

LIBERTY OF THE SEAS

A TRULY ACCESSIBLE SHIP

Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's Liberty of The Seas is part of the Freedom Class and is one of the largest cruise ships at sea. Only RCCL's Oasis and Allure can rival the Liberty in size and amenities. Easy Access Travel just returned from a glorious five nights onboard the Liberty and is happy to report that the ship provides outstanding access for persons with special needs of all types. Liberty of The Seas boasts 32 wheelchair accessible staterooms including inside, ocean view, promenade view, balcony and jr. suites. Accessible cabins have ample turn around space in rooms and bathrooms, roll-in shower with hand held shower head and attached shower seat. These seats are on the small side, so if you need something larger, please let us know in advance. Rooms can be configured with either two twin beds or one large queen. For better access when beds are in twin configuration, ask your room steward to put both nightstands in the middle. This will allow for more wheelchair space in which to transfer from. I enjoyed an inside promenade view accessible cabin which has a window with built-in window seat overlooking the Royal Promenade. The Royal Promenade is the "Main Street" of the ship, filled with cafes, bars, shops, sidewalk sales, etc. and also is the location for parades and dance parties including the Captain's Welcome Party on formal night. Noise was not an issue except for the first night when people seemed to be very excited about being onboard!



Figure 1 Promenade View Accessible Stateroom



Figure 2 Accessible Roll-In Shower

The ship boasts many accessible bathrooms in the public areas, a lift for one pool and one whirlpool (please ask for assistance) and all showrooms offer accessible seating areas as well as an infrared sound system with assistive devices. Signers can be provided with proper advance notice and large print and braille menus and daily newsletters are also available upon request. Anyone with mobility problems should consider renting a scooter for use onboard as well as in ports of call. Scooters and other mobility aids can be rented in advance of sailing through Special Needs at Sea, www.specialneedsgroup.com. They can also take care of any oxygen needs and a host of other special needs requests. Easy Access Travel is happy to assist you with this.

Food, Glorious Food! This seems to be the theme on most modern cruise ships and Liberty of The Seas does not disappoint! From the beautiful three story dining room to the Windjammer Buffet, you will be treated to culinary delights from all over the world. The Royal Promenade features a café serving mini sandwiches, desserts and specialty coffee drinks 24 hours a day. Across the way is Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream and an adorable Cupcake Bakery which also offers cupcake decorating classes. On the other end you will find Sorrento's where you can indulge in awesome pizza and yummy salads. All of these venues double as excellent people watching locations as you indulge in your treats! For a special romantic dinner, consider Chops Grille or Portofino's. You do pay an additional charge for these restaurants but the service and quality of food is well worth the nominal fee. Reservations are required. The most popular spot on the

ship is the frozen yogurt machine located on the main pool deck where you can serve yourself. Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry or Swirl; what's your favorite flavor?



Figure 3 Cafe Promenade

After all that food you probably want to know what activities are available to help you burn off some of those extra calories. Your choices are numerous from doing laps around the upper deck to doing laps in one of the many pools. In between you can try surfing on the “Flowrider Surf Simulator”, enjoy a round of miniature golf, shoot hoops on the basketball court, try rock climbing high above the ocean or take a spin around the ice rink to name a few! Activities are virtually endless but you can also enjoy some quietude whether it's on your own private balcony or in the adults only solarium where you can stretch out on a comfy lounge with a book in the shade or in the sun.



Figure 4 Rock Climbing



Figure 5 Flowrider

Children can enjoy their own private play areas based on age as well as the H2O Zone where they have a choice of water activities from a splash pool to a swim area for the older kids. All children wear a bracelet with their parent's name and cabin number on it. Parents are given pagers so they can be easily reached when their children want them.



Figure 6 H2O Zone for Kids

The entertainment onboard is spectacular! Our five night cruise included a major production show similar to Cirque de Soleil, an amazing ice show, a headliner performer and the Broadway production of Saturday Night Fever. There was also Karaoke and late night comedy as well as a piano player in the Schooner Bar (my personal favorite place), a great salsa band for Latin dancing and a two story disco. For more entertainment be sure to visit the casino where you might get lucky. I managed to turn \$20.00 into \$40!

Ports of call on this itinerary included Falmouth, Jamaica and Labadee off the coast of Haiti. Falmouth is a new port built by Royal Caribbean and is situated half way between Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. The immediate area where you disembark is totally accessible and easy to get around. All shops have level access and are big enough to look around in a wheelchair or scooter. The area has several accessible restrooms and companion bathrooms for people needing assistance. We found a private taxi company that had accessible vans with lifts and took a three hour tour of Montego Bay. The scenery was breathtaking and I'm happy to say that we traveled on a newly designed highway which was a big improvement over my previous trips to Jamaica. I spoke with the Shore Excursion Manager onboard the Liberty of The Seas and was told that more accessible excursions will be offered by the cruise line in the near future.



Figure 7 View From Rose Hall in Montego Bay



Figure 8 Falmouth

Labadee is always a favorite destination and provides a wonderful day where you can enjoy the pristine waters of the Caribbean. You can lounge on a mat in the tranquil bay, do a little kayaking, rent a jet ski, enjoy the water park or try zip lining over the ocean. Lunch is provided by the cruise line and includes hot dogs, hamburgers, jerk chicken and all the usual sides. Beach wheelchairs are provided free of charge as you disembark the ship and the beach monitors will take you wherever you want to be. My choice is always Nellie's Beach which tends to be a little less crowded and has easy access into the water. Labadee has undergone extensive updates in recent years which include a pier and paved access to most of the island. Labadee is a private island owned and operated by Royal Caribbean. There are several private cabanas available to rent for the day. These have proven so popular that they are busy building more, some of which will be wheelchair accessible.



Figure 9 Main Beach in Labadee

Easy Access Travel is currently taking reservations for the 2012 Amputee Coalition Cruise on the Liberty of The Seas, December 3 – 8, 2012, sponsored by the Amputee Coalition, www.amputee-coalition.org. Please call us at (800)920-8989 for more information or to book your cruise. Future group cruises for travelers with special needs are also being planned on other Freedom Class ships.

We look forward to helping you plan your next cruise!