

HOLIDAYS AT SEA

A cruise is a gift your family will long remember, and you won't have to lift a finger all week!

by Kim Cross • photography Meg McKinney

This year, try a whole new take on Christmas. Swap snowmen for sand castles, sweaters for swimsuits. Sail through the season on a cruise. It'll be the easiest—and most memorable—holiday ever.

Seven days for the family. No decorating. No cooking. No cleaning. Sound like a fantasy? Not on a Disney cruise. It's perfect for a newlywed couple, a family with kids, or a sprawling multigenerational clan.

All Aboard With Disney

If you can wish it upon a star, you'll find it on board. The *Disney Magic*, which sets sail from Port Canaveral, Florida, blends the sleek looks of a classic ocean liner with modern perks: Internet access, daycare, movies, and nightclubs. Imaginative restaurants with good food. Quiet, kid-free spaces just for adults. Best of all, this boat stays clean. Pools are drained and scoured daily. So is your room. Courteous deckhands pass out antibacterial wipes at the entrance to every restaurant, buffet, and ice-cream station, keeping germs at bay.

Little Things Set This Cruise Apart

As you glide through one of the snorkeling lagoons off Castaway Cay, Disney's private island, never mind the stingrays. They've been de-barbed. It's just one of the ways a Disney cruise leaves others in its wake. And where else can you bump into Peter Pan and Captain Jack Sparrow on your way to the Goofy Pool?

You'll get larger-than-average staterooms, parties with Mickey and the gang, and a highly trained staff. Returning cruisers (aka Castaway Club members) pack an eye patch and hone their "Yo Ho, Yo Ho" for the Pirates IN the Caribbean deck party.

For your grand finale on Castaway Cay, you'll dance a conga line with Donald Duck and see the *Flying Dutchman* (the phantom ship filmed in the sequels for *Pirates of the Caribbean*). Bonus: This is the only cruise ship that shoots fireworks off the deck while sailing, as Mickey rappels down the smokestack.

Please the Whole Bunch

Obviously, this cruise tops the list for families, especially those spanning age groups. Tots love seeing Minnie in a bikini. Teens dig hanging out in their own club, The Stack, where young staffers host late-night pizza-and-pajama parties. Parents appreciate the daycare. Tweens have a blast in the Oceaneer Lab, where a mad scientist teaches how to make Flubber, that famous goo from the movie. Fun choices abound for all, but privacy is never far away.



Snorkeling guides in Cozumel teach guests about the local underwater creatures, flora, and fauna.



above: Spot Mickey and friends in different cruise-inspired costumes throughout the trip. right: Stay fit with daily yoga classes, or work out on your own in the first-class fitness center. below, right: The atrium lobby, decorated for the holidays, makes a popular photo op for next year's Christmas card.



For Adults—No Kiddin'

We're serious here: You don't need kids to enjoy this cruise. One-third of the main pool deck is reserved for those 18 years and up, with a coffee shop, gym, restaurant, and spa. On Castaway Cay, you can escape to the adults-only beach for a massage in a private seaside cabana. Meals on the ship rotate between restaurants, where excited kids are ever present, but you can request a smaller dining room table or one with other adults.

