

PIXIE DUST NEWS

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DESTINATION: SWIMMING WITH TIGERS IN FLORIDA

I'd been checking out all the places on the Internet for years where I could play with a tiger or lion cub. This has been on my bucket list for a long time. Dade City Wild Things looked like they had the best place, in my opinion. It was sort of costly, so I kept looking at it and putting it off. In September I noticed they announced a "Buy One, Get the Second One for Half Off" sale. I called my goddaughter Noi in Maryland and asked her if she wanted to go. The normal cost for "Swim with a Tiger" was \$200 per person, so this would cost us \$300 for two of us. She thought it was a lot of money, and initially said no.

Just for the heck of it, I picked a random date of October 20, and looked it up on the Southwest Airlines website. To my surprise, it would cost only \$286 for both of us to go round trip to Orlando. The next day, Noi texted me, having decided to say "yes." I called Dade City Wild Things immediately and booked us a tram tour, a 10-minute tiger cub encounter (which at the booking time was with Luna, the white tiger cub), and a ½ hour play & swim with Luna. The total cost came to \$394. (All proceeds go toward care of the animals.) I was told a photographer would follow us around and photograph everything we did. All included in the price! Well worth it, I thought. I quickly booked the fabulous airfare, then a rental car for \$47, and finally a hotel at the airport. Everything just fell into place—it was meant to be!

To my surprise and great joy, a week after I set all of this up, one of DCWT's tigresses gave birth to three cubs, so our 10-minute tiger cub encounter would not be with Luna, but would be with a very tiny newborn tiger! Truly my dream was coming true!

Our flight on Southwest Airlines left at 6:30 am. I slept almost the whole way to Orlando. When we got to Orlando, we ate breakfast in the airport, got our Enterprise Rental Car, and headed North to Dade City. We went to Subway and got sandwiches and drinks along the way because DCWT said they had a place to picnic.

We arrived at DCWT around 12:30 pm and checked in at the office, which included the gift shop. There were two parrots and two chinchillas in cages, plus a black & white cat with only 3 legs. The woman in the office told us a trolley would pick us up at 1:30 pm and take us to the zoo, which was 2 or 3 minutes away. Soon a trolley pulled up, driven by Randy the Tiger Man. We learned that DCWT was founded about 20 years ago by Kathy Stearns and her husband on 22 acres of land. Randy is their son. Also on the zoo property is the home of the Stearns family where they house baby animals whose mothers didn't care for them and rescue animals that still need a lot of TLC. DCWT started with a few rescued animals and has grown from there. It is an ecotourism zoo. There are currently 300 animals there, and they are cared for by a staff of 10 to 12 employees and some volunteers.

Randy pulled up to the huge gates (with an "S" on them for Stearns) and dropped us off at the entrance to the zoo. There we were met by our tour guide/tram driver/photographer for the day. She escorted us to the tram and told us we were the only visitors at the zoo that day. On the way to the tram, we met an emu with a deformed foot who roamed around the place—our guide told us she was also the security guard on duty! We saw a dog and some monkeys and met an overweight puma and an elderly leopard. Once we were on the tram, our guide took us around all the animal enclosures. There are about five full-grown lions, lots of tigers (both white and orange; both Siberian or Bengal), alligators, skunks, birds, many species of monkeys, lamas, wolves, foxes, bear, miniature horses, kangaroo, otters,

porcupine, bison, a zebra named Hank, and so many more animals. Most had come to DCWT injured or abandoned. Many of the animals were pre-owned by people who got them when they were babies, but they didn't know what to do with them once they got too big to handle safely, or they were animals that were hurt in some way and wouldn't have made it in the wild. It's a true sanctuary. It's good these sanctuaries exist because without them, many endangered animals would have been euthanized. The zoo is officially licensed and is inspected frequently by the FWC (Florida Wildlife Commission). It passes inspection every time. DCWT follows all of the required laws in the state of Florida. The animals are clean and healthy and are clearly fed well. In fact, when we asked about the diet for the big cats, we were told they eat pork, chicken, and beef. They have tried to feed them venison but the cats are so spoiled that they turn their noses up at it! They apparently don't like the "gamey" taste! There is a veterinarian in town who comes out as needed and cares for their medical needs. In fact the day we were there, we did not get to meet Kathy Stearns because she had taken one of the new orange tiger cubs to the vet for a check-up. (Baby got a clean bill of health!)

