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SHIP REVIEW

OASIS OF THE SEAS



We were honored to be invited aboard the Oasis of the Seas for a pre-inaugural cruise Thanksgiving weekend of 2009. But before we talk about the ship, you just have to understand the miracles Royal Caribbean has done in revamping both the embarkation and the disembarkation process! This ship is the largest cruise ship ever to sail and she carries well over 6,000 passengers so just you remember how long it took to get checked in and aboard one of their standard size ships Upwards of two hours sometimes. We got out of the taxi and were on the ship headed for the Windjammer for lunch in less than 17 minutes. Pier 18 at Port Everglades (Fort Lauderdale) is mammoth like the ship but planned with every critical detail of organization aimed at smooth and quick passage. And believe it or not the same was true on the last day getting through customs, collecting baggage and whisking away to the airport.

Well, after that I love the ship already! Now we saunter aboard and not into some elevator lobby with which gloved guides to meet us but right into the heart of the ships innards, the grand promenade. Wide open spaces with stores and eateries and drinkeries lining the sides. I am instantly swallowed up in the activity and sheer enormity of this majestic vessel. The ships guide in my hand leads me to believe that I could not see it all in the course of a seven day cruise and certainly there is no problem of what to do as we wait for our cabins to be ready at 1pm.

So big you are lost already? NO WAY! RCCL has installed electronic interactive guide boards throughout the ship. Press a button and it tells you how to find whatever spot you want including your very own cabin. Hanging next to the guide is another board that tells you what restaurants are open, which ones are full (and how full or empty) and I truly expected to be able to find the name of the headwaiter and the dishwasher the information was so complete.

We were told that reservations were needed for the Broadway Show HAIRSPRAY, the spectacular Aqua Show, the Ice Show, and Abba the major production show and we had been able to reserve all of them “on line” before sailing. There is no charge but reservations are needed in order to make sure that everyone who had a ticket had a seat. There were several locations aboard ship where these reservations could also be made and the beauty of it all is that tickets are not required they simply scan your SEA PASS card at the door to the show and your ticket shows up. A full length Broadway production is certainly a classic first for a cruise ship, not to mention the Aqua show. Mrs. Holmes went bananas over the Abracadabra (Abba) show.

We had a middle of the line balcony cabin which was similar to those on the Voyager class ships but slightly larger, better appointed, and brighter in light and feeling. We also were allowed to visit ten other cabins and fell in love with the spectacular “LOFT” cabins which featured a second story with private bath and expansive view of the stern area of the ship and the ocean.

Ocean, who said ocean? Are we on a ship? I almost forgot we were between Central Park, the Boardwalk, and the massive pool and sports zone, who could possibly have time to even realize that we were AT SEA. We made the conscious decision that by the seventh day we might possibly find time to sit on our balcony for a few minutes and watch the waves go by. So our advice to readers is, “book a back to back cruise for 14 days to really begin to know OASIS!

The YOUTH ZONE is so large and encompassing that even the oldest passenger comes away with a clear feeling that Royal Caribbean has left no stone unturned in planning space for children of all ages to enjoy every moment of the day and night. No one is left out from toddlers to teens including babies from age 6 months up. Clearly family is a word generic to OASIS.

Entertainment for the adults is almost as unlimited as well. From the Zip Line to the Comedy club there are at least two weeks worth of activities waiting to be sampled and that is just once around as many folks want seconds and thirds. Be sure to get reservations for the premiere events early in your cruise in order not to be disappointed.

Hold on, we have said nothing about food yet and there are over 30 different places to eat, each of them with unique settings and special offerings to treat the palate. This reviewer finds the only real fault with the OASIS is that the Windjammer, RCCLs standard and highly respected buffet restaurant is far too small for the size of the ship. Officials defend its size by citing all the other restaurants that offer alternatives to the main dining room... but sometimes a familiar and tested space is a comfort.

Lastly what really makes the OASIS is its crew. Made up from the cream of the crop from RCCL's twenty some other ships this team is proud of its ship, happy to be aboard, and ready to support you its guests. We wonder where they will find an equal staff to outfit the ALLURE next October but time will tell on that one.

When we set out to review ships for our website over six years ago we set 100 as the high bar and we really never expected to go much higher than 96 or 97 however:

We rate the **OASIS OF THE SEAS** a 98, the highest ever given.

You must experience the OASIS at least once whether you dislike large ships or not.... This one is not just the largest cruise ship afloat; it may probably be the best cruise ship afloat!

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