

INSIDE VIEW:

PREPARING TO SOLSTICIZE THE SUMMIT

Celebrity Summit's Hotel Director Julian Brackenbury outlines the plans for enhancing this popular ship.

by

Richard H. Wagner

Passengers consistently give Celebrity Summit some of the highest marks received by any ship in the Celebrity Cruises' fleet. Nonetheless, in the Spring of 2010, Celebrity will invest some \$16 million to radically alter the Summit.

Completed in late 2001, Summit is about to enter her second decade of service. However, the reason for this investment is not the ship's age. Powered by gas turbines and utilizing an azipod propulsion system, this Millennium class ship utilizes cutting-edge marine technology. Similarly, with her extensive art collection and understated décor, Summit maintains a sophisticated atmosphere.

Rather, the objective is to take what is good and make it better. In 2008, Celebrity launched Celebrity

Solstice, which ushered in a new class of ship. The Solstice class ships have been praised by critics and passengers for the attention to detail in their design and their innovative features. "Basically, the company wants to take all of the popular aspects of the Solstice class and put them on this class. They do not want to take away the ambiance of the Millennium class but they want to add the more popular facilities of the Solstice class," explains Julian Brackenbury, Summit's Hotel Director.

Summit will be the second Millennium class ship to be "Solsticized." Celebrity Constellation went through this process in the Spring of 2010. "Constellation, you wouldn't recognize inside. You will still know your way around, that has not changed. But

décor-wise, cosmetics, it is very different. She is absolutely stunning."

The work to be done.

While Solsticization is a straightforward concept, taking features from one class of ship and injecting them into a different size ship with a different layout is a major undertaking. Amongst other things, adding new features will mean having to displace existing features. Accordingly, I asked Mr. Brackenbury to outline what Celebrity is planning to do.

Beginning at the top of the ship, Summit's Conservatory, which includes live trees and a florist shop, will be transformed into an Italian-influenced steakhouse, the Tuscan Grille. This specialty restaurant debuted on the Solstice and has been popular on both of the subsequent Solstice class ships, Celebrity Equinox and Celebrity Eclipse. But how can a restaurant fit into the available space?

"[This area] is not far off the size of Normandie [Summit's existing specialty restaurant]. The staircase that comes up the middle [of the Conservatory] will be gone. The florist will be gone. The galley will be where the table tennis room is and there will be a dumb-waiter down to a room we have below that will be the pot wash."

On Entertainment Deck (Deck 5), Summit now has a large area that is the Martini Bar on the starboard side and the Champagne Bar on the port side. In between the two is an open space - - often referred to as "the hole" - - that looks down onto the dance floor in the Rendezvous Lounge on Deck 4. "The Martini Bar will become Cellar Masters, which they have on the Solstice. It is a wine bar. There will still be a bar in there and there will still be a sommelier but in addition to that you can get your own. It will have machines that are a wine dispenser system. It is a way you can try a wide range of wines by the glass.. You can choose [from] three sizes of glass. The machines keep the wines at the right temperature. You just swipe your card and off you go."



Julian Brackenbury

"The other side, where the Champagne Bar is, is going to be Bistro on Five. It will be a little bistro restaurant there, the same menu as on the Solstice class." On the Solstice class ships, this venue features a variety of crepes and is a popular alternative for a late breakfast, lunch or dinner.

To have sufficient space and to ensure that the ambiance of the new venues is not disrupted, "the hole in the middle is going to be filled."

Martini drinkers need not be concerned that their favorite venue will disappear. "The Martini Bar that was is going to go down into the Internet Café on Deck 4." Currently, that area is separated from the ship's atrium by a glass wall. "It will all be opened up; all of the glass frontage will be taken out." This will make the

bar more like the popular Martini Bar on the Solstice class ships, which open out into those ships' atriums. In addition, the bar itself will be transformed from the rather nondescript bar it is today into an exciting bar as on Solstice. "It will be a martini bar with the frozen ice bar."

Another room on Summit that is separated from the main atrium by a glass wall is the Card Room. "The Card Room will be opened up; you will still have the facilities to play cards but it will not be a separate room. It will be all open."

Overlooking the atrium on Deck 5 is the Cova Café, which is part specialty coffee house, part wine bar and part dining venue with specialty sandwiches and desserts. "The Cova Café will be renamed Café al Bacio, the same as on the Solstice class." In addition, the venue will be upgraded to include a gelateria, serving Italian ice cream.

In addition to the changes to the public rooms, the staterooms will be Solicitized as well. "Every cabin will be gutted totally and totally redone with a much more Solstice-style appearance. The cabins still are very nice but the choice of fabric, the choice of carpet and curtains do not fit with current trends. So that will all be changed. The bathrooms will be changed, more updated. We will put in new carpet, new bedding, new fabric, new curtains."

Beyond injecting features from the Solstice class into the Summit, Celebrity will take this opportunity to spruce up the ship in general. "A lot of cosmetic work will be done everywhere. The entire ship will have new carpet. All the hot tubs and Jacuzzis are being replaced. The penthouses are having a lot of work done. They are lovely anyway but they are being vastly modernized, much more clean lines."