At the end of the tram tour, we were taken to a canopy with a table and chairs under it. On the table was a small carpet and a big pink pet bed. We were told to sit down, and our guide explained the rules that needed to be enforced when we met with "our" tiger cub (basically no holding, and no interaction with her eyes or mouth). The cub we would be meeting was 3 1/2 weeks old. She was one of three tigers who were recently born to Bella the tiger. Bella did not produce enough milk, and the cubs had to be taken from her and hand-raised. They were currently living in the Stearns home. The cub we would meet was named Bindi. Interacting with a tiger or lion cub has been on my bucket list for many, many years, and when a personal trainer came down the path to our table carrying "our" cub, I just couldn't take it! She put Bindi on the pink bed, and I reached out for her and tears welled up in my eyes. I could not believe I could sit there and handle this little darling for 15 to 20 minutes. Noi and I were in 7th heaven. We just couldn't get enough of her! We examined her little feet (the pads looked like brown leather) and turned her over and gave her belly rubs (which she loved); we checked out her little belly button. Her trainer periodically gave her a bottle of milk (which she also loved). Her eyes had only been open a couple of weeks and the trainer told us at this point in life, her vision was still a bit blurry. She couldn't walk yet, but she was crawling. The little noises she made were adorable. She was "chuffing" (equivalent to a kitty's purr) and tried to roar, which was equally adorable and nowhere near scary! She had no teeth, but she was teething, and if your hand got too close to her mouth, you ended up with saliva all over your fingers. When we saw the pictures later, it looked like Noi and I were doing toothpaste commercials because all we did was smile! We rubbed her ears, her neck, her tummy, and her feet. The trainer held her up by the armpits, which is her favorite position because that is the way mother tigers hold their babies (only they hold them by the scruff of the neck). When held like this, their entire bodies relax and they look like ragdolls. We each stood beside the trainer and wrapped our arms around Bindi so it looked like we were holding her. Noi kissed her on the cheek and I kissed her little nose. Finally our session was over, and she was taken back to the house for a well-deserved nap.

Next, our tour guide took us to the restroom where we changed into our swim attire. We were then led over to the swimming pool area. Next to the area where there are bleachers for school kids was a cage that housed Remington, the white tiger who was the swimming baby from last year. He is nearly full grown, but still a baby inside. We played with him thru his cage. He practiced stalking us from behind a tree (he didn't think we could see him!) and then jumped at us from the cage. We were told that when Luna got big enough, she would be introduced to Remmy as her future mate. I guess we played games with Remmy for about 10 minutes before yet another trainer brought 5-month-old Luna out to play with us on the grass where a bunch of toys were piled up. Luna was a delight. She is a white tiger and full of energy. Her trainer told us Luna was about the size and temperament of a German Shepherd puppy. How true! She played just like a puppy and she didn't stay still for 5 seconds. She had pull toys and hard rubber toys; her favorite toy was a pink, half-chewed-up swim noodle. Like a house cat, she would lie on her back and kick her toys with her back feet. She was a lot of fun and loved belly rubs just like the tiny tiger. Her back legs were very strong (you could only guess at her future potential!). She also was given a bottle, which took her about 3 seconds to drink. She weighed 35 pounds, and by early November (according to FWC law) she would not be able to interact with the public because the law states interaction is allowed for no more than 40 lbs.