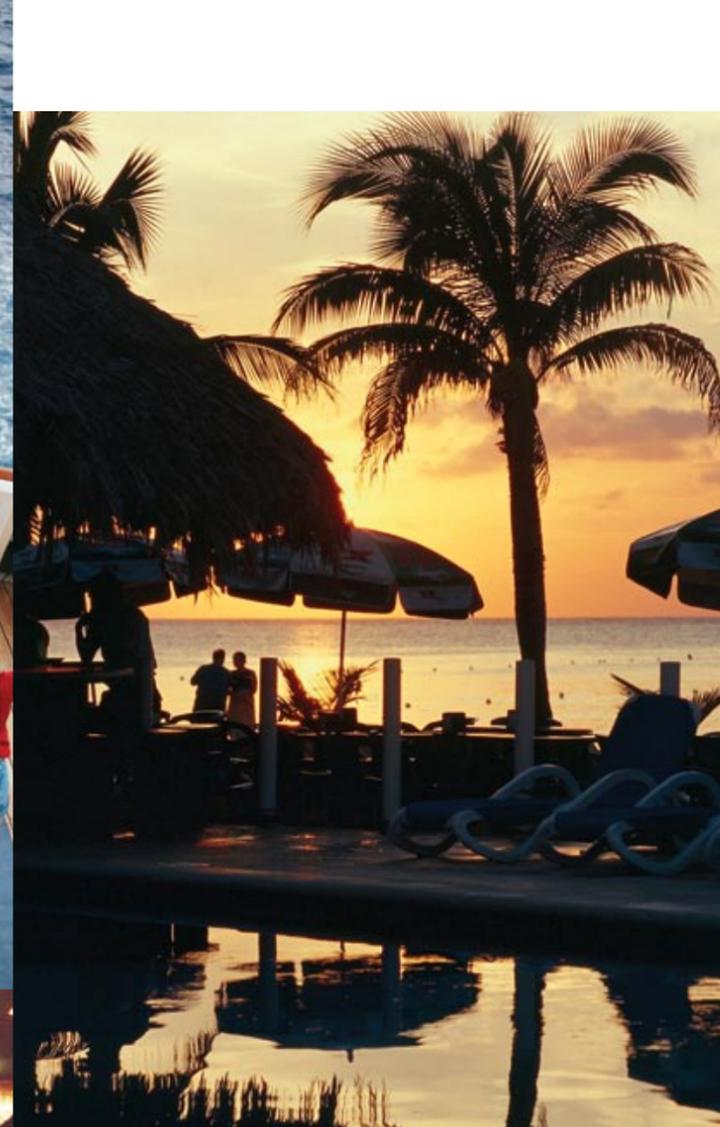
Ports of Call

The hard part about shore days? Choices. Options abound, but here's what we'd do. On Key West, join this island's famous tradition of applauding the sunset into the sea from Mallory Square.

Cozumel means bargain hunting for silver (barter—it's a local sport). Or just lounge at the Playa Mia Grand Beach Park (\$12 per person but well worth it), where a gorgeous sandy beach inspires an indulgently lazy afternoon.

On Grand Cayman, take a popular snorkeling tour of Stingray City, where tame rays glide close and even eat from your hand. If you don't mind swimming with crowds of people and rays, this is a signature experience.

You'll love Castaway Cay, where Disney meets island living. Discover fun family games, bike trails, and shops on this private island. The family beach frames a snorkeling lagoon staffed with lifeguards. At the cute cabanas, all food is free.



Plan Now

It's often possible to find availability on a Disney cruise this month, especially in early- to mid-December. The week between Christmas and New Year's is typically more limited.



above: Deck parties, dive-in movies, and family-friendly festivities take place at the Goofy Pool. left: Find food, drinks, water toys, and bathrooms close at hand at Playa Mia Grand Beach Park in Cozumel. below, left: Castaway Cay, Disney's private island, boasts a family beach and a secluded stretch for adults.

Best of the Boat

Save one afternoon at sea for an all-out splurge: the Spa Villa Treatment at the Vista Spa & Salon. Bliss begins with a gentle foot cleansing and a 30-minute soak in a jetted bubble bath. After a massage or facial, you'll relax on a plush chaise longue for a quiet, calming tea service.

Make reservations for an upscale dinner or elaborate brunch at Palo, the adults-only fancy restaurant. The small surcharge—\$10 per person for dinner or brunch, \$5 for high tea—is the best deal on the boat.

Head to the atrium lobby to snap a photo with your favorite character in front of the Christmas tree. Then join a gingerbread house class, and let the kids have cake—for breakfast.

Throw Caution to the Tradewinds

Lose yourself in the magic of the moment and the spirit of the season. Laugh. Dance. Swim. Nap. Eat. Give in to your every Christmas wish, because this is what memories are made of.

Choosing a Stateroom

A seven-day cruise starts at \$649 per person for a basic inside room. But it's worth the extra cost to upgrade to a deluxe ocean-view room (\$899) or a deluxe stateroom with outdoor balcony (\$1,249). Visit www.disneycruise.com, or call 1-800-951-3532 for more information.