

Booking a Future Cruise Onboard Disney Cruise Line: Disney Cruise Line Tips

by Mary Augustine, PassPorter Guest Contributor

One of the perks of cruising with Disney Cruise Line is the opportunity to book a future cruise while onboard.

There are significant benefits to onboard bookings, including a 10% discount off the cruise price, a 50% decrease in the booking deposit, and, sometimes, an onboard spending credit. The deposit is fully refundable if the reservation is cancelled or rescheduled prior to the date full payment is due. We've booked future cruises six times while cruising on Disney Cruise Line, and I'd like to share some lessons we've learned about onboard bookings.

Each of the Disney Cruise Line ships has a Future Cruise desk, located on deck 4, midship. A crew member is available there during the hours listed in the daily Navigator. However, in our experience, the wait time to speak directly with the Future Cruise crew member can be considerable, particularly on the last days of the cruise. There are no appointments; you simply line up and wait for your turn to book a future cruise. We did just that during our first Disney Cruise Line vacation and spent about an hour of precious cruise time securing the onboard booking. Subsequently, we've learned to take advantage of the onboard booking perks without spending time waiting in a line. With a little planning, you can do so, too.

□ First, consider including future cruise planning as part of your Disney cruise preparation. If you know the specific itinerary and dates you are interested in, you can work with your travel agent or simply use the Disney Cruise Line website to select stateroom choices and determine the current cost for the cruise to plan for the required deposit. You may book up to two staterooms for one future cruise (you'll have to occupy one of those staterooms), and you'll have to be prepared at booking time with the names of the occupants for each stateroom. If you work with a travel agent, you will need the name and contact information for your agent -- more info to be added to your reservation while booking onboard. We have always worked with a travel agent, and enjoy receiving additional onboard credits for doing so (not all agencies offer these booking incentives -- discuss that with your agent beforehand). You will also need to be prepared to pay the deposit for the future cruise, currently 10% of the total cruise cost for staterooms in categories 4-11. This is one-half of the deposit typically required. We

gather all of this information, and file it with our cruise documents, which we carry on as we embark each cruise.

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□ Next, with this information in hand, you can proceed to the Future Cruise booking desk on the day you begin your Disney Cruise Line vacation, where future cruise booking cards are almost always available, even when a crew member is not present. I have completed a future cruise booking card within minutes of boarding, and placed it in the drop box located on the Future Cruise desk. Usually, by the following day, a quote will be delivered to your stateroom, written directly on the card you've submitted. If you are happy with the details, simply call the extension listed on the card and authorize the payment. If you want to make changes, you may call the extension to discuss them or leave a voice message, or make a visit to the Future Cruise desk to speak directly with the crew member. I have successfully made changes by leaving a phone message, and thus have avoided waiting in the queue. Finally, a typed confirmation of your reservation is delivered to your stateroom. I review this once again to ensure that all the information is correct, then save it until I have received a confirmation from Disney or our travel agent, which for us, typically arrives via e-mail a few days after the cruise.

If you are unsure about a future cruise date, you can still book a future cruise or 'dummy' date and change the date and itinerary later, without any penalty, as long as you do so before the paid-in-full date. You may also cancel the reservation within the same time period, and receive a full refund of your deposit. If you do move the reservation to an alternate date, you will retain the perks; currently a 10% discount on the cruise cost, with a deposit of 10% (one-half the usual deposit), and an onboard credit for Castaway Club members of \$100 for cruises less than 7 days in length and \$200 for cruises of 7 days or more (cruisers do not become members of the Castaway Club until the end of their first cruise -- incentives may be different for first-time cruisers). For example, on a recent cruise we booked a 'dummy' date for a 3-night cruise in December of 2013, which we plan to move to a later date when the schedules for 2014 are released. We selected the least expensive stateroom for this 'dummy' booking to keep the deposit to a minimum. (Editor's Note: There may be limitations on how many times you can move the date and still retain the benefits. Some cruisers are reporting being told they can only change one time.)

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□ One final tip -- to save even more time we have picked up an extra Future Cruise booking card while onboard, and filed it away in our PassPorter binder. We'll complete it before leaving for our next cruise so that it's ready to drop off at the Future Cruise desk after boarding. Future cruise planning is part of our preparation for a Disney cruise.

Debarking with a future cruise reservation in hand keeps the magic going for us!

About The Author: Mary Augustine is retired. She has been a Disney fan since the original Micky Mouse Club was on television!

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