After about 15 minutes or so, her trainer said it was time to go in the swimming pool. It was a regular-size in-ground pool, like you'd see in someone's backyard. The deepest end was 5 feet and the water was warm. There was a small pan of water that we were asked to step in first to get anything dirty off our feet. Noi and I got in the pool, and the trainer got in. She had Luna on a leash, and it didn't take much coaxing for Luna to jump in and join us. Luna clearly loved being

in the water and just wanted to swim. But first, the trainer held her until she was floating and then called Noi and me over, one by one, and the photographer took pictures of us each holding Luna as she floated. Soon Luna had enough of the floating, so it was time to do some actual swimming. The trainer and Luna went up to the deep end and again called us over one at a time. We'd get in position, she'd call "one-two-three" and then we'd swim across the pool with Luna. Luna always won. I do not understand the animal activists who said they observed Luna being forced to swim in the pool. If they could only look past their "activism," they would see what is actually happening and enjoy it! DCWT interacts as much as possible with their animals so it would be easier to do medical care (such as taking blood samples from their tails and checking out their teeth). Luna happily swam around the pool and sometimes would splash us with her paws or by shaking her head in our direction.

After about 15 or 20 minutes, the trainer said Luna was getting tired, so it was time to get out. Being so young, Luna had a short attention span and she wanted to get on to some other activity. As soon as Luna got out of the pool, she made a beeline for the foot-cleaning-pan and put all four paws in it (like any other cat, "If I fit, I sit" is very true!). We bid farewell to Luna with a pat on the head, and she and her trainer went into her private play area. We went to the restroom and changed into dry clothing. Randy the Tiger Man picked us up in the zoo trolley and took us back to the gift shop/welcome building. We gathered up the things we'd purchased earlier, bought ice cream from the gift shop, and went to our rental car. They told us that sometime tonight we'd be receiving a link with all the pictures they took. (Our package today included all the pictures they took—more than 600) for no extra charge.

We drove an hour and twenty minutes to our hotel near the Orlando airport, and checked in. We headed over to International Drive for dinner and eventually decided to celebrate our day by getting lobster at the Boston Lobster Feast. What a feast it was! A huge seafood buffet for \$47 per person! Since this was a celebration, we went for it! Next morning we got up at 6:30 am and drove our rental car over to the airport. Our flight left at 8:30 am, and by 11:00 am we were back in Philly. A true 24-hour escape from reality!

One more thing checked off the bucket list!!



DISNEY'S HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS DEBUTS NEW STAR WARS EXPERIENCES

Very soon, guests visiting **Disney's Hollywood Studios**® will have the opportunity to experience *Star Wars* in the park in an all-new way—every day! New experiences will open soon bringing that galaxy far, far away, a little bit closer.

Star Wars Launch Bay will take guests into the *Star Wars* saga and the new film, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, with special exhibits and peeks behind-the-scenes, special merchandise, and opportunities to encounter Chewbacca and Darth Vader.

Star Tours—The Adventures Continue will be home to a brand new adventure inspired by the new Star Wars film. During the opening months, we'll make sure that everyone who rides Star Tours will experience the new adventure. After that, it will be up to the will of the Force.

We also have new information about *Star Wars: Path of the Jedi*. It will feature scenes from the complete *Star Wars* saga, also giving anyone new to the *Star Wars* galaxy an opportunity to get acquainted with the films.

Last, but certainly not least, is Jedi Training: Trials of the Temple, which opened in early December. This reimagined Jedi Training experience takes younglings to the secret site of an ancient Jedi temple where they will face Darth Vader along with the Seventh Sister—a new villain from the Disney XD series *Star Wars Rebels*.

And work begins this year on the 14-acre *Star Wars*-themed land at **Disney's Hollywood Studios**. With construction underway, unfortunately, Disney World won't be able to offer *Star Wars* Weekends. While *Star Wars* Weekends have been a great way to enjoy the saga for a few days every year, now the Force will be with **Disney's Hollywood Studios** every day.

With *Star Wars* Launch Bay, the new Jedi Training experience, *Star Wars: Path of the Jedi*, and a new destination in the Star Tours attraction opening soon, you'll be able to step into the *Star Wars* saga every time you visit **Disney's Hollywood Studios**.

CURRENT DISNEY DEALS

Save Up to 25% on Rooms at Select Walt Disney World Resort Hotels This Spring!



You can save up to 25%* on rooms at select Walt Disney World® Resort hotels for stays most nights April 14 to June 11, 2016, when you book by March 31, 2016. Ask about other great rates for stays most nights Feb. 22 to April 13, 2016. Plus, you can receive 1 more ticket day FREE when you upgrade to a room and ticket package with a minimum 4-day Magic Your Way® Ticket.

