

The Walter E. Disney Suite: Where The Magic Turns Majestic

by Jill Koenigs, PassPorter Guest Contributor

The chance of a lifetime was presented to my family in December of 2007 when we discovered that the Walter E. Disney Suite on the Disney Wonder was available the week that we wanted to cruise in 2009. We had previously stayed in a two-bedroom Category 2 suite, but the lure of the most luxurious suite on the Disney Cruise Line kept calling to us.

Don't think for a moment that we normally travel in the "lifestyles of the rich and famous" circle, but several factors allowed us to go all-out for this cruise. The most important one was the fact that we were traveling with my parents, who would split the cost with us. Traveling during value season and having an entire year to pay for our cruise also made the cost seem not so staggering.

Prior to even stepping on the ship, you discover some of the perks of staying concierge level (which consists of Category 1, 2 and 3 suites). Probably the most important of these perks is the priority booking for spa appointments, excursions and those all-important Palo reservations. Once the balance of your cruise is paid in full, you are allowed to book these "extras" 120 days prior to sailing, giving you 15 days before Castaway Club members can book and 30 days before first-time cruisers can book. With the popularity of some reservations, this extra bit of time can make a world of difference.

Although we have never personally used the pre-boarding concierge service, I recently discovered that there is one. For both of our concierge level cruises, we have used a travel agent who has helped us with any questions or requests prior to sailing. My understanding is that the pre-boarding concierge service can assist you with booking services or any special requests that you might have. Essentially they perform the same services that the concierge team does once you are on the ship.

You begin to really feel the benefits of the concierge level once you step inside the terminal on the day of your sailing. There is a special check-in desk and, once you are checked-in, you are lead to a special seating area reserved for concierge guests. When boarding begins, concierge guests are the first ones (behind the "Family of the Day") allowed to board.

As soon as you board, you are invited to a "Welcome Aboard" reception which is usually held in the Cadillac Lounge. Light refreshments are

served, but the true intention of this reception is for you to meet your concierge team, receive your itinerary and make any last minute requests. You also learn about further perks such as that concierge guests can order room service from the table service restaurants and your concierge team can call ahead to reserve a table for you at breakfast. After this brief meeting, you are welcome to leave your carry on bags there while you eat lunch and explore the ship until your suite is ready.

Speaking of suites, we were all just sitting on pins and needles waiting to finally open the door to the Walter E. Disney Suite. When we finally did, we were not disappointed. The first thing that you see when you open the door is the bright blue sky through a wall of windows. The sun was so brilliant in the suite that we almost needed sunglasses.

On the right side of the entryway is a side table with gorgeous fresh flowers, and to the left there is a half bathroom. Further down the entryway to the right is the door to the master suite and to the left is a butler's pantry where all of the life jackets are stored. We stored our luggage here also, but I'm really not sure what else you would use this area for except for additional clothes storage. The amount of storage space in this suite is truly amazing!

When you finally come in to the living area from the long entry way, you see a dining room to the left and a media room to the right. The living area has a large sofa and two lounge chairs, along with a wet bar and the largest TV in the stateroom. The dining room has a beautiful table with eight padded chairs, and the media room has two lounge chairs, another TV (hence the media), and a Murphy bed that can be pulled down each evening. Although the entire back of the suite is covered with windows, the only doors to the balcony are in the dining room and the media room. All of the "windows" in the living room may have actually been doors, but they were locked by a key and could not be opened.

From the media room, you can also reach the master suite. The bedroom is beautiful, but the true show stopper is the bathroom. To the left of the double sinks is a big Jacuzzi tub and to the right was a multi jet shower. As if that isn't enough, there's a hand-held hand dryer for your use and full size toiletries.

Also off the bedroom is the hallway that leads back to the main entryway. On either side of this hallway are two large closets. We could have literally packed every stitch of clothes that we own and not had problems with storage. Inside of one closet, two comfy robes and two pairs of equally comfy slippers can be found.

