

## TRAVELOGUE

# FANTASY SAILS INTO NEW WATERS

*Carnival's SuperLiner has a Shiny New Coat and Itinerary*

By Melissa Wolcott  
and Al Martino

**W**e have been longtime cruisers on Carnival's Fantasy since it's inception in 1990, mainly because the three and four day trips from Port Canaveral made it easy to fit a fun getaway into a busy schedule. In more recent times we have cruised on a few of the new mega-cruise ships — which we enjoyed — however, when we heard our old friend, the Fantasy, had undergone a multi-million-dollar refurbishing and had a new itinerary, we had to check it out.

*The Fantasy docks at Grand Turk*

Carnival has launched a new year-round program of 4 and 5 day cruises from Port Canaveral aboard the Fantasy. In addition to it's former itinerary of stopping at Nassau, it now also visits a new destination for Carnival — Grand Turk, part of the Turks and Caicos Islands, and spends a day at Half Moon Cay. Carnival's Sensation now provides the 3 and 4 day cruises to the Bahamas from Port Canaveral.

The refurbishment of the Fantasy is obvious immediately upon boarding the ship, with an attractive new lobby bar, and other public areas. A totally new Roman-themed promenade leads you to the ship's various lounges and bars. The Fantasy's nightclubs and lounges are all cleverly themed, especially the Cleopatra piano bar with life-size sculptures and hieroglyphics, and the Cat's Lounge, with oversized food cans and boxes.

Some of the fun on-board things for children is "Camp Carnival", which offers supervised activities, an enclosed play area filled with toys and games, and three swimming pools — one of which has a

115-foot-long water slide. A new nine-hole miniature golf course provides fun for all ages.

Part of the Fantasy's renovations include an expanded health and fitness center — one of the largest of its kind. The 12,000 square foot center features new private treatment rooms, exercise equipment, a beauty salon, and a one-eighth-mile-jogging track to get rid of the unwanted pounds acquired at the generous buffets.

Speaking of which, the Fantasy offers a wide variety of formal and casual dining options, all of which feature some delicious signature items created by famed chef, Georges Blanc, exclusively for Carnival. There is always something to eat somewhere, sometime, on the ship, including the option of complimentary 24-hour room service. Dining room menus also offer a choice of vegetarian and low-fat items (if you don't want to do the jogging thing).

The most important refurbishment however, would be in the staterooms. The decor is understated, but Carnival still boasts about their sizable staterooms, which usually run larger than their competitor cruise lines. The biggest change is "Carnival's Comfort Bed" sleep system, which truly provides guests



*A delectable menu item by Georges Blanc.*



with a wonderful night's sleep on luxurious bedding. Indeed, the beds and bedding have become so popular that Carnival sells them on a separate website ([carnivalcomfortbed.com](http://carnivalcomfortbed.com)). Staterooms come with fluffy bathrobes and bathroom amenities for guests' use.

**W**e were excited to visit Carnival's newest addition to its port stops — Grand Turk — which is known for having some of the most fabulous diving opportunities in the world. Grand Turk has the third largest barrier reef in the world. With a 7,000-foot drop off

*Grand Turk's popular Margaritaville.*



only 200 yards from the beach, it offers some of the best scuba and snorkeling in the world.

A beautiful new welcome center with the largest of Jimmy Buffet's Margaritavilles in the Caribbean is right at the pier when you step off the ship. A lot of guests spent their whole port time at Margaritaville, since the DJ was so entertaining with fun adult games and music. We, however, took one of the excursions to go "power snorkeling". Not quite sure what it was going to be, it turned out to be great fun. We were driven to an area of the beach where we were all given hand-held power "scooters". You need a snorkel and mask, but don't need fins. The small power scooter does all the work for you, so you can just cruise along and enjoy gazing at the beautiful sea life. It enables you to travel a lot farther than you probably would relying on your own leg work. We saw some amazing fish and enjoyed watching them dart in and out of the coral.



*Power Snorkeling on Grand Turk.*

Other Grand Turk excursion opportunities include horseback riding on the beach, bicy-

cling, 4x4 adventures, dune buggy tours, and scuba diving — to mention a few.

**O**ur third day was a visit to Half-Moon Cay, which is an international bird sanctuary in the Bahamas (only two percent of the island is developed), and provides cruise guests a lovely relaxing day at the beach. Guests can go horseback riding, hike a

nature trail or take a stingray adventure. We chose the latter, and it proved to be fascinating. Along with swimming — and feeding — the docile stingrays, we gently handled live starfish and conch.

**W**e have been to Nassau many times, and after doing the main shopping street, we always make our way to the Atlantis,

which is one of the most amazing resorts in the Caribbean. It is famous (thanks to Oprah and/or Regis and Kelly) for its fabulous landscaping on the beach, it's very expensive "bridge"



*Swimming with stingrays.*

suite (rumored at \$25,000 per night), but mostly for its incredible aquarium. We also manage to throw away a few dollars in their casino before we head back to the ship.

**A**lthough Carnival has a "party boat" reputation, we have always found it is enjoyable for all ages, even if you're looking for a laid-back relaxing vacation. Carnival is still the best value for

your buck, hands down — affordable, but of high quality, with excellent food, comfortable staterooms, Broadway-style shows, fun activities and great itineraries. With 21 ships in the fleet now, and three more due to arrive in the next few years, Carnival continues to provide guests with unlimited choices.

Fantasy will always be one of our favorites.



*The beautiful Atlantis Resort in Nassau.*

*For more information, call your travel agent, or 1-800-CARNIVAL, or visit [www.carnival.com](http://www.carnival.com).*

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