

INSIDE INTERVIEW

TRUE TO WHO WE ARE

Celebrity Cruises Senior Vice President for Hotel Operations Lisa Lutoff-Perlo discusses the line's new ship Celebrity Silhouette and the refurbishment of Celebrity Infinity.

by

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Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, Celebrity Cruises' Senior Vice President of Hotel Operations, waited for the press in the Hideaway, a new venue on the line's latest ship Celebrity Silhouette. A relatively small space, it is open to the ship's multi-story atrium. As a result, gazing out from the Hideaway, you see the large living tree that is suspended high over the atrium floor. The space is decorated in muted tones and has an eclectic collection of furniture including a set of 1960s pod-like chairs that shelter the sitter from the rest of the world. This out-of-the-way space where guests can come to get away from it all nonetheless reflects the thought and attention to detail seen throughout the ship.

"We thought we should design it in a way that people could come, relax and enjoy the environment. So we threw the challenge out to the students that were working with us. We said: 'Okay, if we were designing a place called the Hideaway and you were taking your inspiration from the tree that is right outside, how would it look? They went to work and that is how we came up with the design for this space.'

Silhouette had just arrived in the United States

for the first time after spending her first season in Europe. This was Ms. Lutoff-Perlo's first opportunity to show the line's latest creation, the fourth ship in Celebrity's Solstice class, to the American press. A veteran of 27 years with the Royal Caribbean family of companies, Ms. Lutoff-Perlo has been with Celebrity Cruises since 2005. There have been many changes in the cruise industry over this time and she has been near the center of the action. But for her the highlight has been the introduction of the Solstice class. "That was for me and the brand a huge milestone and accomplishment. It is something we are very proud of. These have performed beyond our wildest expectations in terms of the guest react to them. They are larger ships for Celebrity but they still are very intimate and very welcoming."

The Solstice class ships are 122,000 gross tons and carry 2,886 passengers double occupancy. However, the reason that they have won numerous awards is not a story of numbers. It is not just that there are 12 dining venues but the quality of the dining choices. Nor is it the number of bars and entertainment ven-

ues but rather the variety and again the quality. It is the result of thought and attention to detail throughout. More than that, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts - - all of the ships' virtues build upon and interact with each other in a gestalt.

"It is always amazing to me, having been involved with ships for as long as I have, how the ships come to life and how the spaces are designed - - all the amazing minds and input that goes into the ships and what we create onboard for the guests. It is really quite a process. It is very methodical, it is very purposeful but it is also fun at the same time. We just have a great time designing these ships."

"We never design our ships for a specific market. We always design our ships for Celebrity. [You have to] make your own way without thinking about what [the competitors] are doing or trying to replicate it in any way. [Success comes from] figuring out what is right for your brand and for your customers. So that is how we come up with the restaurants that we come up with. That is how we come up with the design we come up with, our activities program and even our entertainment program. We try to figure out what is the right thing for Celebrity based on what our customers tell us they like or some of the things that they may tell us they are missing. That is how we come up with every single thing that we do. Just trying to keep it unique and keep it real for us. We look at our brand in a more holistic way and figure out how it all fits together as a well-integrated piece in the overall experience."

"The brand is modern luxury. We just stick true to our brand, true to who we are."

Focusing on Silhouette

Celebrity Silhouette was built in Germany and her official naming ceremony took place in Hamburg in July 2011. Following the ceremonies, the ship sailed to the Mediterranean where it did a season of cruises. "The thing that we have found that is so wonderful for our brand is how international our brand really is, how much our international guests love what we do. It is a terrific brand and product for the European market."

Still, Silhouette's arrival in the United States was cause for holding another round of celebrations. "The fact that we are able to show it off here in the States is terrific for us because the United States is still [the home of] the majority of our guests. About 65 percent come from the United States so we love to show off our ships here."

"The experience when you walk the ship is you feel that you are in a lovely fine European hotel. When



Lisa Lutoff-Perlo (photo courtesy of Celebrity Cruises)

you go through the ship you will see the beautiful design and the elegance of it. Also, it is very comforting, very welcoming. It is very inviting."

