

A Tale of Two Great Ships: Comparing the Disney Wonder and the Disney Dream

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Never did I imagine, when we booked our Alaskan cruise on the Disney Wonder, that just four short months earlier, we'd be cruising the Caribbean for three nights on the Disney Dream.

After we returned to land, following our Dream experience, I will admit to some feelings of concern about whether we'd be disappointed with the Wonder. After all, the Dream offers everything new on behalf of the Disney Cruise Line, while the Wonder has been around since 1999. A lot's changed in that time, with many innovations, so how would it to return to one of Disney's older members of the fleet? Would it still be wondrous or would it now be less than a dream following our other experience?

The first thing that you immediately notice between the two ships is their size. The Dream is around 50% larger than both the Magic and the Wonder. As we pulled up to Port Canaveral, we were blown away by how large the Dream is. It seemed massive to us, adding an extra three decks (I'm counting the Outlook Lounge and Radio Studio on deck 14!) on the older ships and for a moment I did think maybe it was too big?

□ In terms of boarding, I think perhaps it is a bit too big, as the terminal building was packed with people. We were very lucky to be seen so quickly, and that only happened because we were in the very small minority of non-American cruises on that voyage. We had no such issues with boarding the Wonder in Vancouver. The process was very smooth, and we were seen immediately when we arrived. Score one to the Wonder.

□ Once we were on board, the atrium in the Dream was really something to be seen. As you'd expect from a larger, and newer ship, Disney really threw everything at this. The piano is a wonderful touch, and the main chandelier two decks above you as you enter (complete with very clever hidden Mickeys!) is just stunning, without being overbearing. Now that I look at the deck plans, I'm surprised that, on both ships, the atrium is three decks high, as the Wonder's feels a low lower. It's got its own beautiful light fitting above, but this is where the age shows. Yes, it's lovely, but it's nowhere near as sumptuous as the Dream. The score so far is one-all.

I won't compare the staterooms deliberately, as we were in a category 11 (standard inside stateroom) on the Dream, and a category 6 (deluxe outside with verandah) on the Wonder, which are just impossible to compare. However, we found the arrangement of the rooms, and their decor, to be very similar, with some newer touches on the Dream, like the automatic turning off of the lights when you leave the room.

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□ One of the key elements of any vacation for us is the dining, so let's get down to business, and talk about that. The only restaurant that's the same between the two vessels is Animator's Palate, but that's not exactly fair, as this has changed beyond recognition between the two. Although the show on the Wonder was fun, there was never any way it could remotely compare to having Crush from Finding Nemo interact with your table. That is just inspired, and was one of the true highlights for us.

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□ As far as the other restaurants go, I'll be honest, I've never been a fan of Parrot Cay on the Magic and Wonder. It's a fun place, but to me, it doesn't fit into a cruise ship environment. I want a fancier environment, and that's what you certainly get in the Dream's Enchanted Garden. As for the main formal restaurant, we enjoyed the atmosphere of both Triton's (Wonder), and the Royal Palace (Dream), although the food was more of a standout for us at the Royal Palace, thanks to a spectacularly bad meal on one of our rotations at Triton's. I guess it's two-one to the Dream.

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□ Again, it's not fair to compare adults-only dining as a whole between the two, because with the Dream adding in Remy, it would win hands down, so I'll just look at Palo here. Having had dinner in both, I can say with certainty that, while the atmosphere and decor on the Dream was so much better, the food was a big improvement on board the Wonder. Again, I'm struggling to split the two, so we'll call it three-two to the Dream.

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□ We spent a lot of time enjoying the Rainforest facilities in the spa on both ships, so that seems like another area that's worth looking at. This is a clear win for the Dream, for the amazing hot tubs, and hot stone chairs for their wonderful views out to sea. Having said that, I was expecting to be very disappointed with the Rainforest on the Wonder, but actually I still really enjoyed my time here. Four-two to the Dream.

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□ Now, despite all the wonderful adult lounges that the Dream added, with their superb theming, here's where the Wonder surprisingly wins out for me. I think part of that was that we were cruising with a great group of friends, and had some really fun evenings with them, which wasn't the case on the Dream. I also found some of the lounges on the

Dream a bit intimidating if I'm honest. Don't get me wrong, I loved the theming, but that put me off drinking in there in a way, while Diversions and the Cadillac Lounge on the Wonder were just so relaxed and welcomed. Four-three to the Dream now.

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□I think the one other area I have to mention are the swimming pools. Well, here the winner is clear -- the Dream, with the addition of the AquaDuck! Having said that, on an Alaskan cruise, the pools weren't a great draw, particularly for the adults, who obviously felt the cold much more than the kids did, so we didn't feel as if we'd missed out on anything.

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□Well, that leaves the final score from me as five-three to the Dream, but in a way it doesn't actually matter -- and that was the biggest discovery I made during our time on the Wonder. Going into this cruise, I thought the ship would be such a disappointment to me, but in all honesty, it wasn't. Someone told me before our cruise that it wouldn't be, as the scenery would make up for it, and she was right, but there was more to it. The Wonder had a lovely intimate feeling to it that the Dream will never have, due to its sheer size.

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□It makes cruising on both ships a very different experience, but both experiences are still well worth doing. So if you're concerned about going back to one of Disney's older ships, or taking a cruise on one of those ships, now that there's one new ship in circulation (and another on the way), don't worry. Whichever ship you pick from the Disney Cruise Line, you'll have a perfect cruise.

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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