Booking Window: Dec. 28, 2015 to Feb. 28, 2016

Travel Window: Feb. 22 to June 11, 2016

KID-SIZE WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT GATEWAY

You can take their little ones on a perfect-size Walt Disney World® Resort family getaway.

Watch little one's eyes light up with wonder as they meet their favorite Disney characters and delight in attractions at all four parks. Plus, they can visit Disney's Hollywood Studios® to discover new *Star Wars* experiences.

Experience a 3-night, 2-day stay in a standard room at Disney's All-Star Music Resort with theme park tickets for a family of 3 for just \$908. Offer is valid for stays most nights Sunday through Thursday from Apr. 14 through May 26, 2016. Book by Feb. 28, 2016.

Other great rates are also available for alternate lengths of stay and party sizes for stays most nights Feb. 22 through June 11, 2016.

TEN NEW TOP REASONS TO USE A TRAVEL AGENT

By Ruthanne Terrero, January 3, 2016 – from *Travel Agent Magazine*

1. You snagged some really cheap rooms in the tropics during high season. It was almost too good to be true--in fact, you could barely breathe as you clicked the "purchase" button on the booking website. Too bad you didn't check first on how much it costs to fly last minute to the **Caribbean** during festive season; it was \$2,500 apiece for a middle seat in coach and there were only four of you going. Such a bargain! So what if your first born has to wait another year to start college.
2. Speaking of barely breathing, you didn't realize that ecolodge in **South America** didn't have air conditioning, and you sure wish you had known that the wildlife in the area would have full access to the open-air living room in your "luxury" suite. Your kids loved running around with the flying monkeys and exotic birds all night, and you really wouldn't have minded any of this at all if you'd brought enough Valium to last the week. But you didn't and your voice was hoarse from screaming at everyone by the time you got home.
3. You heard "all inclusive" and slapped down \$2,000 for a two-week resort vacation. But you didn't read the fine print so you didn't see that "all inclusive" didn't include taxes, tips, alcohol, bottled water, soda, or transfers to and from the airport. It's okay, though, because you didn't need that extra \$3,000 you ended up paying at checkout--what's a little more money to enjoy a really good time?
4. You and your wife were so happy to read that the resort you had selected for yourselves had a children's club, which meant you would finally be able to get some quality alone time together. The one thing you didn't catch was that your kids had to be at least four years old to spend time there, and your triplets are just three so they were with you the entire trip. Every minute of it. So you came home with great memories of trying to pry your three boys from the chandeliers of the resort's dining room every night and keeping them away from the adults-only pool as you desperately tried to enjoy some sunshine and get a decent buzz from the \$20 cocktails they were selling at the bar.
5. Springing for the pre-arranged \$50 transfers to the hotel from the airport, well, that just seemed dumb, so you took a cab instead, even though it didn't have a meter. Who knew that this part of the world is notorious for getting ripped off by illegitimate cabbies? So yeah, you did use that extra \$500 in cash that you'd brought along for shopping for the ransom instead, but eventually, you did get to your hotel. And you did meet some nice people through the experience; the policemen who took your complaint were especially endearing. Now that's authentic travel.
6. You wanted to live like a local on this last trip you took, so you found a guide online who promised to take you to all the "insider" clubs in **New York City**. You didn't realize this meant hanging out with him and his five unemployed friends for three days and that the clubs they liked to frequent played hip-hop music and served only Jell-O shots (not that there's anything wrong with that). Next time you'll book a group of pals that prefer chardonnay and classical music, or maybe you'll just stay home and drink wine in front of the TV.
7. Your friends have had only amazing experiences renting apartments all around the globe with nary a complaint. But you, you smart little devil, you found a website that advertised apartment rentals at an even cheaper rate than **Airbnb**. It's amazing how none of your friends are as intelligent as you are, but you like them anyway. And it was okay that there was no electricity or running water at the apartment you booked because you're not that fussy about where you stay, it's all about meeting the people who actually live in the destination. And you met plenty of them because the apartment you booked didn't have a lock on the front door.