A signature feature of the Summit is the marble staircase leading from the Grand Foyer up to Deck Four. This is an impressive feature with multi-deck high pillars draped in silk. However, it is surprisingly dark for an area that has so much glass surrounding it. "They are going to make the whole place lighter. On the Constellation, all the silks have become white silks. There will also be a lot of changes with the lights. The structure, no, that will remain - - the staircase will



Celebrity Summit

remain, the tiling will remain. I think you will probably find that by the time we are finished, it is going to be brighter."

Maintenance work will also be done on the ship. For example, the hull "will be completely cleaned off,...scraped and it will be re-painted with silicone paint, which is more fuel efficient. A lot of our back-of-the-house systems are going to be upgraded; our databases, things which the guests do not see."

Preparing the ship.

The bulk of these changes will be made while the ship is in dry dock in the space of three weeks. However, the work has already begun.

In fact, one of the Solstice-class features has already been incorporated into Summit and is being used by guests. A new feature included on Celebrity Eclipse when she debuted in May 2010 was the iLounge, which features products made by Apple Computers. The iLounge offers internet access and has computer classes on Apple Computers. It also sells Apple products. Summit has already converted its computer classroom into an iLounge and its Internet Café now has Apple computers. (The Internet Café will be merged into the iLounge during the refit)..

"It is proving popular. It is all part of the modernization of the brand without losing what we are known for. As a line we are known for service and for food, and for a bit of tradition, which we like to keep. But we obviously need to move with the times at the

same time. That is the Solstice class; that is the investment in updating this class of ship as well."

A great deal of preparation is required in order to do all that is desired during the three weeks allotted for the dry docking. As the time for the dry docking approaches, "I will be working with the corporate office on a lot of check lists and double check lists to make sure that everything is covered. Does the yard really have items A through Z ready for when we arrive? Why doesn't it have it? When will it be there? Will it be there on time? Raising red flags - - my 1,000 new sofas are not in the yard, where are they?. A lot of preparation is needed to make sure that the people we need, the tools we need, and the materials we need are where they are supposed to be."

Once the dry docking becomes imminent, the preparation will move beyond planning. "Without impacting the guests' experience - - we will have guests onboard right up to before we go into the dry dock - - we will start to remove, mostly back-of-house, redundant equipment and redundant carpet. For example, carpets say in the crew areas. Materials that we do not need will be off-loaded. They will be landed ashore for either recycling, disposal or for use on another ship. We may, for example, have spare tables that we will not need anymore because all of [that type of table that are in use] are going to go [during the refit]. So we will off-load the spares because we are going to have a completely new range. Any surplus carpet we will off load to another ship, partly to create space for everything that will be coming on."

"On the last voyage, as the guests are leaving, we are going to be right behind them covering everything. Anything that is not being ripped out will be covered in plastic, covered in cardboard or taken down to protect it. Everything gets locked down - - all the bars are closed, the bottles get locked up, the glassware gets removed and stored. Whatever we can store in lockers and locked away in cabinets behind the counters is done. The shops will be emptied. Everything will be cleared, ready for the refit."

Who will do the work.

Once Summit enters the dry dock, "most of the work will be done by technicians who will come onboard in the dry dock. We will have about 500 technicians onboard, some of whom will stay onboard, some of whom will stay in hotels."

However, this does not mean that there will be no work for Summit's crew. "The majority of the crew will stay onboard and assist. A dry dock is a huge amount of work for the marine team - - engineers and

sailors - - because it is a lot of work on their ship."

But there also is a lot of work for the hotel staff. "At the start, the first few days, we will bring everything on, unpacking and off-loading garbage and bringing in equipment. Then there will be a lull"

"During the first two weeks, a lot of crew will be given the option to work in other areas. For example, bar staff, dining room staff or housekeeping staff may do work on a cleaning team or we may have special projects that they would work on as a separate task. The spa staff, casino staff, gift shop staff may take two of the three weeks off and either go home or go stay in a hotel and have a break or whatever they chose to do."

"Generally speaking, they will be on reduced hours until that last week, then it will be all hands on deck. Most of the crew's work will be done in the last week of the dry dock. Once the technicians are finished with the Tuscan Grille and the Martini Bar [etc.], we will then go and reset them, clean them up. As the cabins get done, the stateroom attendants will go back in their sections and clean them and make them ready. [The shop staff will] re-stock the shops. [The casino staff will] set the casino up. The bar staff will come back and re-set the bars. We will be receiving a lot of new furniture and the ship's crew will be bringing it on, unwrapping it, bringing off garbage - - all of that process will be done by the ship's crew. The last week is always a massive push to finish and get ready."

The Solsticization of the Summit is a massive project. Nonetheless, Brackenbury is confident that it will enhance rather than change the character of this popular ship. "Each ship has its own heartbeat. They develop their own pulse. And that applies across a class of ship - - the Millennium, the Constellation, the Summit, the Infinity, we all have our own pulse. You can move the ships around and they still have that pulse. Once it gets its pulse, it is hard to change its pulse. The Summit, fortunately, has always been one that has been a highly thought of ship and that is reflected by our guests ". Solsticization will enrich and enhance the passengers' experience on Summit. "If we can keep doing that, the ship will keep going into the next level."