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Off of the dining room is the other bedroom. It has twin beds, which unfortunately can not be converted to a full size bed since the desk between the beds is bolted to the floor (my mom was unable to have my dad within hitting distance when he snored). This room is comparable in size to the master bedroom, and it also has a spacious walk-in closet in which hung two pint-size pink robes. Apparently the concierge team assumed that our daughters would be in this room. The en suite bathroom even had a Jacuzzi tub.

And finally the verandah! It was listed as a quadruple verandah and it is every bit of that. It's full of chairs and loungers and simply cries out for a party.

The most beautiful and eye catching feature in the suite, however, is the gorgeous blonde wood throughout. It just shimmers in the sunlight. The sleek and modern suite seems more like a Manhattan penthouse than a cruise ship stateroom, but the pictures of Walt Disney that were spotted around the suite added the perfect amount of Disney magic to the setting.

The dining room table already held a gift from the concierge team, a gorgeous tray of fruit that my family immediately began enjoying. Every day of our cruise we received some type of edible treat from the concierge team, whether it be cookies, desserts, or appetizers. We so looked forward to seeing what our guardian angels had left for us each day!

And guardian angels they were! After one of our daughters fell in the suite and ended up with a bloody nose, our concierge team sent her a Minnie Mouse and a card. When my husband had to miss our meal at Animator's Palette one evening to take a tired little girl back to the suite, a member of the team personally visited our table to let me know that every one was fine and that my husband had requested that I order him dinner. His food reached him in the suite before the rest of us ate our entrees in Animator's Palette.

We received phone calls or visits from them daily just checking on how we were doing or if we needed anything. They managed to be present without being intrusive, and you knew that you could depend on them for anything.

We were able to get to know them better when they hosted a "Pre-Dinner Cocktail Party" one evening. The venue was the deck behind Beach Blanket Buffet, which had a gorgeous view of Nassau and the Atlantis Resort. Heavy appetizers and complimentary cocktails were served and you had to constantly remind yourself that dinner was but

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an hour away. Members of the concierge team mingled amongst the guests and, here more than ever, you saw how much they truly love their jobs.

On our final night, our team presented us with a special lithograph to commemorate our magical four nights on this ship. From beginning to end, they sprinkled our stay in this suite with what seemed to be an unlimited amount of pixie dust.

The suite ... oh, the suite ... was gorgeous and spacious beyond our wildest dreams. As fate would have it, my mother was recovering from surgery and spent a good portion of her day resting on the living room sofa or a lounge on the balcony. Relaxing in luxury truly helped put her on the road to recovery.

Having so much space for four adults and two children was downright decadent, but we loved every second of it. If one of us needed a bit of alone time, we could escape to a bedroom, the media room, or the balcony. On the other hand, the times that we came together as a family could be done so in comfort around a big dining room table or a large living room.

In fact, the suite is so spacious that it has a door bell at the front door, which turned out to be the only less than perfect part of staying there. A few times we had what my husband referred to as a "ring and run," where someone rang the door bell but no one was at the door when we opened it. We discovered who the tricksters were one day when we surprised them coming out of the room. These young girls were way too guilty-looking and way too giggly for it not to have been them. With two little girls (future "ring and run" candidates) of our own, we could only laugh at their fun.

Staying in the Walter E. Disney Suite onboard the Disney Wonder is a memory that will last a lifetime. The beauty and luxuriousness of it was almost unreal, but you needn't look further than the name on the door to remember who brought you to this place and why.

About The Author: Jill Koenigs is a previous contributor to PassPorter News with articles on [Hilton Head](#) and [New York City](#). Jill is a proud member of the [PassPorter Message Board](#) where she loves writing trip reports about her latest Walt Disney World vacation and exchanging advice with fellow Passporters. In her real life, she works in the Information Technology department of an insurance company and enjoys reading and cooking. She loves nothing more than being in her happy place with her husband, Thom, and their two daughters, Mary Devall and Maddie.

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