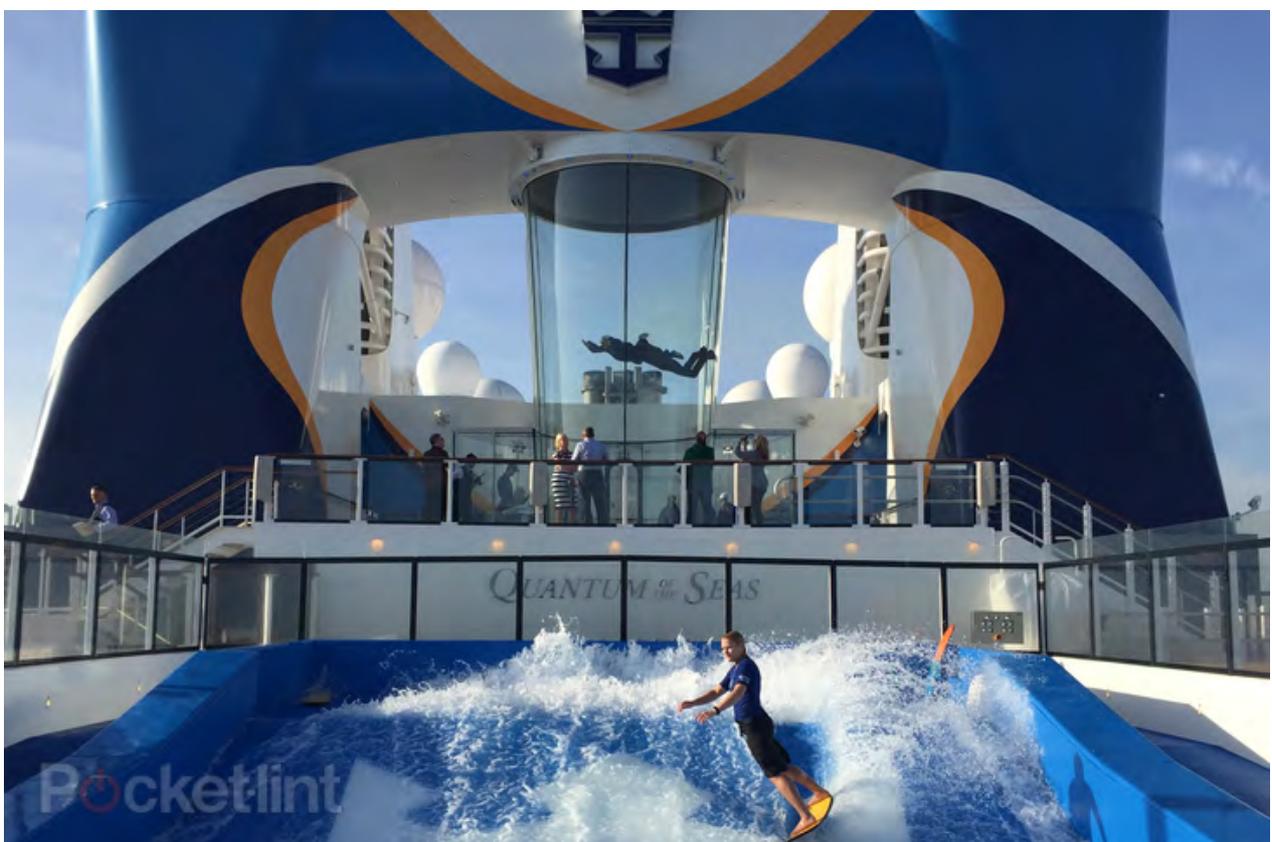


Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas: We step aboard the smartest ship afloat

By [Britta O'Boyle](#) | 18 hours ago

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Mirror, mirror on the wall, which ship is the smartest of them all? Quantum of the Seas is the answer the Royal Caribbean mirror would give, but we wanted to find out for ourselves what makes this new cruise ship the "world's first smartship".

From a skydiving simulator to robot bartenders with everything in between, we stepped aboard the Quantum of the Seas for a couple of days to check out its clever tech and see whether this could be the game-changing ship that will make cruises cool for everyone.

Bionic Bar

You might think you've met some great bartenders at some point in your life, but let us tell you, you've seen nothing until you meet Bionic Bar's aptly-named bartenders, B1-O and N1-C.



