

Portland, England: A Disney Cruise Line Port of Call Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

This year, when the Disney Magic makes its now traditional repositioning cruise from Port Canaveral in Florida to Copenhagen in Denmark, it will feature one port of call new to the cruise line in the United Kingdom.

I will confess when I first saw the name of Portland, I had to check a map to see where it was, never having heard of it. Perhaps that's no surprise, as even its own official website talks about the "remarkable growth" this port has undergone over the last five years. Had someone said Weymouth to me, I'd have known exactly where Portland is. Weymouth was home to the London 2012 Olympic sailing events, and is located along the south coast of England, about halfway between Southampton, and Exeter.

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□ In fact sailing is one of the featured shore excursions here, as you can take part in the Jurassic Yacht Charter, which allows you to see the beautiful Jurassic coast from the water. It may take your entire budget for the trip though, as it's an eye watering \$999/person. If you've not heard of the Jurassic coast, I will be honest, it's not that well advertised, but it is spectacular. We've seen the views from further along at Sidmouth, and the colours of the cliffs are really something to be seen.

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□ Other Jurassic Coast shore excursions include a fossil hunt adventure, much more reasonably priced at \$85/adults, and \$59/ages 3-9. This takes you out to the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre, where you spend 90 minutes out on the coast, searching for fossils. You'll also learn about prehistoric life here, and how it's changed in the millions of years since then.

For those who want a bit more excitement, you may want to opt for the Jurassic RIB Ride to Lulworth Cove (\$165/adults, and \$145/ages 3-9), giving a unique perspective of the Jurassic Coast. A mouth watering incentive to do this tour is the crab sandwich at the stop at Lulworth Cove, made with locally caught crab.

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□ Portland's also about 60 miles away from Stonehenge, and of course, that's one of the major draws for stopping here. There are a number of different excursions on offer, most notably, Stonehenge, which comes in an adult only departure (\$119), small group (\$209/adult, \$189/ages 3-9) or a general departure (\$119/adults, \$95/ages 3-9). We've visited the famous stones a number of times, and in recent years, they really

have improved the visitor experience immensely. Now there's a scheduled shuttle service to the stones from the visitor centre, which explains everything we know about them.

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□ If Stonehenge is on your bucket list, it's worth springing for an excursion, as turn up on your own, and you'll be taking your chances with how long it takes to get a shuttle, rather than having pre-booked places, and trust me, this place can get packed in the summer months. We tend to visit at quieter times of the year, putting our Disney training to good use, and ensuring we're there first thing in the morning, to avoid that problem.

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□ While the stones are amazing, be warned that you're likely to be sharing them with lots of other people, so you may not get the complete feeling of their mystical charms. My fondest memory is still being on one of the first shuttle buses of the day on a cold, but dry November day. We had so few people around, and the clouds formed some interesting patterns, that we could almost imagine the stones being built all those thousands of years ago.

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□ There is another option Disney offers that also includes Stonehenge, but this one also brings in the history and mystery of Salisbury (£125/adults, \$99/ages 3-9). Salisbury is a beautiful city, with the highlight being the stunning cathedral that dominates the skyline. You'll have two hours of free time to explore, and if the cathedral appeals, head straight there, as it's easy to spend that long in there.

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□ While there's no official entrance fee, they suggest a donation of £7.50/adults, £3/children, and £15/families. We enjoyed our time there so much that we actually went back and donated more, which tells you something. We were fortunate enough to be taken around by a volunteer guide, and if you're offered that opportunity, take it, as we found it fascinating, and learnt so much about the cathedral, including some of the detail in the amazing stained glass windows, or the mark on the font that the cleaners have been told not to remove!

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□ Perhaps the highlight for any visitor to Salisbury Cathedral is to see one of only four remaining copies of the Magna Carta, which dates from 1215. It inspired the American Bill of Rights, and the constitutions of many other countries, so its importance cannot be underestimated. However, when we saw it, I was disappointed, as it's all in Latin, so I couldn't read it, and even if I'd studied Latin at school, I think I'd have still struggled, given the text was so tiny! They obviously had better eyesight back then…

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□ Obviously expecting Salisbury to be another highlight for cruise

passengers, Disney again has three versions of the Medieval Cathedral City of Salisbury available: the adult only (\$105), small group (\$175/adults, \$165/ages 3-9), or a general departure (\$105/adults, \$83/ages 3-9).

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□ Another cathedral beckons on the Glastonbury Tor and Cathedral City of Wells tour (\$89/adults, \$65/ages 3-9). Wells Cathedral is another one of the country's stunning cathedrals, although we've never lucked out with the panoramic views from Glastonbury Tor, with the British weather always impacting on our plans whenever we've visited…

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□ Another potentially popular excursion is the Green Fields of England & Corfe Castle (adults only \$99, small group \$205/adults, \$155/ages 3-9, and general departure \$99/adults, \$69/ages 3-9), and that's no surprise, given the castle is remarkably well preserved. Sadly the closest we've come to visiting is the view from the road, as we tried to see it on a weekend afternoon in the summer. Bad plan, and not learning from our Disney knowledge obviously, as the car parks were all full, and we reluctantly had to give up.

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□ Other options rounding out the offer include A Lord's Private Manor and English Cream Tea (\$99/adults, \$75/ages 3-9), which sounds wonderful to me, although those on the repositioning cruise will be disappointed, as this excursion is not available that day, or Portland Lighthouse Walk (\$95/adults, \$89/ages 3-9), taking you on a tour of the area where you're berthed, and the Abbotsbury Swannery and Gardens (\$89/adults, \$49/ages 3-9), which was first established in the 1040s.

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□ As well as the Magic's stop at Portland on May 23 on the repositioning cruise, the Magic returns here on the 12-night British Isles cruise from Dover on July 9.

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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