8. You only had seven days exactly for your cruise vacation and no more, so you flew in the same day your ship was setting sail from **Barcelona**. You allowed three hours to get from the airport to the cruise terminal, but your cab driver got lost and you arrived at the dock only to watch the ocean liner disappear into the sunset. It wouldn't have been so bad but you could hear the music from the sail-away party, and you're pretty sure you heard some champagne bottles being uncorked, too. If only you'd known an expert, someone who could have advised you about international travel and transfers and how to book a cruise--now that would have been really helpful.

9. You were so excited about taking the city tours your cruise line offered in each port but you just couldn't figure out how so many of your fellow cruise passengers had private cars and drivers waiting for them in each destination. You were still thinking about it as you boarded the motor coach with 40 other people as you took off for that eight-hour excursion of highlights and you only got a little car sick about halfway through. You got even more nauseated at dinner that evening as everyone regaled the private lunches they'd had on their private tours and how they each bragged about the shopping they got to do in tiny towns no one had ever heard of. Where did they get this insider information, anyway?

10. Renting a villa has always been your dream. Visions of a fabulous pool with amazing sunsets, your family gathered all around as you all enjoy wonderful shared meals around a long dining room table--feasting off of local cuisine has long been on your list of things to do before you die. If only you'd gone to a travel professional to help you make the selection. You couldn't find the key when you arrived (wasn't it supposed to be hidden in the mailbox?) so you spent the night on the front porch of the "villa," which was really someone's rundown and nearly deserted house. The next day, when you finally got in touch with the owner, you and your family ended up fighting over which bedrooms you didn't want, because each one was smaller and dustier than the other. And it would have been a true luxury if the "villa" owner had provided fresh sheets for the beds. Just saying.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOUR FLIGHT IS DIVERTED

January 5, 2016 - Feature, [ON THE GO MAGAZINE](#)

By Susie Reese

You picked your seat perfectly—by the window, just after the extra legroom seats for savings and easy exit—for a five-hour flight from Las Vegas to Newark. Sure, the 6 a.m. departure was a little rough after a late-night dinner on the Strip, but you'll get home with plenty of time for a good night's rest before work the next day. But then someone has a medical emergency during takeoff. The pilot and flight attendants assess the situation and announce the plane will land in Denver before continuing on its original flight plan. Unfortunately, it's not that simple with air travel. My sister—Marie Reese, Flight Centre procurement leader—found this out on her last trip to Las Vegas, and what was to be a 5-hour flight became a 13-hour ordeal of delays, cancellations, and bathroom breaks.

Get to know your fly rights

The moment the wheels hit pavement, Marie texted me, "Hey! Someone on board is having a medical emergency. We landed in Denver." (My mom is an eighth grade English teacher, so our texts are in full and complete sentences.) I immediately jumped onto my computer to check Marie's flight, finding the new landing time while the medical staff rushed onto the aircraft as soon as it reached the gate. "The person was off the plane within a minute, possibly even less," recounts Marie. "The staff was ready." Then the waiting game started. When would the plane continue on its original course? At these times, it's good to know your rights, as declared by the Department of Transportation (DOT). Better known as the "Airline Passenger Bill of Rights," fly rights or airline passenger protections help to limit lengthy tarmac delays, disclose hidden fees, and make sure passengers are treated "fairly." During a diverted flight, airline passengers have the certain rights to ensure a safe and healthy experience, and Marie found many of these rights to be necessities.

Passenger Right: Airlines must “promptly notify consumers of delays of over 30 minutes, as well as cancellations and diversions. This notification must take place in the boarding gate area, on a carrier’s telephone reservation system and on its website.” — DOT, [“U.S. Department of Transportation Expands Airline Passenger Protections”](#)

The first of many conversations with the pilot began almost immediately after the person in question was taken off the plane. The aircraft needed to wait for its medical supplies to be restocked and paperwork to be filled out, and the pilot informed the passengers of the issue and asked them not to disembark if possible. Passengers then were allowed to get up and move about the cabin, but this proved difficult for Marie, who chose a window seat. She waited and performed the exercises provided in the pouch safety card, and around the first-hour mark, the flight attendants came through with water, as per another passenger right.