Powered by Makr Shakr, the two robots mixing up the cocktails make any cocktail you fancy from a choice of 30 spirits and 21 mixers including eight fizzy, six juices and three syrups. You order via an app but if you're stuck for ideas, you can see the most popular cocktail made that day on the screens either side of the bar, or the most popular by age group and the screens also tell you how long you'll have to wait, which was around four minutes during our experience.

The robots work independently so two cocktails can be made at any one time and they will do everything from putting your plastic cup in place, to pouring the finished cocktail into the glass and delivering it to you at the bar when you're ready.



In between, the robots collect each individual spirit from above them in their metal [mugs](#), add some ice, shake, swirl, strain or muddle everything together and once you have your cocktail, they will clean themselves up and start again. B1-O and N1-C can make two drinks per minute so it's not the fastest you'll ever have seen a drink made and you won't get any juggling with glasses and spirit bottles but it's impressive to watch and really damn cool.

RipCord by iFly

If you have ever considered doing a skydive but the thought of jumping out of a plane with just a parachute to break your fall stops you, then the RipCord by [iFly](#) could be the perfect activity to help you get your thrill without sitting on the edge of the hanger telling yourself to jump.



Royal Caribbean says the RipCord by iFly is the first sky diving experience at sea and although you don't jump out of a plane, you get to wear all the gear including a jumpsuit, helmet and eye goggles, plus you get the same flying feeling, without that the initial jump.

The key is to relax, which is easier said than done when you're in a giant plastic tube being blown around by some serious force, but once the instructor puts you in the correct banana-like position, another instructor will hold onto you and take you up into the tube to make you feel like you're flying.



Its positioning is pretty great on its own, sitting right at the back of the ship on a raised platform so you get a perfect view of the sea, if you dare look while you are 'flying' in the air, but the fact that you get the skydiving experience without that 10,000ft drop is awesome. The only bad thing about this experience is that the one minute allocated per person didn't last long enough.

North Star

North Star is one of the features of the ship Royal Caribbean's chairman and CEO Richard D. Fain was most excited about, describing it as "extraordinary", "a new icon" and a "much more interesting experience than I realised".



It's essentially a pod with glass walls, but sadly not a glass floor, and it sits on an giant arm on the top deck of the 348-metre long, 41-metre wide Quantum of the Seas, offering 360-degree breath-taking views of the ship itself and the surrounding sea.

You might think it sounds pretty standard, but it's like being on a mini version of the [London Eye](#), only you are surrounded by vast amounts of water rather than buildings. We experienced the North Star at night and although it comes out and away from the ship at a 90-degree angle when the weather is appropriate, we only saw this from the deck earlier in the day as it was too windy when we went up.



Each flight lasts around 15-minutes which we found was perfect, but if you are scared of heights, this one will certainly test your boundaries.

SeaPlex

SeaPlex is the claimed to be the largest indoor sports and entertainment complex at sea and although it allows for all sorts of activities on its huge shiny court including basketball, table tennis and roller skating, it was the bumper cars that got us excited.



The Royal Caribbean-badged bumper cars didn't spark at the top like those you might remember from the pop up carnivals but there were all the usual colours and lights on the front and back.

We have to admit from the spectator position at the outside of the court, they looked a little slow, but as soon as we got buckled up in one and put our foot down, we were surprised to discover they had a lot more oomph in them than we first thought.



We had a great time whizzing around the space and while there were only 12 other cars to bump into when we were testing them out, which wasn't quite as many as we would have liked, there were plenty more available off the court so we suspect the bumper cars will be a great activity when the ship is at full capacity and all the cars are on the court and in use.

Starwater at Two70

The activities on board the Quantum of the Seas were smart enough, but the entertainment took smart to a whole new level. The Two70 bar was your average bar during the day, sitting at the rear of the ship with 270-degree panoramic views of the sea behind through its huge windows.



At night however, Two70 transforms into the stage for the Starwater show, which not only featured dancers coming in and leaving from either the four vertical ceiling lifts, three actor lifts or two other lifts on the side of the main area, but six robotic screens also made up part of the show, as well as a 12K screen that replaced the windows with projector screens.

The screen is breathtakingly spectacular and the robotic screens are brilliant. It's almost worth taking a cruise on this ship just to see them in all their glory. The screen itself is made up of 18 individual projectors and 110 animators are involved with creating the content for it as images have to be created in small sections to retain the resolution.



When it comes to the robot screens, their inventor Andy Flessis said they have been taught animation and rather than just going from A to B the fastest way possible, they understand the language of animation so they move fluidly and perform with the dancers in a way that you never imagined robots could move.

