

Onboard Activities on the Disney Wonder: Disney Cruise Line

by Terry Dagdagan, PassPorter Guest Contributor

This past Easter holiday, my family and I sailed with Disney Cruise Line (DCL) on a 10-night cruise to Mexico on the Disney Wonder.

This was the ship's last Mexican cruise before heading off to its first season in Alaska. Don't worry if you have your heart set on going south on the west coast with DCL, as the Wonder will be returning to Mexico in the fall with 7-night cruises.

□ With four port days and five days at sea, my family and I decided to take advantage of Disney's many entertainment options. First, there is the Buena Vista movie theater on Deck 5. Not only did we enjoy first-run films, but we also saw movies recently released on DVD. Nothing compares to seeing a movie on the big screen. My daughter and I were excited to see *Tron* in 3-D in the Buena Vista Theatre. *Prince of Persia* was also a nice surprise, as it has been out on DVD and Blu-ray for a while.

□ A few nice extras in the Buena Vista Theatre were question-and-answer sessions with members of the creative teams from various movie productions. The sessions were followed by the movie discussed. After one such session we saw *The Game Plan*, and another day they did the same with *Invincible*.

Some movies are shown on what DCL calls Funnel Vision, an electronic movie screen on Deck 9 at the Goofy Pool. Those screenings tended to be older movies, such as *A Bug's Life* and *Finding Nemo*.

□ When sailing with DCL, there are plenty of opportunities to meet characters, both planned and spontaneous. Besides the regular greeting sessions, everyone onboard has a scheduled character breakfast. The Disney characters make the rounds of all of the tables, giving every passenger photo opportunities. Be sure to have your battery charged and the camera ready when it is your turn, as they don't linger for long. We took pictures with six Disney characters. One thing that amused us during the breakfast was a father at the next table was more concerned with getting his picture taken with the characters than giving his kids the opportunity. It just goes to prove that some adults will never grow up!

□ One bonus to finding the Disney characters onboard, as opposed to in the parks where they can slip through a Cast Members Only door, is

that sometimes they have to use the hallways just like the passengers. I happened to be walking up to a stairwell one morning, when I looked up and saw a big furry chipmunk backside sliding down the banister towards me. After he landed, with his back still to me, I said, "Okay then!" By his jump I obviously startled Chip, who didn't realize there was an audience behind him.

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□ Another day my 15-year-old daughter happened to be riding one of the elevators when in stepped Stitch and a couple of his escorts. As he rode with her, Stitch casually reached over and pretended to pick her nose. You just can't plan magical memories like that!

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□ Looking forward to somewhat more adult entertainment, my husband and I had planned to attend one of the many wine tastings that DCL offers. We never made it to a one, as we were distracted by the variety of other tasting opportunities. For something different, we chose to attend the cognac tasting. It is held in the Cove Cafe in a private corner of the place. There were only five of us that night, and our cognac expert was Jesus from Puerto Rico. Jesus was very knowledgeable about cognac, and we all walked away quite a bit more informed.

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□ In Disney style, there was no rush to push us out after the tasting, even though it began at 10:00 p.m. The five of us sat there chatting for an additional hour, just enjoying our samples and the company. Jesus would stop by and join in our conversations once in a while, which made us feel like we were welcome to stay. My fellow tasters and I agreed that while we had all experienced wine tastings before, we were all glad that we had not passed up this unique opportunity.

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□ The second tasting we attended was for whiskey. Our instructor seemed a bit nervous, as this was one of his first tastings. He did an excellent job, and wasn't hesitant to involve our previous host, Jesus, when he felt someone asked a question beyond his abilities.

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□ There were several other tastings that we did not attend. These include wine, beer, tequila, margarita, martini, champagne, and mojito tastings. The cost for each of the two we attended was \$20 per person, which is well worth the price. I did notice that the cognac tasting was only offered once during the cruise. The other tastings were offered at least two or three times.

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□ I would be remiss not to mention another favorite of ours--the Vista Spa. What a wonderful refuge in which to spend an hour or two, availing ourselves of the services they offer. The first day is a great opportunity to tour the facility. We received tickets for a drawing that afternoon. The spa gave away a few treatments, but you had to be present to win.

Obviously, the odds of winning are pretty slim, but don't be put off if you intend to indulge in a treatment. Just for showing up for the drawing, we were offered a special if booked for that day or early the next day. For \$129 the spa offered a 25-minute facial with a 50-minute Swedish massage. This package could also accommodate couples that wanted the treatments together. All throughout the cruise they offer different packages and specials, especially during port days.

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□ We booked a treatment for the next morning, and were happily surprised to have our couples massage in one of their spa villas. These rooms have the two massage tables in a room with an open balcony. Our masseuses, Cheryl and Sharon, were fabulous! This was my husband's first facial (well, mine too, actually) and he was true to form. As I was enjoying my facial, I could hear gentle snores coming from the table next to me. Cheryl told us later that most times when a male customer is getting his first facial, he falls asleep.

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□ Of course, relaxing in the adults-only section of the ship is one of the most popular activities, especially for parents whose kids are having fun without them in the children's clubs. There are two hot tubs and a pool with a wide shelf around the perimeter that is only a few inches deep. This allows you to sit in the sun while being refreshed in the cool water.

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□ This cruise, like other Disney cruises, was chock full of fun activities for families, kids, and adults that I don't have the space to list. I highlighted just a few things that we took advantage of on our voyage. There are parties and nightly shows, too! Rest assured that on a Disney cruise you will always find something for everyone in your group.

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□ When you do voyage with DCL, just be prepared for all of the choices. I can't imagine anyone being disappointed -- or bored!

About The Author: Terry Dagdagan and her family have been Disney Vacation Club members since 2000. They are looking forward to another year of Disney as they celebrate their daughter's 16th birthday at Disneyland in October and enjoy their fifth Disney cruise on the Disney Dream in June 2012.

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