Passenger Right: “On both domestic and international flights, U.S. airlines must provide passengers with food and water no later than two hours after the tarmac delay begins.” — DOT, [“Fly Rights: A Consumer Guide to Air Travel”](#)

Eventually, the pilot came back onto the intercom and asked all passengers to take their seats as the plane had been cleared to taxi. Marie texted me her love and turned off her cell phone for the flight.

Over the (three-hour) limit

A little less than an hour later, I decided to check on Marie’s flight status and went to the airline’s website. She had yet to take off, and her plane, which was scheduled to land at two, was now scheduled to land after four. I sent her a quick text to ask if she had taken off, and less than 30 minutes later, I received a reply, “Making us get off.”

Passenger Right: “Some flights are delayed on the airport ‘tarmac’ before taking off or after landing. DOT rules prohibit most U.S. airlines from allowing a domestic flight to remain on the tarmac for more than three hours” there are safety and security concerns for deplaning passengers or air traffic control advises the action would significantly disrupt airport operations. — DOT, [“Fly Rights: A Consumer Guide to Air Travel](#)

Contrary to her text, Marie was—at first—not required to get off the plane, but passengers were allowed to deplane and walk around the gate, use the bathroom, or grab food at the terminal. Unfortunately, passengers did not return to the plane in a timely fashion, and due to a “technological glitch,” the pilot informed, the flight was cancelled. This allowed the second leg of the flight (from Newark to Denver, ironically) to take off from Newark with the correct flight number. Despite initial confusion about the cancellation, the airline was hard at work, creating a new flight number for Marie’s leg of the journey and issuing new tickets to the passengers.

Notes Marie, “The pilot announced that no, the flight crew were not overtime and would be allowed to fly us safely and within FAA regulations to Newark.” There were a few bumps and obstacles of course. “The airline staff broke us into two lines—those who were using Newark as a hub and those who were finishing their journey in Newark.” At times, it became quite confusing with some passengers getting on the wrong line and the flight attendants allowing passengers to board before all tickets were issued, “which caused some passengers to become hostile, fearing they would not be able to put their carry-ons in the overhead bins or get on the flight at all,” recounts Marie. Just after three p.m. EST—an hour after her original flight was to land and more than four hours after the plane landed in Denver—the flight once more took to the skies.

Is Passenger Bill of Rights a good thing?

After thousands of passengers were stranded on the tarmac for up to 10 hours at New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport in 2010, the 2009 Passenger Bill of Rights was amended to include the right to deplane after three hours on domestic flights and after four hours for international flights. If an airline does not comply, it can be fined heavily, but are the stiff fines worth it? (Southwest holds the record at \$1.6 million.)

A 2013 Dartmouth study “Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice” found that per minute saved in tarmac delays, three minutes of delays are created due to cancellations. Marie’s flight proves this point. Her flight was cancelled, the entire plane was forced to disembark before finally taking off hours later. If such a law didn’t exist, Marie would have been back in the air just over three hours after landing and landed in New Jersey just after four p.m., not seven p.m. So is this section of the Passenger Bill of Rights necessary?

“Absolutely,” Marie says without hesitation. “The problem wasn’t with the three-hour time limit. The pilot told us we had to wait for medical supplies, then gas, then paperwork, and then even more paperwork. They just could not get us in the air fast enough. Airlines need to work on their efficiency in these situations.” In October 2015 alone, more than 800 flights were diverted in the U.S., according to the [DOT’s Air Travel Consumer Report](#).

Wonders Marie, “If this is normal occurrence, why don’t airlines have a better procedure for this type of situation?”

HOW TO HAVE THE PERFECT GIRLFRIENDS GETAWAY ON A DISNEY CRUISE

Posted on November 17th, 2015, by Natalie Bailey, Cruise Director, Disney Cruise Line

In need of an escape for you and your gal pals before the hustle and bustle of the holiday season sets in? Here’s a 10-step guide to ensure the perfect girlfriends getaway on a Disney cruise ...

