

Budgeting Spending Money for your Disney Cruise: Disney Cruise Line Tips

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Time for some honesty here before I do anything else... we are not the best at budgeting for the time we've spent at sea on Disney cruises.

Having made that confession, hopefully you can learn from some of our previous mistakes, in the same way that we've learned from them.

Our first Disney cruise, many years ago now, was just the three-night itinerary, and I was staggered by how much we managed to spend during that period of time. Let's just say that the final bill was a little on the heavy side when it arrived! So where did we go wrong?

☐ One problem was the way the small things added up so quickly. I had no idea that the specialty cocktails of the day could result in such a large bill at the end of the cruise, and of course, part of the problem is that when they're offered to you as you're sitting by the pool, they don't come with readily-available price tags on them. When you're handed the receipt to fill in, the prices can come as a bit of a shock to the system. It's the same if you're a coffee, tea, or hot chocolate drinker, as you'll pay for the privilege of these outside of meal times if you don't visit the free beverage station.

☐ So that's the first tip, think about any budget you may want for drinks. If all you want are soft drinks, then it's easier to keep hold of money, with that available at all meals, and at the beverage station on deck 9 on the Magic and Wonder or deck 11 on the Dream and Fantasy.

Just like the cocktail on arrival, there's a lot else to tempt you as soon as you board. We put down a not-insignificant amount of money almost as soon as we boarded on our recent Dream and Wonder cruises, on a length-of-cruise pass to the Rainforest Room in the spa. Then, if you want to enjoy Palo on any of the ships, or Remy on the Dream, and Fantasy, there's an additional charge for that as well.

☐ Disney, like every other cruise line, no doubt, has thought of every way possible to part you from your money, and once you're at sea, you don't have a choice to go anywhere else. Another temptation can be the offers that appear every night in your Personal Navigator. I gave in to some ridiculously cheap deals on spa treatments, and other things you're likely to see advertised each day are photo packages, Internet access, and specials in the various shops on board.

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□ The photos certainly don't come cheap on a Disney cruise. There are no photo packages along the lines of Disney's PhotoPass in the Disney theme parks. While you can often get a CD for just \$99 on land, if you want all your shots from the photographers on board the cruise ships put on a CD, you're looking at more like \$280. Yes, it's a lot of money, but we ended up giving in on our Alaskan cruise, and getting the CD, as there were just so many wonderful photos that I couldn't pass up. I'm sure many other people can identify with that feeling, especially if you've got kids, and there are lots of beautiful photos of them.

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□ Want to stay connected while you're at sea? That's going to cost you as well for Internet access. Generally, you get a better deal if you purchase more minutes. We found on our Mediterranean cruise that we went through the time more quickly than we'd anticipated, partially because it could take a long time to connect. On our recent two cruises, we didn't bother with the Internet, choosing to go without for our three-night cruise on the Disney Dream, and giving up on the idea on the Alaskan cruise, due to tales of lousy reception for much of the time we were at sea.

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□ Each of the ships have a variety of shops, with tempting merchandise on offer everywhere. There is literally something for all members of the family, and it can be very hard to resist. Of course, everyone wants a souvenir from their cruise, and we're no exception. We tend to be suckers for T-shirts and sweatshirts, fridge magnets, and scrapbooking material, but there's so much more. On recent cruises, we've seen jewelry, watches, photo albums, postcards, lots and lots of toys, clothes for the whole family, and Christmas ornaments. The price can quickly add up if you're not careful. To try and avoid that problem, take a look at the shops early on in the cruise, when you've got time to decide what you want, and can, afford. Our mistake on the Dream was to hit the shops for the first time on our final night on board, and by that point, we were practically in panic mode, desperate to buy everything before we ran out of time. Big mistake -- the bill was much more than we expected!

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□ The final two major expenses you can plan in advance. The first is shore excursions, and you can find out how much that's going to cost through the Disney Cruise Line website. Be prepared, as some of the excursions can give you real sticker shock. We found that any with the word "exclusive" in the description came with a particularly high price! Because you book them in advance of your cruise, the only danger is that you'll forget to budget for them. That's something we've been guilty of in the past, and now we make sure that the numbers are firmly accounted for.

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☐Tipping is something else you can budget for beforehand, thanks to your handy guide in your *PassPorter's Disney Cruise Line and Its Ports of Call*. You do have one, of course? Tips are now charged when you check-in at the port for your cruise, or you can pre-pay your gratuities. ☐Hopefully with some of these tips, you should help to avoid some of the problems we've encountered in the past. The best advice I can give you is, tedious as it sounds for a vacation is, to keep an eye on your spending, keep a note of what you're buying. Otherwise, it's far too easy to run up the bills with your ever-so-easy to use room key. Trust me, I should know!

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!](#)

Article last updated: 09-20-2012

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