

Celebrity Flora

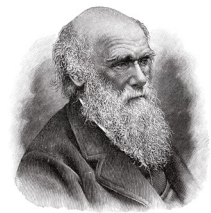
Rebecca Gibson explores how Celebrity Cruises has worked with partners to create a pioneering ship that will transform the Galapagos cruise experience

Rising from the Pacific Ocean around 1,000 kilometres off the coast of Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands is a volcanic archipelago that comprises 19 islands and multiple islets boasting some of the most diverse collections of plant and animal species in the world. So unusual is the life on these islands that it inspired English naturalist, geologist and biologist Charles Darwin to write his ground-breaking theory of evolution, outlined in *The Origin of Species*. From June 2019, Celebrity Cruises' guests will have a new and more intimate way to experience the archipelago that is now dubbed the 'living museum and showcase of evolution' for themselves – on the new 100-guest Celebrity Flora. The vessel is the first of her kind to be purpose-built for operating in the Galapagos.

"Celebrity Flora was specifically designed to bring our guests closer to the Galapagos Islands than ever before – from her outward-facing design that takes guests to the water's edge, to the enhanced custom designed Novurania yacht tenders," said Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, president and CEO of Celebrity Cruises, in a press release.

To turn its pioneering concept into reality, Celebrity enlisted the help of renowned New York-based hospitality design firm BG Studio International. The team designed all public spaces and accommodation areas, finding innovative ways to reflect the untouched environment and the abundance of plants and animals that call the Galapagos home.

"We visited the Galapagos Islands and looked at everything from the textures and silhouette of the animals, to the colours of the



CHARLES DARWIN

During a visit to the Galapagos, Darwin found plants, birds and reptiles that had developed in isolation from the mainland, but varied on neighbouring islands. This led to his theory that species gradually transformed through natural evolution.



Darwin's Cove will give guests their first taste of Celebrity Flora's nature-inspired interiors after they embark via the aft marina



The Discovery Lounge will host presentations and briefings from Celebrity Flora's team of expert naturalists

flowers and the marine life," explains Francesca Bucci, founder of BG Studio International. "We also explored the geology of the islands, which has been defined by the lava that flowed from the volcanos over the years."

The resultant ship reflects all these aspects of the Galapagos. "The spirit of the place (known as the *Genius loci*) was an overarching design philosophy and it inspired me to incorporate principals of nature: the intersection between water, sky, earth," says Peter Guelle, project architect at BG Studio International. "For example, the outdoor restaurant on the upper deck has an organic canopy that is shaped to look like water washing onto a beach. We've also used timeless natural materials, such as wood, plaster, metal, stone, glass and leather throughout the ship."

Architecturally speaking, every part of the ship offers a connection to the environment – from the Sunset Lounge, Seaside Restaurant, the outdoor Ocean Grill dining venue, to the glass-enclosed Observatory Lounge at the front of the ship, the central exploration hub named

Darwin's Cove, the education lab and the Stargazing Platform.

"All windows span from floor to ceiling, every bed faces the sea and all the furniture is designed and positioned to make you connect with the exterior," says Bucci.

Public spaces have also been designed to create a relaxed and intimate atmosphere. The Vista open-air hideaway on the top deck, for example, has comfortable cocoon-style loungers and private cabanas to enable guests to unwind in comfort.

"A visit in the Galapagos is a rigorous adventure, so [when guests] come back to the ship after a long day, they have a lot of rejuvenating venues," said Kelly Gonzalez, vice president of Newbuilding Architectural Design at Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd, in a Celebrity video highlighting the ship's new features. "The Vista is an open-deck environment with a hot tub, sun loungers and alcoves. The Discovery Lounge is like the ship's living room where everyone can congregate, take in the panoramic views around them, have a drink or even watch a movie."



Photo: 3deluxe

Combining expedition and luxury

3deluxe developed the exterior design of Celebrity Flora by combining the traditional façade of a cruise ship and yacht with the rugged appearance of a research vessel. To give guests a direct onboard link to nature, 3deluxe designed the ship to make the most of its surroundings, the Galapagos islands.

Celebrity Flora's uncovered aft and marina are the focal point of the exterior design, while the asymmetric overlapping terraces are another key architectural feature. From the private terraces with glass balustrades to suites with floor-to-ceiling windows, the ship's features enable passengers to easily observe nature in the epitome of comfort.

INTERIOR VIEW

Luxury abounds in the ship's accommodation areas too. Divided over two decks, all 50 suites have spacious bathrooms, outward-facing layouts and integrated balconies. Accommodation options include one Ultimate Sky Suite, two Royal Suites, seven Premium Sky Suites, sixteen Sky Suites or twenty-two Sky Suites with verandas.

"100% of the suites have floor-to-ceiling windows that bring daylight into the living room and bedroom areas, while 38 of the 50 suites have glass windows in the bathrooms, bringing the daylight further into the space," said Gonzalez.

The connection to the outdoors will be most evident in the two Penthouse Suites, which will offer separate indoor and outdoor living areas, a private wraparound terrace with a hot tub, and a telescope for wildlife spotting or stargazing. The Penthouse Suites, which are the largest in the Galapagos Islands, are a personal design favourite of Bucci.

