



On the A-list

The *Celebrity Solstice*, the first of Celebrity Cruises' Solstice-class ships, took to the waves in November 2008. Jodie McLeod boards a liner offering a range of industry firsts.

Celebrity Cruises *Celebrity Solstice*, the first of five vessels in the cruise line's new Solstice-class, has wowed industry critics and passengers alike since its launch on 23 November 2008. Setting sail on a seven-night cruise through the Caribbean, three weeks earlier than originally

scheduled, the 122,000-ton, 2,850-passenger ship by German shipbuilders Meyer Werft dazzled guests with spacious cabins, innovative entertainment concepts and variety of dining options. *Solstice* is the first release from Celebrity Cruises since



2002, and will be followed by the *Celebrity Equinox* in summer 2009 and *Celebrity Eclipse* in summer 2010.

Industry firsts

The ship features a number of industry firsts, including a half-acre Lawn Club with real grass, and a Hot Glass Show glass-blowing demonstration, presented in alliance with the Corning Museum of Glass. The Lawn Club has proved a hit, enabling guests for the first time ever to wriggle their toes in lush lawn grass while at sea and play a game of bocce, croquet, or have a picnic. The popular glassblowing demonstration, situated in the Lawn Club area, regularly attracts a full complement of spectators, with the audience occasionally spilling over into the seating area, creating some turf attrition. This, in addition to poor weather, may require some parts to be temporarily sectioned off.



The ship offers glass blowing demonstration (left) and a half-acre Lawn Club (right).



The two-storey wine tower (left), swimming pool (top), and Sky Suite (above).

Accommodation

As the biggest ship in Celebrity's nine-strong fleet, *Celebrity Solstice* has 1,425 staterooms on board, 85% of which have balconies and 90% have ocean views.

The luxurious minutiae of the staterooms reflects the unique approach Celebrity took in designing rooms, which was guided by the opinions of a panel of female cruisers and cruise industry professionals.

New concepts include an AquaClass level of stateroom that gives guests privileged access to spa treatments and cuisine as well as the spatially innovative ability to link separate staterooms via adjoining doors, providing more space for families and groups.

The deluxe veranda rooms are 15% larger than on previous ships.

Wine and dine

The *Celebrity Solstice* has ten main dining areas, covering French to Asian cuisine in casual and formal settings.

The Oceanview Café and Grill on the lido deck gives the option of indoor and outdoor dining, and features buffet stations to reduce queues and enables made-to-order options.

The cruise line's Silk Harvest restaurant serves very fashionable pan-Asian cuisine in a share-friendly way, while the Tuscan Grille steakhouse caters for those guests

looking for elegant yet approachable food. It remains to be seen how the cluster of alternative dining options in the one area of the ship, which includes the two aforementioned outlets as well as Blu (a restaurant exclusive to AquaClass guests, serving 'clean cuisine') and Murano (a fine dining Celebrity mainstay) will accommodate maximum capacity traffic.

Another dining highlight is The Grand Epernay, designed by interior architect Adam Tihany of Tihany Design in New York, which gives a spectacular twist on the traditional main dining room with a two-storey glass wine tower centrepiece, from which waiters retrieve select vintages. Guests will not be short for a drink with 14 bars to choose from, with brand new cocktail bars Ensemble Lounge, Passport Bar and the Sky Observation Lounge, where guests can gaze through floor-to-ceiling windows while they boogie on the dance floor.

More youthful entertainment comes in the form of Celebrity's Youth Program, which organises activities (video games, crafts, sports) and meals for kids, mostly situated on deck 15.

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On the whole, *Celebrity Solstice* offers a taste of the sophisticated direction Celebrity is taking with their Solstice-class of ships; a direction that addresses the key needs – increased space, variety and choice – of 21st century cruise passengers. wc

Celebrity Solstice

Construction start: October 2006
 Project type: Luxury cruise vessel
 Estimated Investment: \$750 million
 Launch: 23 November, 2008
 Occupancy: 2,850
 Staterooms: 1,425
 Tonnage: 122,000
 Length: 1,033ft
 Width: 121ft
 Draught: 27ft
 Propulsion: 24kt
 Registry: The Bahamas
 Shipbuilder: Meyer Werft

