

Disney Adventure: WHERE FANTASY MEETS LUXURY

AS DISNEY CRUISE LINE MAKES ITS ASIA DEBUT, EXPERIENCE A WORLD OF MAGIC AND FANTASY ON A GRANDER SCALE AT ITS LARGEST AND NEWEST SHIP.

By Pallavi Pasricha

When was the last time you relived the thrills of childhood through the eyes of a five-year-old? I got the chance to do so recently when my nephew accompanied me for the preview sailing of the Disney Adventure, the first Asia-based ship of Disney Cruise Line that set out from Singapore.

The excitement built up even before the cruise began. Seeing Hollywood star Robert Downey Jr. christening the ship a day earlier gave me goosebumps. After all, one does not expect the popular screen Avenger to appear in front of you –

but with Disney even the extraordinary becomes the norm.

Arriving at Marina Bay Cruise Centre the next day to set sail, I was awed by the sight of the ship – the newest and largest in the Disney Cruise Line fleet. As I walked on board holding my nephew Krish's hand, crew members applauded – it's a Disney welcome tradition. Suddenly he spotted Aladdin and darted off to ask, "where is Jafar?" I smiled. The magic of iconic tales and of spontaneous encounters with beloved characters had begun to unfold.

This gigantic ship with 20 decks, has more than 2000 rooms and suites in several categories that can accommodate 6700 guests. This cruise has 3 and 4-night itineraries from Singapore but does not dock enroute – the ship itself is the destination.

THEMED ROOMS & SUITES

My Deluxe stateroom had a verandah, but instead of the ocean, I looked out on the Discovery Reef, one of the seven themed areas on the ship that are inspired by films like *The Little Mermaid* and *Finding Nemo*. Each room is themed after a Disney character – mine in a blue palette features Spiderman. There's also the Concierge section in the ship – which has more premium rooms and suites and the guests here have access to a private lounge, sun deck and spa suites. It's more upscale than the rest of the ship.

WHEN STORIES STEP OFF THE SCREEN

At the heart of the ship lies the Imagination Garden – another themed area on the ship where characters and tales from Disney, Marvel and Pixar come alive. Spread over two levels, it features a performance stage below and a beautifully designed upper level complete with a Disney Castle installation, The Garden Bar, and a whimsical Mickey Mouse topiary.

While we missed the Sail Away Party, the Disney Character Party more than made up for



it. Watching Goofy, Pluto, Daisy and Donald Duck mingling and dancing amongst guests was magical, especially as I witnessed the little one's excitement as he ran off to tap his feet with his favourite characters.

At the Walt Disney Theatre, the 1250-seater indoor auditorium, two Broadway style shows

held us spellbound. At the musical, 'Disney Seas the Adventure' we watched Minnie Mouse asking Goofy to navigate the ocean and met characters from classic movies like *Tangled* and *Finding Nemo*. 'Remember' was a heartwarming journey of WALL-E and EVE with characters like *Coco*, *The Little Mermaid* and *Aladdin*.





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I also dined at one of the premium restaurants – Mike & Sulley’s, a Japanese restaurant that has different sections and experiences – a steakhouse, Omakase, teppanyaki and Sushi & Sashimi, which is for small bites.

The dishes at the steakhouse were exceptional – from wagyu, king crab, black cod to oysters, it was all top notch. I had not expected to indulge in a steak made of A5 wagyu on a ship – that too paired with sake. This meal could rival some of the finest restaurants on land.

FOR THE THRILL-SEEKERS

Adrenaline seekers won’t be disappointed. This is the first ship of Disney to have a roller coaster on board – extending over 820 feet, the Ironcycle Test Run is the longest such ride on sea. It is located on the upper deck at Marvel Landing, one of the themed areas, along with two kid friendly rides – Groot Galaxy Spin and Pym Quantum Racers.

But what brought out the child in me were the two water slides at Toy Story Place – landing in water with a huge splash was truly exhilarating. There’s also the Flying Saucer Splash Zone for kids – an interactive water play area.

When adults want some time to themselves or just relax with a coffee or a drink, The Oceaneer Club for kids is the perfect place to leave them for some time under the supervision of Disney experts. With toys, art and craft, Disney movies, storytelling and more, there is plenty to occupy them.

There’s a sprawling spa on board too. Apart from a range of therapies, it has a rainforest themed relaxation area with heated loungers, a steam and sauna room, as well as a hammam. There’s a pool deck with sweeping views of the ocean at the back of the ship and a number of bars on board – after all – why should children have all the fun?

As the day came to disembark, Krish had tears in his eyes – he did not want to leave this world that blurs imagination and reality. As for me – it was not just watching his smiles and expressions that made the cruise a standout vacation. I found it an equally immersive experience that brought the fantasy world of Disney alive on a grander scale than I had witnessed before.



With so many Marvel fans on board, the Avengers Assemble live show witnessed a packed audience. Watching super heroes like Iron Man, Captain America, Black Widow, Thor and Black Panther on stage was thrilling – but the highlight came when Spider-man made a dramatic entry by swinging from one end of the stage to the other.

FROM PLAYFUL PLATES TO GOURMET DINING

The entertainment did not stop here. It continued into dining which also reflects the theme of the cruise. The choices are aplenty – from premium restaurants, regular ones to QSR options and 24-hour room service. They include most of the popular cuisines including Indian at Mowgli’s Kitchen.

Rotational dining each evening ensured we sat at three different restaurants with the service staff following us to the next one too. By the end of the second meal, they even knew your preferences.

Our first meal was at Navigator’s Club where I opted for the Hainanese Chicken Rice – having set sail from Singapore, it seemed the right choice. Children were handed a kids menu to choose from as well as something to keep them busy – like colouring pens. Krish’s eyes lit up when suddenly in the middle of the meal, Mickey Mouse put in an appearance. Forgetting all about his food, he ran to hug him.

If dinner was about meeting Mickey Mouse, then breakfast was about devouring Mickey shaped waffles at Pixar Market. While for lunch we had burgers, pizzas and shawarma from the QSR restaurants.

At Animator’s Palate for example we were given colours and a sheet to create Disney characters. Towards the end of the meal our sketches were animated on screens at the wall.

