

Feb 28th was a historic day for the City of New York , it was the morning where Disney's newest flagship the Disney Fantasy was to make er maiden arrival to the United States , the event also marked the first time in history a Disney cruise line ship has ever sailed into New York City.

For Disney cruise line this marked the beginning of a new era , with the Christening of their new Flagship to take place on March 1st and the ship's maiden voyage to begin on the 31st from her home port of Port Canaveral , the Disney Fantasy like her sister the Disney Dream will be carrying on the new generation of cruise travelers.

I had woken up fist thing in the morning at the crack of dawn and with my camera fully loaded with a 16 gig card to capture is illustrious moment in history , I wasn't taking any chances of running out of film.

Like the many famous ocean liners from the golden era whom have made their maiden Transatlantic voyages to New York with grand celebrations welcoming them as they sailed into the harbor with flotillas and fire boat escorts , the Disney Fantasy's arrival to New York would be one to remember as she would be following a long tradition like many famous ships before her.

In order to get the on water shots of the Fantasy and to fully capture her maiden arrival and utilize the elements of the magnificent weather & the rising sun over the harbor , I used the Staten Island Ferry to accomplish this daunting task but even the ferry has its cons and pros.

The pros being its the only platform in New York city which allows you to get shots on the water of cruise liners arriving and departing New York which would be impossible on land and to capture the full beauty as the ship is either arriving or departing , lastly the cons being the timing has to be perfect as the ferry could be late departing and you could miss precious camera time and the million dollar views.

First Ferry Flyby:

I caught the 7:00 am ferry going out to Staten Island in order to catch the Fantasy as she was sailing under the Verrazano Bridge.

As the ferry closed into sight of the bridge I took out my camera zoomed in and there she was in the distance , her sleek and stylish streamlined profile graced on the water as she entered the Harbor as the beautiful morning sun rose.

Within 30 mins She had sailed past Staten Island , I quickly went on the return ferry 8:00am in pursuit of another pass of photo snapping and grabbing good shots from the side , I could not afford to loose the opportunity of a lifetime.

The ferry sailed in great range of the Fantasy , lucky for me I was on the front deck as we came in closer I snapped away as she was slowly sailing past the Statue of Liberty.

The Fantasy was only going 5 knots and was not in a hurry to dock in Manhattan for she was posing for the cameras and the helicopters covering her every move and giving those on board the ferry the photo op of a lifetime .

For most it was a surprise she was arriving except for the 2 police officers and ferry crew who knew her arrival.

As I was snapping away I looked at the Fantasy as the ships twin funnels and sleek liner profile blended in with the landscape of the New York City Skyline with the Empire State building in the distance and the new World Trade Center 1 rising over lower Manhattan .

With the glowing morning sun shining on her hull with her graceful lines she looked absolutely beautiful , it as if the heavens were calling on the Fantasy and its passengers & crew , a sign of their safe passage across the Atlantic as well as symbolizing their new found achievement.

It was so reminiscent of the maiden arrivals of the SS France / SS Norway , SS United States , QE2 and the SS Nieuw Amsterdam when they made their maiden voyages to New York.

The sight was just breathtaking as the ferry was in cruising speed we sailed past the Fantasy with all the people waving to the crew and the ferry blowing its horn in salute.

3rd ferry flyby 8:40 am :

The 3rd ferry flyby from Manhattan was a close one indeed as The Fantasy was completing her sail by of the Statue of Liberty , I had not a minute to spare as I positioned on the front deck of the ferry and pointed my zoom lens in range to catch her as we passed her while she was in action going 10 knots , it was completed , the only photos I could get with my zoom lens after the 3rd pass was completed.

As we sailed farther from Manhattan as the Fantasy slowly sailed into New York making her way up the Hudson river , surprisingly there was no escorting flotilla of small ships other than a Circle line ship and a few other small vessels sailing with the Fantasy that morning.

4th ferry flyby 9:00 am EST:

It was a tricky one indeed from Staten Island , the ferry was sailing at maximum speed , luckily for me the Fantasy was still in range of my camera's powerful zoom lens we got in close enough for we to spot her as her fire boat escorts had begun their routine welcoming party , as I got off the ferry I raced to get my bicycle parked down the street and then proceeded to speeding up the west side highway bike path to catch the Fantasy sailing up the Hudson river , I managed to grab a few shots of her sailing up the Hudson with her tug escorts , finally she made it to the Manhattan Terminal Pier 88.

She docked at the Manhattan Piers at Approximately 10:21 EST blowing her famous whistle as a finale to an amazing maiden arrival , She would stay in New York for 3 days with her grand christening celebration being held on March 1st.

As day 2 of her stay in New York progressed and the day of her christening came , I was on the New Jersey side in Wehawken and Port imperial to snap some photos of her at the piers , we also had another maiden arrival in the harbor that day as Artania (Royal Princess , P&O Artemis) was docked at Pier 90 for a 3 night stay in New York as well , it was the first time she had docked in New York years since her conversion from P&O cruises Artemis.

It was a classic yet charming sight of old meets new as the Disney Fantasy dwarfed the Artania in size and length , as the night came search lights beamed on the sky from the decks of the Fantasy as her grand celebration was taking place on board.

The Fantasy Departed New York on March 2nd to her home port in Port Canaveral to to into operation and to begin her maiden season starting with her sold out maiden voyage on March 31st .

It was a breathtaking & magical experience indeed , the likes of which we will not see again for a good while.

The Disney Magic makes her maiden debut to the North America this Spring in May where she will be sailing out of New York on routine cruises to the Caribbean and then to New England & Canada this fall.