

Star Wars Day at Sea on the Disney Fantasy: A Disney Cruise Line Planning Article

by Jennifer Best, PassPorter Guest Contributor

After taking two 4-night Bahamian cruises on the Disney Dream, my husband and I decided we wanted to try something longer.

In 2016, Disney Cruise Line (DCL) started new 7 night Caribbean cruises on the Disney Fantasy, which would include a special Star Wars Day at Sea (SWDAS). My husband said book it! He is a long time Star Wars fan. The man must have over 100 Star Wars related T-shirts. My daughters, who were 5 and 6 at the time, are also into all-things Star Wars. (My older daughter wore her Princess Leia costume to eat at Cinderella's Royal Table at Disney World.)

□ We took the cruise in March 2016. We liked it so much, that we have another SWDAS cruise booked for March 2018.

□ Some basic information about the cruise: Initially only Western Caribbean itineraries offered the SWDAS option. Now both Eastern and Western Caribbean itineraries are available. It is only offered on certain 7 night spring sailings on the Disney Fantasy. These cruises leave from Port Canaveral. The SWDAS occurred near the middle of our cruise. It is scheduled during a sea day. Star Wars activities are pretty much limited to that one day. The Star Wars cruises tend to be a little bit more expensive. You still make regular port stops, including Castaway Cay. There is a regular formal night and Pirate night in addition to the SWDAS.

□ When we arrived on the ship, there was a card allowing you to rank order who you would like to have meet-and-greets with. You chose categories rather than specific characters. It was divided into Bespin (Boba Fett and Chewbacca), The Dark Side (Captain Phasma and Darth Vader) and Tatooine (C-3PO, R2-D2 and Darth Maul).

Throughout our cruise we saw fellow cruisers dressed in Star Wars t-shirts. A few dressed in full blown costumes on embarkation day. Adult costumes are allowed, as long as they are not offensive. I proudly wore my "Best Wife in the Galaxy" t-shirt.

□ Star Wars-related merchandise was available throughout the entire cruise. Merchandise could be pre-ordered, but we found plenty to purchase onboard. We bought personalized name tags, T-shirts,

ornaments, picture frames, Boba Fett drink cup, BB-8 cups and a Tie-fighter popcorn container.

☐ Star Wars movies were playing in the Buena Vista theater throughout the cruise (in addition to other non-Star Wars movies). Episodes of Star Wars Rebels were playing on Funnel Vision on the pool deck throughout the cruise as well.

☐ On the morning of the SWDAS, Star Wars background music was playing throughout the ship. We went to our first meet-and-greet at the Irish pub in the adult district. We did not know who we were meeting until we arrived. My children were excited to see a very large Chewbacca as we rounded the corner. He was very friendly. It was a short wait and watching him interact with everyone was entertaining.

☐ Our second meet and greet actually occurred on the morning after the SWDAS. I think they had scheduling issues and wanted to make sure everyone met two characters. Our second meeting was Darth Vader. My daughters were a little intimidated by the imposing figure, but after they met him, they would not stop talking about it. Darth Vader was not friendly like Chewbacca, and he kept trying to recruit my daughter to the Dark Side.

☐ Throughout the day, there were many activities offered. We went to Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple at the Walt Disney theater. It is similar to the activity done at Hollywood studios. Some children are chosen to go up on stage, train and then battle Darth Vader. Some parents complained that there was no real direction about how the children were chosen to come up on stage. It seemed to be random selection from those who arrived early. However, the show was very interactive. Children in the audience were all asked to help and use the Force at one point. Just like at Hollywood Studios, I find it really fun to just watch all the different children battle Vader.

☐ My favorite part of SWDAS was interacting with the characters roaming the ship. Most of these characters were in the main atrium and on Decks 4 and 5 around the main atrium. There were Imperial guards, Tuscan Raiders, storm troopers. The assassin from episode 2 seemed to take a shine to my husband. My best interaction was with the Jawas. They were on deck 5 and they looked exactly like real life Jawas! Tip: Jawas are scavengers and like to trade. Bring small shiny objects (that you don't mind parting with) to trade with them. I traded some glow sticks for a shiny coin.

☐ The Disney costuming for SWDAS is some of the best I have ever seen. My daughters ran into Ahsoka, one of their favorite characters from

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Star Wars Rebels. Her costume was insane! It looked just like her. All of the characters were available for pictures, but it was not the usual meet-and-greet lines you would see in a theme park. As the assassin lurked around my husband, I snapped a picture. The Tuscan raiders freaked out when you tried to take a picture with them, and then tried to steal your camera. The Imperial Guards wanted to arrest you. It was awesome!

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□ My children did multiple Star Wars-themed activities in the Oceaneer Club. They did Padawan crafts making Yoda magnets. They made homemade light sabers out of glow sticks. There was a Galaxy design session where they got to build small models of some of the Star Wars ships.

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□ While our daughters were busy in the kids' club, we went to hear the guest speaker in the Buena Vista theater. On our cruise, the speaker was involved in creating the Star Wars Rebels show. Now I love Star Wars, but I had never seen Star Wars Rebels. I did not think I would enjoy his talk very much. However, it was wonderful, and now I am a fan of the show.

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□ Other activities included a Star Wars 101 session, which recapped the films and a trivia session called the "Padawan Mind Challenge". There were costume celebrations. I cannot recall if any prizes were given for the best costumes.

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□ Some of the guest costumes were very elaborate. The most memorable costume I saw was a very tall (well over 6 feet tall) gentlemen dressed in a complete orange fighter suit. Now where do you get a Star Wars fighter suit for a 6 foot 5 man?

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□ There was a special Star Wars-inspired meal in the main dining rooms which unfortunately we had to miss. Star Wars: The Force Awakens was being shown that evening in the Walt Disney theater. At that time, the movie had not come out on DVD, so we wanted to see it again. We watched the movie and then went to Cabanas for a table service dinner after the movie. We heard from a few passengers that service in the dining room was slow because they were serving the new SWDAS menu that night. The childrens' menus doubled as masks. There were some special desserts including a Han Solo in carbonite sundae.

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□ The end of the evening was the Summon the Force fireworks show on the pool deck. There was a parade of all the characters we had seen that day. The fireworks were set to Star Wars music of course. Clips from the Star Wars movies were playing on Funnel vision during the fireworks. A late buffet was available. There was a Star Wars Super Fan contest in

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one of the adult clubs that night. Unfortunately, we were too tired to make it to that.

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□ I have seen mixed reactions online regarding the SWDAS cruises. Some people seemed underwhelmed and offered only criticism. I understand Star Wars is a lot to live up to. But Star Wars fans, just step back and think about it. You are not going to have an experience like this anywhere else. Where else are you going to trade with a Jawa, be stalked by an assassin and see fireworks set to Star Wars music in the middle of the Caribbean? I was happy with the amount of activities offered and was frustrated I couldn't go to more that day. On my most recent cruise with Royal Caribbean, I geeked out over a 1 hour Harry Potter trivia session! That was 1 hour on a 7 day cruise. This is Star Wars all day long. If you are a Star Wars fan and like to cruise, I think you should definitely look into a SWDAS cruise. You get the Star Wars day plus the Disney cruise line experience. If you are not a Star Wars fan, the experience only lasts one day, and the rest of your cruise will not be affected much by it.

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□ We are booked again for spring 2018 and looking forward to it!

About The Author: Jennifer Best is an internal medicine physician living in Maryville, Tennessee with her husband Daniel and daughters, Macey and Madeline.

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