Silhouette is similar in design to her three sisters. However, each of the four ships is somewhat different in décor. Moreover, as it did with each of the three previous ships, Celebrity has introduced a number of changes with Silhouette.

An example is the Lawn Club area. Each Solstice class ship has a half acre area of real grass on its top deck. This area is used for games such as bocce and croquet and gives the ships a country club atmosphere. On the first three ships, the Lawn Club is an open expanse save for a small outdoor theater where glass blowing demonstrations are given. On Silhouette, the glass blowing is gone but new features have been added.

"We added the Alcoves, which are not on the other ships. Those are private spaces which you can rent for the day or the cruise. We added the hammocks and the [giant] Adirondack chairs. We added the Porch, which is a breakfast and lunch venue. We added

the Lawn Club Grill where you can grill your own steak, make your own flat breads for dinner. It is attractive. The chefs help you prepare your dinner."

Another change is the Michael's Club bar. A signature bar on Celebrity ships, Michael's Club has been an upscale piano bar with an elegant décor. While the décor remains much the same, the bar has been expanded and now specializes in premium varieties of beer.

The specialty dining area on Deck 5 contains the same line-up of alternative restaurants as on Celebrity Eclipse, Silhouette's immediate predecessor. "Murano is our signature restaurant on Celebrity - - contemporary French cuisine. The Tuscan Grill - - our Italian steak house, which has the most beautiful views that I have ever seen in a specialty restaurant. Then we have Qsine, which is the brain child of Jacques Van Staden, our Vice President of Culinary Operations. It is very whimsical in design. We were the first restaurant I believe, I know at sea, that had its full menu and wine list on an Ipad. We originally planned to put them on Ipods but the Ipad was coming out at just about the same time as the restaurant and so we got Ipads."

Also in this area is the Aqua class dining room, Blu. "Our guests always tell us that the best thing about the Aqua class staterooms is that they get to dine in Blu. That is their own private main dining room for the cruise. The service is amazing the food is even more

amazing."

"In some things you read, Blu is linked to the spa but when you go in it is really a first class restaurant. I'm going to tell you a personal story about a friend of mine. My husband and I have known him for well over 20 years. [He wanted to cruise] on Solstice to Europe and he said what should I book? I said Aqua class. He came back and he said that for four nights he wouldn't go to Blu because he did not want to eat 'that kind of food'. [Finally, after he tried Blu,] he says that he is not booking anything other than Aqua class again."

"That restaurant is amazing. You can be as decadent as you want in Blu, as healthy as you want in Blu. It is a fine, fine restaurant. We need to be careful how we message it so that people do not assume that because it is part of the Aqua class experience that it is [typical spa cuisine]. The food is amazing. It is as decadent as you want it to be."

The main dining room is the Grand Cuvee, which like the main dining rooms on Silhouette's sisters, features a spectacular two-deck-high wine tower. "We have the traditional two seatings but we also have Celebrity Select. Anybody who doesn't want to eat at 6:15 or 8:45 in the evening can sign up for Celebrity Select dining and can come at any time. Sometimes the time that you want you might have to alter by 15 minutes just to keep the guest flow going appropriately. We don't like our guests to wait. We want the experience to be wonderful."

For more informal dining, there is the Oceanview buffet restaurant, the Aquaspa Café (light healthy fare), the Porch (sandwiches and light fare), Café al Bachio (coffees and pastries); the Gelateria (ice cream), and the Bistro on Five (creperie) - - "our Chairman's favorite restaurant."

A cruise experience, of course, is not just about the various physical spaces on the ship but also about what happens in those spaces. Silhouette's theater is the largest entertainment venue on the ship and it is used for production shows and circus-style shows with aerialists and acrobats.

