

Skagway, Alaska: The Jewel of an Alaska Disney Cruise

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Disney will spend another summer sailing through Alaska.

So I want to pay tribute to the town that, for me, is the jewel of a cruise through this beautiful part of the world: Skagway.

The first reason I love Skagway, Alaska is that it's so small, compact, and easy to explore, with your ship within easy walking distance of the various shops and attractions Skagway has to offer. Home to just 850 permanent residents (the numbers increase dramatically during the summer months), it's got a single bank, post office, library, and DIY store, but if you need a doctor or dentist? They only visit once a month, with emergency cases taken to Juneau or even Seattle. It really is another world, and it made me very thankful for all the facilities we have in our home town.

□ Despite its small size, Skagway is packed with shops catering to the thousands who flock here daily on cruise ships each summer. We quickly learned that some of them are owned by some of the bigger cruise ship companies, and indeed, hardened cruisers may even recognize the names of some of the stores here. As a result, we made a point of heading for the smaller shops to try and support the local community.

□ But there's much more to this little town than just shopping. For starters, it's home to the visitor center for the Klondike National Historic Park, although there isn't much to see in here. Nearby, also worth a visit is the Skagway Centennial Statue, which pays tribute to the prospectors of the Gold Rush days in the late 19th century.

At the other end of the tourist part of town, which is all of seven blocks away, is the Skagway Museum. It looks at the history of the town, and as such, it's full of a variety of exhibits, including historic costumes, sleighs, and skis, stuffed animals, minerals, photos of the town in years gone by, and even an entertainment section that has a gambling table. It's a fascinating insight into life here, and all for a low entrance fee.

□ Another place that's worth a visit, if you're an adult that is, is the Red Onion Saloon. When Skagway was at its height during the gold rush, this place was a brothel, and this place now plays on that history. It's not somewhere to bring children, and indeed there are warnings about anyone under the age of 21 coming in here, something to do with the

explicit images on the walls, and the risqué costumes worn by the servers. We had lunch here, and enjoyed the food we had.

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□Perhaps the biggest draw here is one that runs into, and out of, Skagway, the White Pass and Yukon Route Railway. During our visit to the town, we took Disney's adult-only shore adventure that took us on the railroad and to see the Yukon Suspension Bridge. I have to say that, having done this, I wouldn't want to miss either of these attractions on a visit to Skagway.

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□Which attraction is visited first on this tour varies from day to day, and on the day we took it, we headed first to the Yukon Suspension Bridge, which is over the Canadian border, meaning everyone has to bring their passports with them. The bridge is in a perfect location for a trip on the railway, lying just a few miles north of the White Pass summit, and the scenery on the way here and at the bridge itself was just stunning, with some beautifully vivid colors.

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□Of course, the main attraction here is the suspension foot bridge, 57 feet above the rapids below. I'm no fan of these things, but I didn't have a problem, although that could be because it was an adult-only tour, meaning there were no younger souls jumping up and down on the thing!

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□The second part of the excursion was the White Pass and Yukon Route Railway, and it's only on the day itself that you find out which way you'll be taking the railroad, either up from the port, or down from the mountain peak. We took it down the mountain peak, which I really enjoyed, as I loved seeing the views of the Disney Wonder as we got closer to the town, but I'm sure either way is equally memorable.

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□The railway was built in just 26 months in response to the 1898 gold rush, an even more amazing feat considering that, beforehand, it was considered impossible to build it. Depending which way you're headed, it either climbs or descends almost 3,000 feet in 20 miles, through a myriad of stunning scenery. Despite the change in heights, you honestly don't realize how much you're going up or down until you look back at where you came from, then it brings it home to you what an engineering feat this is.

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□One of my favorite things on board the train was to go outside to the platform at the end of the carriage, and look at what was either coming up or behind us. As we passed around various twists and turns, it was amazing to see the train winding its way around, and it made for some great photographs. To me, you really can't come to Skagway and not go on the Yukon and White Pass Route Railway. It came as no surprise to

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me to discover that this is Alaska's most popular shore excursion, and quite rightly, too.

☐ For those of you lucky enough to be heading to Alaska this summer on the Disney Wonder, enjoy Skagway. It's a beautiful town, and one of our favorites. I can't wait to (hopefully) return on another Disney cruise in a couple of year's time, provided they keep visiting this beautiful part of the world.

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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