

Wish you were here



Joanna Booth hopped on Disney Cruise Line's newest ship *Wish* to experience its magic on water

It took me a moment to realise that the squeaking I could hear was no longer Mickey or Minnie, but me. Slushing through a 760ft tube looping around the top deck of new ship *Disney Wish*, I'd just zoomed around a see-through section that projects right out over the side and let out a high-pitched squeal.

What sets AquaMouse, branded as the first full-blown Disney attraction at sea, apart from even the most elaborate cruise ship water coasters already on the market is the combination of slide and story. As well as the splashes, I was treated to a series of shorts starring Disney's iconic mice along the way. It's a charming combination, making this coaster a real hit for cruisers of all ages.

It's also a statement of intent. *Wish*, the fifth in the fleet, is Disney's most-immersive ship yet, every aspect based on the iconic stories the brand has brought to the silver screen over the past century. And in most

areas, there's an extra level of interaction too. As guests first set foot on the ship, walking wide-eyed into the soaring, Cinderella-themed Grand Hall – complete with a statue of the princess and a glinting glass slipper – each child is given a 'wishing wand'. This is used in both a boarding celebration and a final night farewell show, turning the lobby from a glorified corridor into an experiential venue.

Many of the exclusive-to-*Wish* elements of the ship possess this same transformative factor. The *Star Wars: Hyperspace Lounge* will blow fans' minds; the futuristic bar, decorated like the interior of a spacecraft, features a giant 'window' where scenes of galaxies far, far away specially designed by the movie team from Lucasfilm play out. Cocktails smoke or glow with UV light and tubes of luminous liquid bubble in the corners – it feels like a film set.

The new *Worlds of Marvel* dining experience demonstrates what being a cruise offshoot of ➤

AquaMouse
water coaster



ABOVE: Arendelle: A Frozen Dining Adventure is an interactive dining experience and the first Frozen-themed restaurant at sea PICTURE: Amy Smith

a world-famous brand can bring to the table. Exclusive footage of A-listers Paul Rudd, Evangeline Lilly and Brie Larson reprising their roles as Ant-Man, The Wasp and Captain Marvel plays on a giant screen by the table, with the characters talking to the crowd and green-screen technology showing footage of the superheroes swooping about on board *Wish* itself.

The first Frozen-themed restaurant at sea is a more traditional Disney experience, with diners invited to Anna and Kristoff's engagement party, set in the great hall of Arendelle Castle. Characters in costume – plus a chatty, animatronic Olaf the snowman – mingle among the tables between courses, and keep the whole family entertained with song and dance.

Even the Oceaneer Club takes things up a notch from the already excellent versions on earlier Disney ships. Kids can access the club via a slide, then explore a host of themed areas. Most striking is Star Wars: Cargo Bay, a low-ceilinged space full of blinking lights and buttons to

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press, plus a series of furry, feathery and slimy creatures from the alien universe that children can interact with. There’s also a shiny, high-tech Marvel Super Hero Academy, where kids can train with the professionals – it was Spiderman giving web-shooting lessons the day I visited – plus Fairytale Hall, a hybrid area with theming interweaving a number of Disney princesses where kids can do craft, read and play.

This mammoth, fun-filled area is open from 9am to midnight, and there are separate spaces for tweens and teens too – all included within the cruise price. Only the It’s a Small World Nursery, for kids from six months to three years, incurs an extra cost.

Younger guests really are in heaven, with a Toy Story Splash Zone and gentle Slide-a-saurus Rex waterslide on the top deck, alongside multiple small pools – a development more suited to young families than the more traditional layout with one much larger pool.

Adults aren’t forgotten either. The Quiet Cove pool and ➤

SELLING TIPS

✿ **PACKAGE IT UP:** *Disney Wish* is a fun-filled but more relaxing add-on to an Orlando theme park trip.

✿ **SELL THE VALUE:** So many of the headline attractions on *Wish* are included in the price. This includes both new dining experiences – Arendelle and Worlds of Marvel – plus the AquaMouse water coaster and the incredible Oceaneer kids’ club.

✿ **ISLAND IDYLL:** All cruises on *Wish* call at Disney’s private island, Castaway Cay. It’s a major selling point for many guests, where they can enjoy white sand and the clear, warm ocean without leaving the Disney bubble.

✿ **ADULT FAN-TASTIC:** Disney fans come in all sizes, particularly when it comes to the Marvel and Star Wars franchises. Adult Disney aficionados will love the Star Wars: Hyperspace Lounge and Marvel dining, and can even enjoy themed personal grooming at Hook’s Barbery and the Untangled Salon.





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Ant-Man and Captain Marvel at Worlds of Marvel dining experience; Pirate's Rockin Parlay Party; Disney Wish stateroom PICTURE: Amy Smith



DISNEY WISH in NUMBERS

29 MILLION

gallons of water were used to flood the building dock so the ship could sail out

30,000

LED lights feature in the Grand Hall

\$5,000

the cost of the most expensive cocktail in the Star Wars: Hyperspace Lounge

60FT

the length of Rapunzel's hair on the sculpture on the stern

40

different flavours at the Joyful Sweets ice cream parlour

sundeck is a real hideaway, plus the spa area has a much-expanded indoor and outdoor, rainforest-styled relaxation zone. Each bar has a different feel, from the wood-panelled, pub-style Keg & Compass to The Bayou, a flower-filled venue hosting regular live music performances. At the top of the ship are three elegant, adult-only venues all loosely themed around *Beauty and the Beast*. The shimmering, light-filled Enchanté serves haute French cuisine designed by Michelin-starred chef Arnaud Lallemand and Palo is a steakhouse with dark, striking decor – both are speciality dining venues. The Rose is a stylish cocktail bar with expansive floor-to-ceiling ocean views.

There are plenty of opportunities for families to come together: at the Walt Disney Theatre for West End-quality shows, in the two on-board cinemas, at a giant inflatables challenge called the Hero Zone. There's also the new and exclusive Uncharted Adventure, a virtual scavenger hunt at sea, where visiting different areas of the ship will unlock new elements of the game.

Staterooms follow Disney's tried-and-tested layout. The bedroom and living room areas (with sofa, bunk or pull-down beds) can be separated by a heavy curtain, and there's a split bathroom, one space with the over-bath shower and a basin, the other with an

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additional basin and toilet. They're spacious, sleeping up to five. There are 76 concierge suites – twice the number on earlier ships, in response to demand – and these guests have access to a private lounge three times the size of previous ones, plus an exclusive sundeck with a pool and bar. Signature suites include four *Sleeping Beauty*-themed Royal Suites, featuring giant verandas with hot tubs, and the one-of-a-kind Wish Tower Suite. This is the first-ever stateroom set in the funnel of the ship, a penthouse for eight guests with decor inspired by *Moana*.

The 1,254-cabin *Disney Wish* will sail three and four-night Bahamas itineraries out of Port Canaveral year-round, making it a great extension to a trip to the theme parks. But for those who want to stay closer to home, *Disney Dream* will sail in Europe next summer, including two short sailings out of Southampton. “We have a very loyal UK audience, and we're very grateful for it,” says Disney Cruise Line chief Thomas Mazloum. **TW**

BOOK IT

A three-night sailing in a standard inside stateroom on *Disney Wish* departing from Port Canaveral, Florida, on May 3 costs from £577, not including flights. Travel agents can learn more about Disney cruises by downloading the Magic Ahoy! training app. disneytravelagents.co.uk