"Over the last six years, we have moved away from traditional production companies that had historically done our entertainment. We now work with a company out of the UK called Kudos. We also work with a company out of Fort Lauderdale called Poet. Poet does all of the shows for the Solstice class. So they'll do the circus show and the aerial shows and all the wonderful things that we have in those type of shows. We do our own version of Broadway, which isn't quite Broadway. We have charged it up quite a bit.



Celebrity Silhouette
(photo courtesy of Celebrity Cruises)

Then we do a very high energy show as well."

"As far as our other entertainment, it is very diverse. Each venue has its own style of entertainment. We move our entertainment around a lot. We do our own interactive theme shows."

"There are brands like NCL [Norwegian Cruise Line] with the Blue Man Group and all the different things that they are doing and our sister brand Royal Caribbean with the Broadway shows, we haven't gone that route. We really create our own type of entertainment."

Along the same lines, "we have chartered our own course in the way of activities and we haven't gone the way that our competitors do. Our activities program is Celebrity Life. We have really enhanced the things that we offer our guests."

To illustrate, "a lot of cruise lines have their internet cafes, we have iLab. We work with Apple. We have all of their products, we have training. Our guests can learn about making movies, photo books. That has been incredible for us."

"We have Oceans Ahead, where we teach our guests about how we re-cycle onboard, how we navigate through the oceans, how we re-create water. We also have a bridge simulation. I was talking to the captain today [and he said] he showed up to do the bridge simulation in the main theater and it was standing room only. That is 1,400 people so our guests love it."

"We also have an art class in which guests can make things on recycled material. So with soda cans, cereal boxes, beer cans, they create works of art."

"We have real comparative wine tastings. We have the Smithsonian bring in their lecturers."

Silhouette will spend the winter season cruising from Bayonne, New Jersey (metropolitan New York) to the Caribbean before returning to Europe in April.

Renewing Infinity

The arrival of Celebrity Silhouette in the United States was not the only milestone event in the Celebrity fleet in November 2011. Also on the docket - - a transformational refurbishment of Celebrity Infinity, a process which Celebrity refers to as "Solsticizing."

Infinity was the second of four 90,000 gross ton ships built in Celebrity's Millennium class of ships. Constructed in France by Chantiers de l'Atlantique, Infinity entered service in 2001. Like her sister ships, Celebrity Millennium, Celebrity Summit and Celebrity Constellation, Infinity is an elegant ship, popular in the

premium cruise market.

"The Millennium class was the basis by which we built the Solstice class. You will notice the Grand Foyer and the Grand Staircase and all the lovely design that we have [on the Solstice class ships] is very much inspired by the Millennium class."

Coming full circle, the Solstice class is inspiring the refurbishment of the Millennium class ships. "Now that we have launched the Solstice class and everybody loves it so much, we are bringing all of these great features and venues from the Solstice class and putting them on the Millennium class."

Constellation was Solsticized in 2010 and that work was warmly received by guests. Consequently, the plans for Infinity are even more ambitious. "Infinity is entering a three week drydock in Freeport in the Bahamas. 1,100 workers for three weeks. Top to bottom. We are really going wild. It is amazing what we are doing with that ship."

"On Infinity, 107 staterooms will become Aqua class staterooms. We are adding 37 and we are converting some of the Concierge class to Aqua class. And we are building a Blu restaurant. We are adding Bistro on Five, Cellar Masters, the Martini Bar, and Crush. We are going in and doing all the staterooms, the furnishings, the bathrooms. We are adding 60 staterooms. We are redoing the conference center."

One thing that will not change is the name of the ship's existing specialty restaurant. Each of the Millennium class ships has a specialty restaurant honoring the great ocean liners of the past and their décor includes important artifacts from those liners. On Infinity, this restaurant is called the United States Restaurant after the SS United States.

"Those original restaurants on the Millennium class and the Murano on the new ships are the same concept. We did discuss [changing] it so that all the names would be the same throughout the fleet. [But we decided not to] change the names on the Millennium class ships because there is a lot of history and emotional connection of our guests to those restaurants. The experience is the same."

After her re-fit, Infinity will be cruising South America followed by Alaska cruises in the summer.