Virtual Balconies

When it comes to the staterooms themselves, you won't find much smarter than USB charging ports and plug sockets next to the bed in most of them. Perhaps surprisingly however, the 375 staterooms that don't have the luxury of a window or balcony, do have something a little smarter than the other rooms on the ship - Virtual Balconies.

The Virtual Balconies are created using an 80-inch TV, curtains either side to cover the TV frame and a bar across the centre to create the balcony effect. The TV displays a view from one of the cameras on the outside of the ship, which means you'll see what you would see if you were in one of the rooms with a real balcony or window but you won't be able to step outside for that sea breeze.



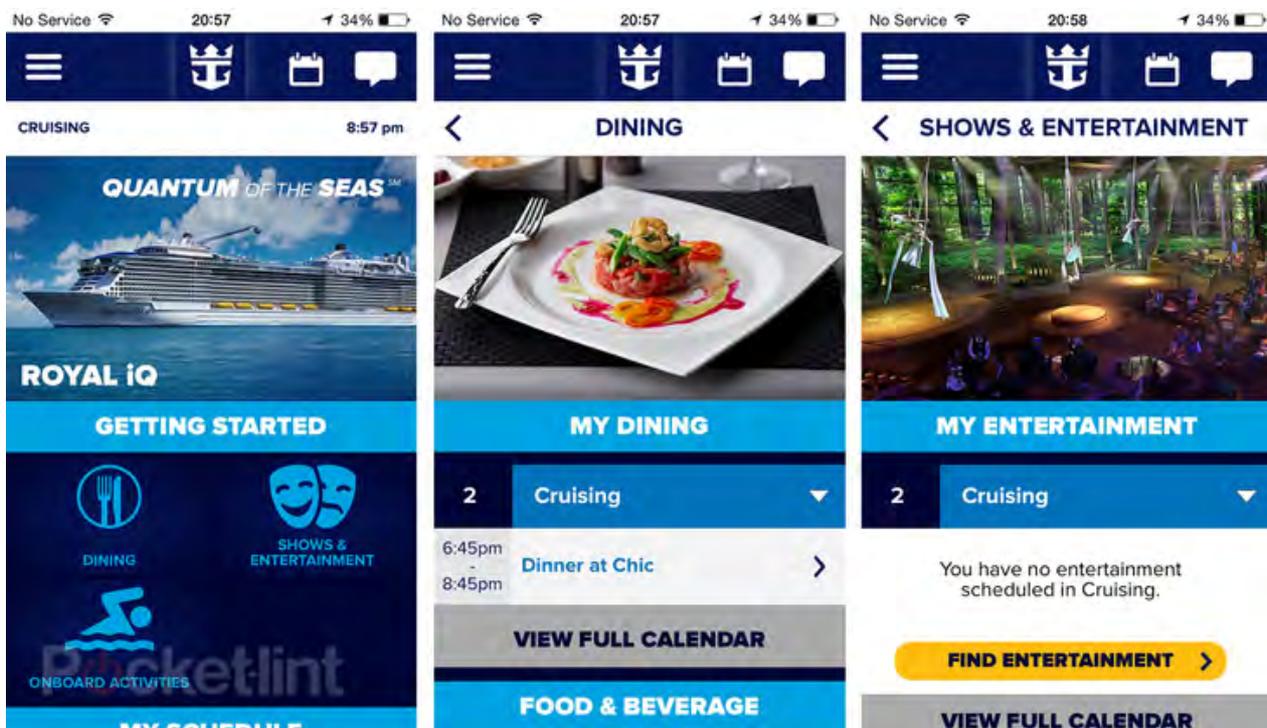
The Virtual Balconies are very clever and although the image they display isn't anywhere near as realistic as seeing it with your own eyes, it's a nice idea and one that is executed well.

A room without a balcony or window may be considered an inferior option on a cruise ship if you are a regular cruise goer, but if you at least have a Virtual Balcony to look at and see what you would have seen, you're bound to be happier than staring at a solid wall.

Dynamic Dining

Cruise ships stereotypically have one large dining room and while there are many different foods available to try, individual restaurants isn't something that you'll see on the majority.

The Quantum of the Seas has introduced the idea of dynamic dining though, with a range of restaurants for guests to choose from including Jamie's Italian, Johnny Rockets and a speciality restaurant called Wonderland. There is also the large dining room buffet restaurant too but there are no waiters with iPads in this one so it was nowhere near as fun.



