



Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas

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With contributions by Travel Agent Anne Larison



The biggest and best yet! We were in the first group of travel agents to sail on Royal Caribbean's huge new ship, the Oasis of the Seas, for a special 2 night travel agent cruise November 20-21, 2009. We were very impressed with the Oasis and give a report of our impressions below.

For a slideshow of pictures and short videos we took of the ship visit <http://www.familytravelgurus.com/vidoasis1109.html>

Ship details

At 220,000 tons the Oasis of the Seas is by far the largest cruise ship now afloat. By comparison Royal Caribbean's previous record setting ships (the Liberty, Freedom, and Independence of the Seas) are each 164,000 tons. We have sailed on the Liberty of the Seas and thought that was the biggest ship we'd ever see. Wrong!

Our first thought was, "will the ship seem crowded?" With a maximum capacity of 5,400 passengers, that was a concern. Though our cruise was less than full (about 3,400 passengers) we could tell that the Oasis is designed to handle crowds. The Windjammer Marketplace, for example, is divided into separate areas each with its own food offerings. So instead of one huge buffet area, the smaller buffet section we ate in was similar to the size of buffets we have experienced on other ships.

The Oasis has a unique “neighborhood” concept (7 neighborhoods). We found the passengers were dispersed in the different neighborhoods during the busy hours so that no single area of the ship had excessive crowds.

Neighborhoods

Central Park

An outdoor park on a cruise ship? Yes, the Oasis of the Seas has one with its unique “Central Park” area. Central Park features specialty restaurants, an art gallery, a portrait studio, and a Coach “handbag” shop. Most of the restaurants were closed during our sailing, but we still enjoyed strolling through the park at night.

Anne says:

Not only are there 12,000 live plants (including 56 trees) in Central Park for a fresh atmosphere during the day, but at night it turns very romantic. The lighting is low and there several seating areas to enjoy the lush, relaxing atmosphere.

Royal Promenade

Those of you who have sailed on Royal Caribbean’s Voyager and Super Voyager class ships are familiar with the Royal Promenade – an indoor shopping mall in the middle of the ship. The Royal Promenade on the Oasis was similar to what we have seen on these other ships. The Cupcake Cupboard is a unique addition with cupcake decorating classes. The Rising Tide Bar moves between decks 5 through 8 – from the Royal Promenade to Central Park and offers great views.

Anne says:

Another unique feature is that the area under the Rising Tide Bar is a water fountain. When the bar is raised guests can enjoy a peaceful water show until the bar descends to the main level! Just an example of how Royal Caribbean didn’t miss any detail to make the ship special.

Boardwalk

One of our favorite areas on the Oasis, the open air boardwalk has the first Carousel at sea, restaurants, and shops. At the end of the Boardwalk is the AquaTheatre, where professional diving shows are performed. We enjoyed eating lunch at Johnny Rockets one day on the outdoor patio – a great place to people watch. The burgers, shakes, and fries at Johnny Rockets were very tasty, also. The Boardwalk’s Ice Cream Parlor was a bit of a disappointment as we didn’t think the ice cream was as good as other snack options onboard.

We were fortunate to have our “muster drill” in the AquaTheatre and it was one of the most comfortable muster drills we have been to. There are no life jackets stored in the staterooms and none

are required at the muster drill (the jackets are stored away and only are deployed in the event of an emergency). We watched a safety film on one of the large Aqua Theatre screens, checked in with a crew member, and that was it!

Anne says:

Even though there is an extra charge at the Ice Cream Parlor, there are freshly baked doughnuts at another shop that are included in your package.

Pool and Sportszone

Do you like pools? You have a nice variety of pools to choose from on the Oasis – Main Pool with two side by side whirlpools, an “adults only” Solarium, H2O zone for family and kids with a dedicated infant and toddler pool, a Sports pool for team sports like water polo, and a Beach Pool which has a sloped entry for wading into the water.

The water fun doesn't stop there. The Oasis of the Seas has not one but two FlowRiders – surf simulator machines that were first introduced on the Freedom of the Seas. While we weren't brave enough to try the Flowrider ourselves this was one of the most popular activities among our fellow cruisers.

Not into water sports like me? There's still plenty of fun for you on the Oasis. A 9 hole miniature golf course is the best one we've played on a cruise ship. A huge full court basketball court is available for pickup games or just shooting some baskets. We always enjoy playing ping pong but hadn't been impressed with the ping pong setup on other Royal Caribbean ships. That's changed on the Oasis with separate enclosed areas for ping pong (we saw 4 tables). The first “zip line” at sea, suspended 9 decks above the Boardwalk, is a popular “thrill ride” on the Oasis.

Anne says:

In addition to the miniature golf for all the ‘big kids’ – there is a course just for the little ones, with larger holes and fun obstacles for the little golfers.

I did see many folks who were not yet ready to stand on the FlowRider and ‘surf’, were able to use a boogie board and lay flat on their front in the wave. The patient staff even gave tips and encouragement to go from the prone position to the next step of being up on their knees. A good introduction without having to surf right away.

Vitality at Sea Spa and Fitness

The Oasis features a full service spa with 29 treatment rooms. The adjacent Vitality Café offers healthy food choices. The Fitness Center has 158 exercise machines in total and offers pilates, cycling classes, nutritional training, and more.

Youth Zone

The Oasis of the Seas has a huge area dedicated to their youth program. Age specific rooms each with their own counselors are sure to keep kids entertained during the cruise. We liked the teen zone area in a separate part of the ship. The younger kids had their own mini-arcade and small theatre. New for Royal Caribbean is a program for infants, Royal Babies. There was a program for all age groups, from 6 months to 17 years.

