



The new cruise ship Celebrity Apex makes its debut at Port Everglades on Tuesday. COURTESY

Celebrity Apex makes Florida debut

By Richard Tribou
Orlando Sentinel

Florida's winter sailing season floodgates have opened with the first of several new ships slated to debut arriving to Port Everglades.

Celebrity Apex, the sister ship to the groundbreaking Celebrity Edge, arrived to Fort Lauderdale on Tuesday for its christening.

"Celebrating Celebrity Apex is certainly long overdue and it's a day I have been waiting to celebrate for quite a long time - 581 days, to be exact," said Celebrity Cruises President and CEO Lisa Lutloff-Perlo.

The ship was originally set to debut in March 2020, but was one of several new vessels delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, the ship has already had sailings in the Mediterranean, but now begins alternating seven-night Eastern and Western Caribbean itineraries.

Sailing from Port Everglades' Terminal 25, which debuted its new look in 2018, Apex brings the design concepts that first came to Florida when Celebrity Edge arrived that year.

That includes the Magic Carpet, the exterior elevator platform that performs multiple roles, acting as an innovative way for passengers to disembark and reboard the ship when it tenders at ports of call, but also doubling as an entertainment and dining venue.

Also just like Edge, Apex includes the three-story

venue called Eden at the aft of the ship that acts as lounge and avant-garde aerialist performance stage. The ship also features the Infinite Verandah staterooms in which the balcony is part of the cabin.

Lutloff-Perlo was joined for the naming ceremony by the ship's Godmother, Reshma Saujani, the founder of nonprofit organization Girls Who Code and author of "Brave, Not Perfect."

"It's both thrilling and humbling to serve as the godmother of Celebrity Apex," said Saujani. "Similar to the mission of Girls Who Code, which is centered around closing the gender gap in tech, Celebrity is leading the way to create a more diverse future in the cruise industry."

Part of that includes the ship's plans for on-board STEM programming using interactive, fun coding activities from Saujani's group's curriculum within the ship's Camp at Sea program for children.

Lutloff-Perlo said the cruise line has grown its percentage of women who serve as bridge officers to 30%, citing the industry average at just 2%, and having Saujani follow on the heels of Celebrity Edge's godmother, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai, helps inspire the line's commitment to closing the gender gap at sea.

"Reshma is a visionary, leading the charge to challenge stereotypes and inspire a whole new generation of girls and women

to bravely pursue tech jobs," Lutloff-Perlo said. "It is Reshma's game-changing spirit that makes her the perfect godmother for a game-changing ship like Celebrity Apex."

Celebrity Apex is the first of three new vessels to call Port Everglades home in November. Also arriving are Princess Cruises' Enchanted Princess and Holland America's ms Rotterdam.

While both Princess and Holland America have yet to restart sailing from Florida, Celebrity was the first cruise line to do so in the U.S. after nearly a year and a half of pandemic shutdown when Edge departed Port Everglades on June 26.

The 2,918-passenger Apex now adds to Celebrity's restart expansion, and brings some unique options as well.

One new culinary offering from among 29 restaurant bars and lounges is the Craft Social Bar with more than 50 microbrews on board served by a beer sommelier alongside comfort food like mac and brie and Kobe beef sliders.

Le Grand Bistro features a new 3-D digital dining experience, in which animated projections that make each course come alive before you eat it. Called Le Petit Chef, it debuted on Celebrity Edge but will have a new story with new menu on board Apex. The updated menu will feature spring pea soup, king crab farfalle pasta and filet mignon with a story that see the little animated chef meet the girl of his dreams at age 12.

For the three-story Eden, the lower level dining will feature a la carte items from local farms and fisheries with menu items like roasted Spanish prawns with melted peppers, cured chorizo, slow-cooked shellfish broth and mashed potatoes cooked in duck fat. Apex will also have new menu items for venues Raw on 5, Magic Carpet, Fine Cut Steakhouse, Rooftop Garden Grill and the four main restaurants: Cosmopolitan, Cyprus, Normandie and Tuscan.

The Theatre main stage on Apex will have unique entertainment with three new stage shows while The Club will have a new cabaret show.

New productions include "Rockumentary," that pays homage to classic rock while letting cruisers vote for their favorite final; "Tree of Life," which will feature a 20-foot-tall prop with 3,000 LED leaves with pop rock music; and "Crystalize," that highlights dance and aerial acrobatics with a light and laser show with a featured violinist.

The retail options that feature high-end offerings such as Bvlgari and Cartier will be joined by the line's first-ever standalone boutique from Montblanc.

The exercise regimen will feature F45 classes for the first time at sea, and "Women in Wellness" programs.

"This stunning ship truly represents a new standard in new-luxury travel, and we can't wait for our guests to finally experience it for themselves," said Lutloff-Perlo.

Voters say 'yes' to early closing time for South Beach bars

Associated Press

MIAMI BEACH — Last call could come three hours earlier in Miami Beach, where a majority of voters fed up with nighttime violence chose "Yes" to rolling back the 5 a.m. closing time for alcohol sales.