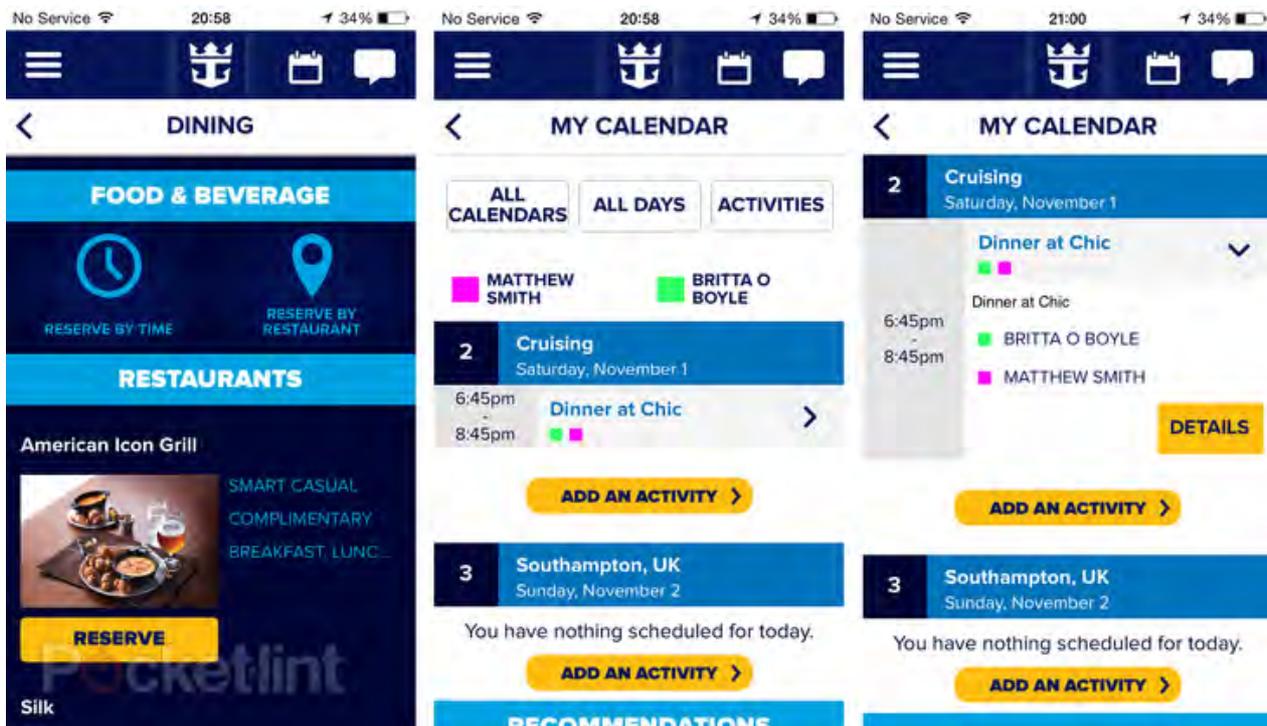
The other restaurants, which you can reserve through the Royal iQ app, have waiters and waitresses that take your order with iPads. You might think it sounds a little gimmicky but it's better than watching them try and remember your order and hope they don't forget you want rare, not well-done steak, between your table and the computer on the other side of the restaurant.

The ability to reserve your dining through the app is pretty clever too as it means you don't have to spend your time queuing at guest services and you can also book where you want to eat up to five days before you board the ship through the Pre-Cruise Planner, which is handy as you can get organised so you don't spend your first day making dinner reservations.

Royal iQ app

Dining isn't the only thing you can book through the Royal iQ app though. You can also keep an eye on your schedule and activities, such as when you will be flying with iFLY, or when you have decided to go 300ft above sea level on North Star.

The app allows you to book entertainment so you can put yourself down to see Starwater and its robotic screens in Two70 or you can opt for Mamma Mia but as the app lists what time things start and finish, it is easy to see what time you should then make your dinner reservations for.



When it comes to booking your dining, the Royal iQ app lets you see the menus of the restaurants through it and what times they have available, a little like Open Table does. It didn't work flawlessly when we tried it as each time we went into a menu and came out, we had to then start from the beginning and re-add our preferences, but when we eventually made our booking, we had no problems when we came to eat at the restaurant we had selected so they had obviously received our booking.

