

I was fortunate to recently tour Royal Caribbean's newest cruise ship, Quantum of the Seas. She was docked in Bayonne, NJ getting ready to depart on another 7-night sailing. I first saw Quantum as we approached the pier and she was a magnificent sight! Even from the outside I knew there was something different and exciting about Quantum of the Seas.

The minute I walked onto the Quantum I fell in love! This ship offers an experience unlike any ship I've ever been on. And the layout of Quantum is significantly different from any other Royal Caribbean ship – but in a good way! The décor was calming, classy, and inviting. Walking around, it felt more like a modern hotel rather than a cruise ship.

This is the first “smart” ship offered by Royal Caribbean and has some nice tech features. The ship uses broadband connections that rival those on land – this allows for fast and easy connections within the ship and with the outside world. Royal Caribbean provides an app for your tablet or smart-phone which can be used to book shore excursions, make dinner reservations, spa appointments, etc. Or you can do the same using free-standing touch-screens located around the ship. Hate searching through the mass of professional pictures taken on the cruise, looking for yours? Now all the pictures are stored digitally and can be located and ordered from a touch-screen kiosk. Saves photo paper and saves you time!

Another nice tech feature comes with your SeaPass card. Along with your card you get a waterproof wrist band. The wrist band uses RFID technology to act as your SeaPass card. Need to get in your room, just wave your wrist in front of the door. Want to buy a drink or any other ship-board purchase, just wave your wrist. A very convenient feature!

We toured several categories of staterooms, including the owner's suite, a grand suite, and a junior suite. The cabins on the Quantum are larger than others with Royal Caribbean and there are also “modular” staterooms that allow easier inter-connections for families/groups. But I have to say the most brilliant idea was to outfit the inside cabins with “virtual balconies”. An 80” flat screen TV hangs on the wall where the “balcony” would be and displays a live video feed of whatever is outside the ship at that time. Now even if you don't have a window you can see what it's like outside!

For the Quantum class, Royal Caribbean has replaced the Main Dining Room with smaller, separate dining options. There are now four complimentary, stand-alone “restaurants” in one area of the ship for you to choose from. Each has a different theme/cuisine and you can dine in the same one each night or a different one each night. One of the restaurants is dedicated to formal attire, so if you love to get dressed up you will want to eat there. Although you don't need to make reservations it is highly recommended to avoid long waits. We were able to sample food items in each restaurant – they did not disappoint! Suite and Pinnacle guests also have another choice for complimentary dining and there are a number of specialty dining venues ranging from burgers to table-side service.

The Quantum also offers the DreamWorks experience: character-dining and meet & greets with favorites from Shrek, Madagascar, Kung Fu Panda and more. Like most Royal Caribbean ships there are age-specific activity areas and pools, a teen nightclub, and outdoor poolside movies. Quantum also boasts a 3D movie theater.

There are many new and exciting features on Quantum. There is the RipCord sky-diving simulator, which we did not try but looked like a lot of fun! There is also the North Star where up to 13 passengers ride in a glass capsule on the end of a crane arm up to 300 feet above sea level. A thrilling way to see the ship and its surroundings! In addition, Quantum has the FlowRider surfing simulator and a rock climbing wall.

One of my favorite areas was the SeaPlex – this is essentially an enclosed, two-level multi-purpose area that can be used for basketball, roller skating, dance parties, and even bumper cars! Plus alongside the court are foosball tables, air hockey and even an Xbox area. You can spend all day just in the SeaPlex!

Along with the usual array of bars on the Quantum there is also another technological marvel called the Bionic Bar. It's essentially a robotic bartender – at first I wasn't sure about this but it's actually quite cool! You place your order via the kiosk, picking a drink from the menu or making your own concoction. A glass display next to the bar shows your name and your order, and how long until you get your drink. Once your drink is ready the only way to remove it from the "bartender" is by swiping your SeaPass/wristband – this prevents anyone else from taking your drink.

Quantum has 4 pools, one of which is an indoor/outdoor pool. With the glass roof closed, guests can enjoy the pool area immediately, even while docked in the cold winter weather of NJ. Once the ship reaches warmer waters the glass roof is opened. One of my favorite areas of the ship was the Solarium – an indoor adults-only pool with cascading lagoons. The Solarium sits at the back of the ship and is a peaceful and relaxing oasis.

Like all Royal Caribbean ships there is a theater for live shows – currently Quantum is doing a Broadway-style production of "Mamma Mia!" There is also a separate two-level music hall which can be used as a performance stage, a disco, or for other entertainment.

Currently Quantum is departing out of Bayonne, NJ going to the Caribbean – depending on the dates for a 7, 8 or 12 night sailing. In May she will be repositioned to the Far East (China). In November 2015 her sister ship Anthem of the Seas will begin sailing out of Bayonne going to the Caribbean.

My final thought about Quantum of the Seas is that it's a beautiful and captivating ship. I've been on many different ships in my career and Quantum is in a class by itself. The "feel" of the ship, the décor, the layout, the features, the staterooms – all contribute to what should be a wondrous cruise experience for anyone! I'm ready to sail on Quantum – how about you?