

Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas: Impressions from the Inaugural Sailing

by Mary Kraemer and Char Berger, PassPorter Guest Contributor

The two of us have a story to tell. One of us is anxiously awaiting her first sailing on Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas, and the other recently returned from the inaugural sailing. Follow along, as we share our experiences with you ...

Months ago, I (Mary) became intrigued by Royal Caribbean's new ship, the Oasis of the Seas as it was still being built in the shipyard. The concept drawings of the ship, with all its amenities and new concepts such as 'neighborhoods' onboard were so radically different from other cruise experiences that I couldn't help being excited by it.

And as time progressed, I saw that others were excited, too, with newscasts and YouTube videos showing the ship sailing under the Great Belt Bridge in Denmark as it headed on its voyage to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida (retracting smokestacks -- how cool is that?) I remembered when my family went to San Francisco to see the magnificent Queen Mary II as she sailed (barely) under the Golden Gate Bridge, and marveled at the idea that the Oasis was 50% larger than the Queen Mary II! This ship had to be seen to be believed.

I have four children, ranging from age 12 to early 20's. They've had the privilege of sailing on cruise ships before, and have enjoyed it tremendously. But there's something exceptionally exciting for them about the Oasis other than sheer size. The idea of a zip line on a ship blows them away. They are excited about the two surf-simulator FlowRiders, being able to play minigolf, and, for my freestyle ice skating daughters, being able to skate while at sea in the Caribbean.

We weren't really planning on going on a cruise in January, but one day, I found myself playing a game of 'what if' as I looked at school vacation dates. When I checked, I found that we could book the last family stateroom with oceanview verandah that was available. The fact that this stateroom accommodated six people was astonishing to me; what a great option for larger families (like mine!).

As soon as my 89-year-old father heard we were going on a cruise, he said he wanted to go, too, and I booked him a stateroom with balcony overlooking the Central Park neighborhood of the ship. It will be so interesting to have an interior-facing balcony! My father uses a motorized scooter to get around, and it will come in very handy on such a large ship!

We have shore excursions and our FlowRider lessons set up, our online check-in is nearly complete, and I just received email notice from Royal Caribbean that our sailing is a month away! This spontaneous trip is our family's Christmas gift -- thankfully, I don't have to try to figure out how to put such a large cruise ship under our tree! We will be sharing our multigenerational family's experience from the time we leave home until we arrive back again via blogs (www.mouseearsfun.com) and the MouseEarVacations Facebook page. With so much to see and experience, there will be a lot to share with you, which is so exciting!

Now, for those of you who can't wait for my reports, here is a short firsthand account from Char, who sailed on the inaugural just last month!

Simply put, everything about the Oasis of the Seas is unprecedented! This new class of vessel did not take a step forward; they ran away with new ideas and entered a whole new realm of entertainment and experiences for you and your family while vacationing.

You'll have wonderful port days, of course, enjoying the best ports of the Eastern and Western Caribbean plus their fabulous private beach day in paradise. The difference will be when you are onboard, and you can climb rock walls, stroll through a family open-air park with a carousel, enjoy crafts or even make a toy. Kids' play programs are extensive and broken out by age. These (and more) are just the daytime activities!

Evening entertainment includes an ice show with ten international skaters with Olympic backgrounds performing in shows of a caliber that matches their expertise. On another day you will see Olympic swimmers perform in the outdoor amphitheater with high dives and gymnastics combined in a Cirque du Soleil-style water show, ending with Bellagio-style water fountain shows choreographed to music.

Other nights feature a rocking 70's party where you can dance down the promenade to some of the best tunes of the era, and sit in the theater for a top-name musical performance; see the play Hairspray; come back the next night for a Las Vegas-style show; visit the Jazz and Comedy clubs; or dance in the nightclubs until the wee hours.

You can choose to dine in the lovely main dining room spanning three decks, or stroll Central Park to dine on fresh pizza you design yourself, indulge in Spanish tapas, enjoy selections from the deli, sink your teeth into a Johnny Rocket's burger or peruse the Seafood Shack back on the Boardwalk. Healthy choices are featured at the huge spa and workout area -- and I do mean huge. Asian food fans will love Izumi, and of course there is always room service or the Windjammer Cafe for very

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good buffet choices for any meal of the day.

Like Mary said, there are two FlowRiders that allow you to test your skills at surfing, and are just one choice in the 21 pools aboard the ship. Take a zip line ride across the atrium. Shoot 9 holes of golf. The art gallery has an unprecedented approach with fresh work shown daily and innovative auction and education opportunities.

See what we mean? We hope that this partial list of activity choices delivers the message we've been struggling to make clear. This is a new form of cruising, unlike anything ever before! We encourage anyone and everyone to give Oasis of the Seas a try!

About The Author: Mary and Char are agents with www.CruisingCo.com and www.MouseEarVacations.com, in business since 1987. Char is currently on a whirlwind tour of Europe, and Mary is looking forward to her first Oasis of the Seas cruise in January!

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