Anne says:

The security in the Youth zone seemed very extensive and each age group was in a separate area.

Entertainment Place

Ice Show – We have enjoyed the Royal Caribbean ice shows on their Voyager and Freedom Class ships – among the best shows we've seen at sea. We were glad that the ice arena was included in the design of the Oasis. A new ice show, featuring Hans Christian Anderson stories, debuts on the Oasis. We found the ice show to be of the same high quality as the royal Caribbean ice shows we had seen previously. The show featured the same amazing ice stunts from skilled skaters (how they do some of those maneuvers on a moving ship is amazing to us). Our show featured a special appearance by artist Kseniya Simonova who wowed the crowd by drawing figures in sand projected on a large screen over the ice.

Anne says:

Even though the stories of Hans Christian Anderson are from another era, the stories were updated with upbeat music. I very much enjoyed the show and always come away in awe of their talent and ability to perform such an intricate show on a small ice stage on a moving ship!

Jonathan Kane, Elton John tribute act –We had seen the REAL Elton John in concert in Las Vegas two years ago and honestly this show was just as good if not better! In fact Elton John endorses this show, and some of the movie footage is the same as Sir Elton uses in his Caesars Palace Las Vegas show. Impersonator Jonathan Kane had the audience rocking through several of Elton John's hits, including Benny and the Jets, Rocket Man, Goodbye Norma Jean, and others. The show concluded with a rousing rendition of "Crocodile Rock" where audience members were invited to dance on the stage with the band. The stage was covered with dancing passengers enjoying their last night on the ship – a good sendoff for the cruise.

The Oasis features other shows that were not performed on our voyage. Hair Spray the musical (for an extra charge) and the water acrobatics show at the Aqua theatre promise to be good additions to the entertainment options offered. A variety of bars featured music in smaller venues.

Casino Royale - The casino was by far the biggest one we have seen on any of our cruises. We especially noticed a large area for poker players. One warning: the casino is one of the few places onboard where people can smoke. If you are sensitive to smoke this is not the place to be – we saw some smokers not even playing any of the games but in the casino as a place to light up.

Staterooms

We had a balcony stateroom, category D3. We found the storage in the room to be sufficient for the two of us. We enjoyed sitting on our private balcony in the mornings and at sunset.

The Oasis offers different types of balconies – including balconies that overlook Central Park and the Boardwalk. We talked to one passenger who had a Boardwalk balcony; she said that while she enjoyed the view, she noticed you could see into the staterooms on the other side unless their curtains were drawn. For privacy and the best views we still recommend an oceanview balcony on the Oasis.

The wireless internet access in our stateroom worked flawlessly for the entire cruise. In fact the internet café we saw on the ship was one of the smallest we've ever seen (only 4 terminals) – that's because Royal Caribbean has designed the Oasis for wireless access (assuming passengers will bring their own laptops). Royal Caribbean plans to offer iPhone rentals on the ship (for a rumored \$35/person) so you can browse the internet from your rented phone and keep in touch with other family members.

The only negatives about our stateroom:

There were very few plugs – just two standard 140 volt plugs below the desk with another special outlet for the hair dryer. The location of the plugs made them hard to reach (especially plugging in the hair dryer). We recommend bringing a power strip or extension cord to give you more outlets to work with.

The bedding was new and felt more like sleeping on plastic than comfortable linens.

We toured a number of the other staterooms on the ship. The ones that stood out:

A 2 story Royal Loft Suite – this suite offers great views of the sports deck with the ocean farther in the distance. The loft bedroom on the 2nd floor had its own movie screen that came down from the ceiling for movie and tv watching from a king sized bed.

Aqua Theatre Suite – we liked this suite even better than the Royal Loft Suite. The suite featured a large balcony. On one side of the balcony you could watch the action at the aqua theatre. The other side of the balcony was open to great views of the sea.

Family oceanview and inside rooms – do you have a large family but can't afford suite accommodations? No problem! The Oasis features special "family" oceanview and inside staterooms that can sleep a family of 6. You must have at least 5 people to book one of these larger family rooms.

Anne says:

The staterooms have a nice large flat screen television. Since guests are not in their staterooms much the size is adequate. However, I did find the bed a little close in proximity to the closet. I found it a little challenging to access the back of the closet.

Our stateroom was near the elevator and I found this to be very convenient since the ship is so long you can find your self walking long distances.

Dining

We enjoyed two dinners in the huge Opus main dining room. Opus is divided in to 3 levels; any one level doesn't seem that big. Our two dinners in the Opus were excellent.

Royal Caribbean is encouraging guests to sign up for "anytime dining" instead of a set early or late seating time (though early/late seating is still available). With anytime dining the gratuities are required to be prepaid at the final payment. The Windjammer Marketplace is available for those who want a less formal environment.

The Oasis has a number of specialty restaurants. We liked Johnny Rockets on the Boardwalk (excellent hamburgers and shakes). Many of the specialty restaurants were not open for our special travel agent cruise. I did hear the Italian restaurant, Giovanni's Table in Central Park, is a "not to be missed" dining experience from several Royal Caribbean staffers I talked to.

Anne says:

I have to believe that on the Oasis there is a dining venue to meet every need. From formal to buffet and in between there are so many options for eating (which is my favorite part of cruising). I am anxious to return and try many of the dining options that we missed, such as the Seafood Shack on Deck 6.

Summary

Royal Caribbean has done it again! The Oasis of the Seas is an incredible ship with an amazing amount of sports, dining, and entertainment options. We didn't have near enough time on our 2 day cruise to experience it all. We'd love to come back and sail on a full 7 day Eastern Caribbean voyage (offered throughout 2010). And the Allure of the Seas, the sister ship of the Oasis, is coming out in late 2010!

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