The voter referendum was held Tuesday in response to increasingly raucous crowds and public drinking in the South Beach entertainment district, where tension has been bubbling for years as party crowds grew from a few weekends into a year-round presence. It worsened during the pandemic when city officials closed the main drag to vehicles and allowed restaurants to offer more outdoor seating along Ocean Drive.

The city imposed an 8 p.m. curfew during spring break, when more than 1,000 people were arrested. But it wasn't entirely clear how much support such measures had among citizens in a city that depends on tourism.

Mayor Dan Gelber, who pushed for a 2 a.m. closing time, also won reelection on Tuesday. He declared victory for both campaigns.

"This is what our residents want," Gelber said. He called the earlier limit to alcohol sales a first step toward repositioning South Beach's entertainment district as a "live, work,

play" area with new housing, offices and cultural spaces.

The city's commissioners had agreed to a temporary restriction of early-morning alcohol sales in South Beach last summer. Now city staff must develop legislation to codify the referendum. Gelber said he expects commissioners to support such measures now that voters have spoken.

In 2017, voters rejected a similar proposal for a 2 a.m. alcohol sales ban on South Beach's Ocean Drive, the Miami Herald reported.

Exemptions are possible — Gelber said he would be open to letting bigger hotels with security staffs continue serving alcohol until 5 a.m.

Critics said the earlier cutoff would cost the city millions without stopping crime. South Beach club owners poured \$675,000 into a failed campaign to kill the referendum, the newspaper reported.

"Today's non-binding straw poll was an attempt at misdirection by leaders who have failed to stem the growing problems of crime on Miami Beach," said a statement from Citizens for a Safe Miami Beach, which plans to "oppose solutions that do nothing to solve crime, but will cost 4,100 local workers their jobs, increase property taxes, and cut tens of millions of dollars from city revenues."



The Cleveland Hotel and Bar is shown at dusk along Ocean Drive, Sept. 24 in Miami Beach. Last call could come three hours earlier in Miami Beach, where voters fed up with nighttime violence chose yes to rolling back the 5 a.m. closing time for alcohol sales. LYNNE SLADKY/AP

UCF receives 'Seal of Excelencia' award for embracing Latino students

By Daniela Vivas
Labrador
El Sentinel

The University of Central Florida was recognized Friday as one of 10 schools across the country in 2021 with the "Seal of Excelencia," an award from a national organization that recognizes colleges and universities intentionally seeking Latino students' success.

Including previous years' recipients, UCF is now one of 24 institutions across the country with such designation from the Latina-founded nonprofit group Excelencia in Education.

University President Alexander Cartwright attended the ceremony in Washington, D.C., to receive the award, along with UCF's director of Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Culture and Partnerships Cyndia

Muñiz, who processed the university's application for the recognition.

"The idea is that with the seal you delineate the schools that are really excelling at being HSIs and the schools that are really pushing forward their Latino, Latinx and Hispanic populations," said Julian Duque, chair of Hispanic/Latinx Caucus for the student government.

UCF currently has a 27% of Latinos in their student body, which designated them as an HSI per the U.S. Department of Education back in 2019.

"When we received our Hispanic Serving Institution designation, which means we enrolled a certain percentage, we really started to try more intentional initiatives to make sure we are actually doing things to serve the Hispanic and Latino population and



University of Central Florida student government members celebrate the Seal of Excelencia recognition with the school's mascot. As of this year, only UCF, Miami Dade College and Florida International University have earned the seal in the state. DANIELA VIVAS LABRADOR/EL SENTINEL

not just enroll them," said Jennifer Sandoval, faculty board member in the Latino Faculty and Staff Association (LaFaSa).

The watch party the student government held in the UCF Student Union featured some of the efforts

that have helped the university get this seal, such as the peer mentoring program CREAR Futuros.

Other initiatives that have supported this community on campus have been the Latinx Leadership track within LEAD Schol-

ars and DirectConnect to UCF, which has caused an increase of 432% in the number of degrees earned by Latino students through the program.

"Our Hispanic student population is continuously growing, and it is growing at a really high pace," said Duque. "Being recognized at this moment is pivotal because we have the ability to change the lives of so many students."

Students like Daniella López feel proud by this accomplishment.

"There is so much research and work that is being put into the Hispanic community, and our HSI designation gives us the funds and the resources in order to provide that," said López who also serves as the student government chief of staff for the executive branch. "I really do think that is the reason why we are continuously improv-

ing and now we got the Seal of Excelencia."

With a Hispanic student retention rate of 92%, same as the overall retention rate of the UCF student body, López said they can truly feel they have a community on campus and an administration that cares for them.

"Orlando is huge. UCF is huge, but that piece of community is here," she said. "You will find it whether or not you want to find it, and even if you are not really looking for it there are events like these where you can't miss it. We are right in the middle of the Student Union ... At the end of the day estamos en familia [we are in family]."

Daniela Vivas Labrador is an intern for El Sentinel Orlando and covers the Hispanic and Latino community in Central Florida. She can be reached at dvasivas@orlandosentinel.com.

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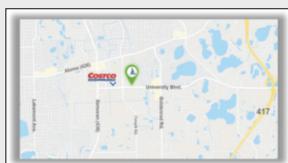
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