Step 1: Make yourself at home. Our family-size staterooms are ideal for a group of friends. Connecting doors adjoin some staterooms, and the partition between the verandahs can be opened to create a larger shared balcony. Plus, getting ready for a night out is made easy with our signature bath-and-a-half design. Conveniently, one bathroom includes a vanity, sink and full tub or shower, while the “half” bath has a vanity, sink and commode.

Step 2: Sit back and relax. Once you’ve settled in, it’s time to unwind. At the adults-only Quiet Cove Pool, you and the girls can soak up the sun, cool off in the refreshing pool, and enjoy a beverage at the poolside bar. Or kick back behind a gently falling rain curtain at the adult-exclusive Satellite Falls on the Disney Fantasy and Disney Dream. For the ultimate relaxation, head over to our indulgent spa and the Rainforest room where you can unwind with tropical aromatherapy and melt your stress away on heated chaise lounges.

Step 3: Sleep in and sip up. When the morning sun peeks in, roll over and smile ... you’re on vacation! You deserve some extra time spent wrapped in luxurious Egyptian cotton bed linens with your head on a plush queen-sized pillow. And when you’re ready to venture out, meet the girls at Cove Café, a peaceful adult-exclusive retreat where you can sip a gourmet coffee and chat about yesterday’s adventures.

Step 4: Pamper your senses. The spa is your go-to for a beautiful ocean-view environment where you can let your worries set sail. With a number of luxurious treatments and services such as massage, body wraps and facials, you and your girlfriends may just want to spend the entire day in this peaceful escape. On Castaway Cay, getting a therapeutic massage in a private, ocean-view cabana is a must-do.

Step 5: Sharpen your skills. What’s better girlfriend bonding than taking a skill-sharpening class together? During “Anyone Can Cook,” you can learn the secrets of great cooking and get tips for creating everything from dazzling desserts to delectable entrées. Or, for you wine connoisseurs, try the “From Stem to Stern” wine tasting, where you can learn to sip like a pro by meeting with a sommelier and sampling wines from around the world.

Step 6: Keep your fitness afloat. If you and the girls are in the habit of staying fit—even while on vacation—you can team-up to work out in the fitness center, take a jog on the track, or attend a group class like yoga or spinning. On land, a

morning 5K run around Castaway Cay is a great way to explore the island together while burning some calories! Later, fine-tune your vinyasa on the beach during a yoga class just steps away from the crystal clear water.

Step 7: Have fun in the sun. Get your adrenaline pumping with a giant twisting, turning water slide up on deck, or challenge one another to a game of miniature golf, foosball, or basketball. If your group is particularly adventurous, try parasailing, paddleboarding, kayaking, or sailing at Castaway Cay, and be sure to take the plunge down the island's Pelican Plunge water slide.

Step 8: Dine like a queen. Foodies, rejoice! Top-notch cuisine and treats are never far away on your Disney cruise. At Palo, one of our adult-exclusive restaurants, you and your girlfriends are invited for brunch or dinner to indulge in a menu of delectable Northern Italian cuisine, classic reserve wines and superior service. And be sure to try Palo's signature Chocolate Soufflé, served with decadent vanilla bean and chocolate sauces. Need I say more?

Step 9: Shop 'til you drop. For those ladies who love to shop, our onboard stores do not disappoint. Everyone in your group can pick up souvenirs, clothing, jewelry, perfume and other specialty items, including Dooney & Bourke's exclusive Disney collection. On Castaway Cay, you'll find exclusive beachwear, hats, pins and more at She Sells Sea Shells ... and Everything Else!

Step 10: Toast to a night to remember. After a full day at the spa or sunbathing on deck, gather the girls for a fun night out at the adult-exclusive lounges. Inspired by an elegant French boudoir, Ooh La La on the Disney Fantasy is the perfect venue for a glass of wine before a night of dancing. Or on the Disney Dream, try Pink, an elegant and upscale cocktail bar, serving top-shelf wines and liquor, as well as the bubbly beverage of choice ... champagne. Cheers to an amazing getaway, girls!

HAVE A FUN AND SAFE WINTER!