

INSIDE VIEW:

LEADING THE CELEBRITY LIFE

A Conversation with Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, Senior Vice President, Hotel Operations, of Celebrity Cruises

by

Richard H. Wagner

In July 2009, Celebrity Cruises launched a new onboard programming concept called "Celebrity Life". This concept is being rolled out throughout the Celebrity fleet and is expected to be in place by the end of November 2009. I spoke with Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, Senior Vice President of Hotel Operations for Celebrity to find out what this new program is all about.

In order to put Celebrity Life in perspective one has to take a step back and look at what Celebrity Cruises is like. This premium cruise line currently operates nine ships with three more ships to be added by 2012. The ships fall into three main classes that vary significantly in size and features. However, a unifying factor is the attention to detail in design. The interiors are contemporary and sophisticated with high quality art collections woven unobtrusively into the overall decor.

"These are beautiful ships but if I could sum up in one other word what Celebrity is, it is service. It is the people onboard that really make

Celebrity different - - the passion and energy they bring to taking care of our guests. They bring it in an authentic and very honest way, which our guests react very positively to. I think that manifests itself in what the experience is onboard whether you are on a Solstice class, Millennium class or a Century class ship. There are things that transcend all ships regardless of when they were built or how many venues or experiences that we are offering. So, it is a special brand that takes special care of people and offers them very special experiences. I think that sort of sums up who we are."

The line targets its marketing to baby boomers with incomes over \$75,000. These people tend to be experienced travelers with a leaning towards the sophisticated and intellectual side of life and the onboard experience is geared accordingly. "I think we say sophisticated but certainly not stuffy or arrogant. We try to be sophisticated in a really comfortable way - - for everybody but

we are more about things that probably have a deeper meaning for people than other brands which have either a fun or adventurous appeal to guests. We go more for the experienced traveler who is looking for slightly different experiences when they get on the ships."

At the same time, the onboard experience attracts an international clientele. "We have about 65 percent North American and 35 percent international and those are from all over the world. The majority of that 35 percent right now is probably the UK, followed closely by Germany and Mexico." Thus, the onboard lifestyle can be summed as relaxed sophistication with an international flavor.

"The onboard experience for Celebrity is the biggest reason why people chose it over other cruise lines." While Celebrity has received high marks for this in the past - - the line was recently voted "best mega-ship cruise line" by the readers of Conde Nast Traveler - - Celebrity decided to review its onboard programming in order to determine if the experience could be enhanced. This involved researching what past Celebrity passengers had indicated about the line's onboard programming as well as assessing what other cruise lines were doing. The result was Celebrity Life.

"The reason that Celebrity Life came to life was so that we would have a series of programming aboard our ships that was truly reflective of our brand and what our brand stands for. It is all around the pillars of Celebrity - - the things we have been known for since our brand started."

Celebrity Life takes the line's onboard activities and places them into three broad categories. Guests can pursue the track (or tracks) of activities that are most attuned to their personal interests and thereby have a cruise experience that will yield fruit to enhance their everyday lives. Thus, the onboard programming has unifying themes is not just an amalgamation of unrelated events. "Some [aspects of this program] other people might be doing, some Celebrity might be doing now but there is nobody doing it as comprehensively as Celebrity Life has been put together. It is a brand differentiator for Celebrity because it is significantly better and different than what other people are doing."

This is not a mere repackaging of Celebrity's existing onboard offering. "Some of the things are existing, some are new. This is the launch and we will continue to add amazing things even next year. There is a whole menu of things that are going to be added."



Lisa Lutoff-Perlo

The first broad category or "pillar" in Celebrity Life is called "Savor" and focuses on food and wine activities. "Celebrity is really all about savoring life and part of that is through wonderful food created by extremely passionate and talented people and the most extensive wine list in the industry to accompany that. We have almost 500 bottles of wine on our wine list. You would think that would be because our guests care about sampling wonderful bottles of wine while they are eating this delicious food"

The Savor series includes three tracks. "Celebrity Vineyards" was developed in partnership with the United States Sommelier Association and involves guests in a series of events designed to improve and expand their understanding of the world of wine.

"Signature Spirits" developed in cooperation with Bacardi focuses on spirits and mixology.

"Food as Art" includes cooking demonstrations led by Celebrity chefs as well as behind the scenes tours of the ships' galleys and guest participation in cooking competitions. In addition to



Celebrity's own chefs, visiting guest chefs will be featured on some voyages.

A second major strong point for Celebrity over the years has been its Aquaspa. Building on the fact that people often come to a Celebrity ship "to relax, feel better about themselves, feel better just in general," the second pillar of Celebrity Life is "Renew." Once again, this category is divided into three tracks, each with its own menu of treatments, seminars and workshops.

The "Ageless" series includes lectures on youth-enhancing lifestyle activities, skin care and anti-aging facials, and "medi-cosmetic" treatments such as Botox.

"Energy" includes nutritional information, wellness assessments, fitness and exercise classes as well as "life prescriptions" intended so that guests can incorporate these tips into their everyday lives.

"Longevity" includes seminars on stress management, lifestyle enhancements and alternative healing systems. Classes include yoga and tai-chi and guests can have a complimentary consultation with the onboard acupuncturist.

"The third pillar, 'Discovery,' is all about intellectual curiosity and enrichment. We have always been a brand that focuses on enriching our guests. We have had guest lecturers and lecture series for many years and now we have expanded that significantly and we have partnered with the Smithsonian Institution so that we bring it even

more credibility."

The Smithsonian lecturers will give in-depth talks on history, art and culture on selected sailings as part of the "Behind the Podium" track. Another track will feature computer and Ipod classes. In partnership with Stargeezers, Celebrity will present classes on astronomy and guests will be able to participate in on-deck evening star-gazing. Through a partnership with Rosetta Stone, guests can attend classes designed to pick-up a few fun phrases of a foreign language or participate in classes designed to give a more in-depth language learning experience.

On a more physical plane, guests will be able to participate in interactive dance performers along with the ships' production show casts. This track will also include dance classes and competitions.

Finally, in partnership with the Story Tellers Club, Celebrity will be offering classes on making scrapbooks.

To prevent all of this from becoming just another laundry list of activities, the line has appointed a "foodie" to lead the Savor program, a "Guru" to lead the Wellness program and a "Cosmopolitan" to lead the Discovery program on each ship. "We wanted one person onboard to own every pillar, every group of events. They are the hosts of the program. They bring the program alive both personally and for all the people they work with and for our guests every day."