"The Penthouse Suites exemplify pure modern luxury – they are fully enclosed by glass and are cantilevered one above the other in a 'yin and yang' fashion," offering a bespoke and spectacular experience," says Bucci. "The use of warm

top-deck 'glamping' site – a first for the Galapagos Islands. Up to four guests per night will be able to enjoy the Galapagos Glamping experience, dining and sleeping in private cabanas under the night sky. A naturalist will also be on hand to point

"Celebrity Flora is truly a luxury mega yacht with a life force worthy of an explorer"

Francesca Bucci

woods, stunning statuary marble and the picturesque views from the panoramic windows and terrace gives guests the sense of being totally immersed in nature while they relax in their beautiful and exclusive residence at sea."

Guests will also be able to book a one-night experience at the ship's dedicated

out the different star constellations in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres

"Our new Galapagos Glamping experience gives guests an incredible opportunity to experience the destination the ship was built for, on a whole new level, under the millions of stars above," said Lutoff-Perlo.

BG Studio



Top: Glamping cabanas on the top deck will enable guests to enjoy a night under the stars. Bottom: Spaces like the Seaside Restaurant and Sky Suites have floor-to-ceiling windows and natural materials to connect the guests with the Galapagos Islands

Sustainability is also at the heart of Celebrity Flora's design. The ship has anchorless dynamic positioning technology to maintain her position while protecting the sensitive ocean floor. Meanwhile, the vessel's uniquely configured hull, specially designed diesel engines and advanced propulsion system will all reduce fuel consumption by 15% and significantly lower emissions. Plastic use is also at a minimum – each suite has an in-room water filtration system that converts sea water and air conditioning condensation into pure,

fresh water that guests can drink from their complementary recyclable bottles

"We wanted to make sure that we made a statement with this ship," said Lutoff-Perlo in a Celebrity video showcasing the ship's features. "The Galapagos is a pristine, beautiful place in the world, and it is our desire and intention to preserve that."

Respecting and protecting the environment was at the forefront of every interior design decision BG Studio International made too, particularly when it came to elements like lighting.

"All interiors are illuminated by energy-saving LED lights," comments Bucci. "We've also intentionally configured the colouration and temperature of the exterior lights to ensure that they wouldn't attract indigenous insects to leave their natural habitat and follow the ship as she travels to other locations overnight."

Furniture was primarily sourced from local Ecuadorian manufacturers, often built with bamboo accents, upholstered with wool fibres and treated cotton fabrics to uphold the stringent International Maritime Organization

Shipyard de Hoop

3Deluxe

INTERIOR VIEW

regulations. Celebrity also partnered with Ecuadorian interior and furniture designer Adriana Hoyos, who drew inspiration from her heritage and the islands when crafting the bespoke, sustainable pieces for the ship's Discovery Lounge, Penthouse Suites and Marina.

"The Galapagos has always been a great inspiration for my work," said Hoyos in a press release. "Each island has different elements like the sand, the volcanic ashes, the leaves and all of those textures put together have a place in my furniture. That is why we chose selected pieces to complement the ship's design with local elements that will connect organically to the design of the cruise ship."

Hoyos is not the only one Celebrity has partnered with to make Celebrity Flora a sustainable success. The cruise line has built on its 20-year relationship with the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science to collect data about the unique ecology and the El Niño and La Niña ocean currents of the Galapagos Islands

via an Oceanscope. This data will be made accessible to researchers worldwide, so they can better protect and preserve the fragile Galapagos ecosystem.

"Each of these new partners is helping shape a better tomorrow for our planet in one way or another – whether it's through the research, sustainable material sourcing or conservation – and we couldn't be prouder to be a part of this sea change," said Lutloff-Perlo in a press release. "These new partnerships are accentuating the already incredible work we've done with our other partners, including the amazing Francesca Bucci of BG Studio International – who designed every aspect of this stunning new ship – and the world-renowned marine scientist and regional destination expert Ellen Prager who crafted new and exciting science- and discovery-based programming exclusive to Celebrity Flora."

Thanks to Celebrity's investment in creative designers, sustainability-focused suppliers and naturalists who can provide guests with insider access to

the Galapagos, it's clear that despite her diminutive size, Celebrity Flora certainly has the power to redefine the expedition travel experience.

"Celebrity Flora is truly a luxury mega yacht with a life force worthy of an explorer," remarks Bucci. "She has a dynamic, yet relaxed and friendly, personality – just like the Galapagos sea lions, which swim briskly underwater at times, but lay curious and contemplative on the sand at others. My incredible team of architects and designers worked on this ship for almost three years and we're all very proud to have contributed to creating such an innovative ship that seamlessly combines modern luxury with sustainability and design."

"We became very excited about this project because never before have we had a project with a design that would allow us to create a oneness with the environment in the way that Celebrity Flora has," said Gonzalez. "Celebrity Flora is a one-of-a-kind ship for a one-of-a-kind destination." **CFI**



Built by the best

Chosen by Celebrity Cruises for its extensive expertise and wide-ranging skills, Shipyard De Hoop built and outfitted Celebrity Flora in around 18 months at its yard in Lobith, Netherlands.

De Hoop paid particular attention to reducing onboard noise and vibrations by installing floating floors, flexibly mounted equipment, anti-vibration panels in walls and ceilings, and a stabiliser system. The yard also carried out wind tunnel tests on the ship's superstructure to ensure passengers would not be affected by exhaust gases on outside decks.

In addition, De Hoop collaborated with partners like Droste Elektro, Steerprop and Veth to ensure the HVAC, sewage, propulsion, engine and other operational systems are as environmentally friendly as possible. The uniquely shaped bow with a straight, wave-piercing stem and an integrated bulb also reduces resistance when the ship is sailing and saves energy when she is stationary.