was pleased to see veggie burgers available upon request and can confirm they were very tasty.

☐ Looking for a special souvenir? You can have your pick. Seasoned Castaway Club members often warn that the gift shops on the island will sell out of popular merchandise early on busy days. This was not an issue for our visit at all. Towels, t-shirts, and other souvenirs with "Castaway Cay" on them are simply a must!

☐ Have your pick of beach chairs and hammocks!

☐ That's right. No vying for the perfect spot or wishing you could score a hammock. Take ten because no one will notice! Our daughters spent their first hour on the island swinging in the hammocks. I must admit they were too low to the ground for my comfort.

☐ Port Adventures Canceled (hooray, more souvenirs!)

☐ Admittedly, my hubby and daughter were disappointed to have their parasailing adventure canceled. They had prepared by watching YouTube videos of others sailing over Castaway Cay and talked about it for months. I warned them, though, that this experience is highly weather dependent and canceled more often than not. At the end of a cruise, however, a \$204 U.S. credit is a nice bonus!

☐ You were planning to get wet anyway…

☐ My hubby came prepared with his snorkel gear, so rain and cool temps weren't going to get in the way. He spent hours in the water finding huge tropical fish. Our girls took turns with him and, surprisingly, our youngest stayed in the cool water with him for two hours after the rest of us decided to head back to the ship to warm up.

☐ Something for everyone

☐ While I only get wet when the water is warm and sunshine will be there to greet me afterwards, snorkeling in the intermittent rain was a highlight of the trip for my hubby and daughters. Grampy especially enjoyed the barbeque and Nannie never misses an opportunity to shop in more Disney gift shops. As for me, my Castaway Cay 5K medal and

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souvenir pin are proudly hanging over my bedroom mirror and will remain there for some time to come.

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