Additionally, the app allows you to track any [luggage](#) you checked in on the pier so you know when your evening outfit will be with you, but your device has to be connected to the on-board Royal Wi-Fi to work, which we found easy, but we aren't sure our cruise-loving nan would find it quite as simple.

Wow bands

The Quantum of the Seas ship has also introduced what it called Wow bands, which are essentially a means to pay with your wrist, just like you can on the [London Underground](#) if you have a B Pay wrist band for example.



The rubber watch-like bands are coded to your room, which is of course linked to your card and expense account, and you can pay for anything in the shops, bars and spa by tapping your wrist anywhere you find the Wow Band symbol.

They don't look the best when you have your posh clothes on, but they do mean that you don't have to bring your room card out and about with you if you don't want to as the Wow bands also unlock your room too.



Like the rest of the tech on this ship, the bands are handy. They offer something a little extra and they make everything a little easier but we suspect when the Quantum of the Seas sets sail properly, they might not be as widely adopted as some of the other tech, like the Pre-Cruise Planner for example.

Boatloads of bandwidth

It's all well and good having a super smart boat, but like many smart things, you need some sort of connectivity to make everything work and the Quantum of the Seas is no exception.

Royal Caribbean claims the Quantum-class ships, which will also include the Anthem of the Seas that is set to debut in April 2015, will offer "unprecedented connectivity - 500 times more than any other cruise ship".

A new satellite is set to launch which will help with this, however it hadn't when we were on our mini cruise so the Wi-Fi was a little temperamental. We stayed connected for the most part but we struggled to get online when we were in our stateroom and it would drop out every now and then when we were walking around.

ship however, so it can be forgiven for struggling a little and it will be interesting to see the difference the new satellite will make.

First impressions

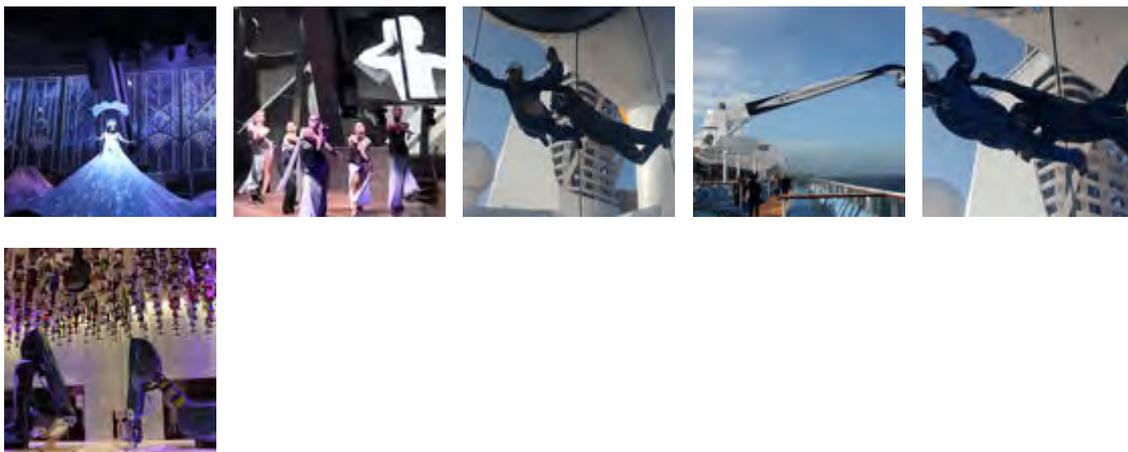
There is some fantastic tech on the Quantum of the Seas, from the little things like the Royal iQ app to help you book your entertainment and dining, as well as tracking your [luggage](#), to the fabulous 12K screen and six robotic screens within the Two70 bar.

The Bionic Bar was brilliant to watch and the sky diving experience made for a great way to spend an hour. We had a lot of fun on the ship and we were impressed by the little things like the crew using [iPads](#) to check us in and RFID technology to speed up the boarding process, just as much as the bigger things.

We can certainly see why the Royal Caribbean mirror would tell us the Quantum of the Seas is the smartest ship in the world and even though a cruise wouldn't have been our first holiday choice before we stepped foot on this ship, it has certainly made us see cruising in a different light - and a very cool light at that. Check out the gallery below for more pictures.

READ: [More pictures of the tech aboard Quantum of the Seas](#)

Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas: We step aboard the smartest ship afloat gallery



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