



Wizards of Décor for Cruise Ships Offer Advice for Home Decoration

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Expert interior designers encounter budgets, small and large spaces, and a moving ship - with thousands of guests a week to please. Here's a snapshot of how their creative ideas and tactics can work in your home.

MIAMI, Aug. 15, 2016 -- As you peruse the vast number of color choices in the paint store or try to decide whether the watercolor you are obsessed with at the local arts festival will work in your home, consider what the interior designers of cruise ships encounter.

These wizards of décor create spaces enjoyed by thousands of cruise vacationers on a weekly basis. When they choose colors it may be for 1,000 staterooms; when they buy artwork, it's to be seen by thousands of cruise passengers each week. And they do their designs on a moving ship.

Just like you, the designers of cruise ships work on a budget and within the confines of specific spaces.

Their inspiration comes from the sea and beyond.

When ultra-luxury cruise line Seabourn debuts its new 604-passenger Seabourn Encore in December, passengers onboard will be immersed in a "soft and curvaceous" nautical world of high-gloss wood and white, navy and burgundy tones created by noted hospitality designer Adam D. Tihany.

"The inspiration for Seabourn Encore comes back to the idea of a luxury private yacht," said Tihany. "Every detail of the design is crafted to embody the elegance of a yacht with the careful attention of a residential space."

A different vision inspired the design team, including Tihany, when it came to public spaces on Holland America Line's 2650-passenger Koningsdam, which makes its North American debut in November. Music was the muse for rooms such as the elegant Queen's Lounge, created to feel as if you are inside a violin looking out.

The colors for the Koningsdam's verandah cabins are the result of a visit to the port city of Venice by My Nguyen, Holland America Line's deputy director of interior design. There she spotted an old faded blue building.

"At the base of the building there was black algae that graduated to grey as it grew towards the top," said Nguyen. "In contrast, next to the building was a bright new terra cotta structure. This unusual color combination was an inspiration that became the color palette."

Cruise passengers can likewise draw inspiration from their travels.

When beginning a design project, it's a good idea to have a wealth of ideas on hand, said Lindsey McPhail, manager of interior design for Princess Cruises, and currently overseeing refurbishment projects for the Grand Princess, Royal Princess and Pacific Princess.

"I'm constantly putting images and concepts and references onto tools such as Pinterest, so when I'm ready to hit the ground running on the design development aspect of a project I have a collection of references to inspire me," McPhail said.

Lessons cruise passengers can draw from cruise ships include the effective use of space.

"We need to design with every precious square inch in a stateroom to make it functional, comfortable and feel luxurious," said Nguyen. "You can find clever storage ideas, and also get inspired by color combinations that make a small space feel larger."

It's important to start any new building or renovation project by imagining how a space will be used, said Alison Clixby, director of hotel design and projects for Carnival UK, which includes P&O Cruises UK and Cunard.

"It's all about what it is you are trying to feel when you're in that space," said Clixby. "That's how I think about the guests on our ships. How do I want them to go through the day? And it's the same when you do your own house. Her projects include the recent extensive "re-mastering" of Cunard's Queen Mary 2, the world's only transatlantic ocean liner.

Colors can help create and change mood, so don't be afraid to experiment, advised Petu Kummala, director of interior design and architecture for Carnival Cruise Line, who previously worked with legendary ship designer Joe Farcus (on ships for Carnival Cruise Line and Italian line Costa Cruises).

"If you want a wall pink, paint it pink. If you don't like it, repaint it the next day," said Kummala. "It's not expensive; you can always repaint. Be creative with color choices."

In designing cruise ships, he added, he doesn't always have that same luxury.

"We have to approach design from a point of view that it has to be pleasing to 2,000 people or more," said Kummala. "If you like white, you can do your bedroom in white and you love it, but if we do that, some guests would love it, some guests wouldn't."

Designing a ship has other challenges, which is why five to 10 design firms and dozens of designers are typically involved in the process.

Sections of the ship, including cabins and some public areas, are typically pre-fabricated, the blocks put together like Legos at the shipyard. Then

there is the issue of movement to contend with – designers can't add features such as swinging chandeliers, for instance.

But basic concepts can be replicated at home.

"We design with bold patterned carpets, furniture in rich colorful hues and elaborate architectural details in the walls and ceilings," said Holland America Line's Nguyen. "One way to achieve that classic elegance at home is by combining rich color tones in your furniture, gilded frames with mirrors or art such as a classic oil painting.

To go for a look such as on the recently redone Pacific Eden and Pacific Aria in Australia, collect design items from your travels, suggested Petra Ryberg, head of design for P&O Cruises Australia.

"Onboard the ships you will find fabrics from Italy, imported lamps and art deco-inspired light fittings," Ryberg said. "My philosophy is to love every single piece in your home or in a project, everything from the larger items such as art down to your daily water glasses."

Another take-away from ships for your own home is to think in terms of the "wow" factor.

On the Australia ships, small quirky details such as the duck-feet lamps in the Ocean Bar, blue velvet couches in the Blue Room and big bold graphics in several spaces have been popular with passengers.

"I like to surprise guests and hopefully give them a laugh as well," Ryberg said.

Carnival Cruise Line ships share the "wow" of soaring atriums. On the new, 3,954-passenger Carnival Vista, jaws drop in the atrium when guests encounter the Dreamscape, a huge, three-deck-high LED video art wall showcasing some 80 ever-changing abstract and seascape designs.

Even if your home is without a grand entrance, you can create a "wow" with little money and effort by using LED lights, said Carnival Cruise Line's Kummala.

Or go full tilt. Kummala said he recently designed a house in South Florida with a waterfall over the pool bar and another water feature when you enter the home.

"These are spectacular cruise ship-like things you can do in a private home," he said.

Tips from Cruise Ship Designers

1. Step back and really look at your space and do a deep think about how you want to move within that space.
2. Be creative with color choices (you can always change your mind and repaint).
3. Design for yourself. If you love the design, it is successful.
4. Use inexpensive LED lights to highlight art and create other "wow" effects.
5. Too much of a good thing is not a good thing. Always simplify, edit and then edit again.

SIDEBAR:

Take home your cruise bedroom

If you love the comfy bed on your cruise ship you may actually be able to order a duplicate at home. At www.shophollandamerica.com, for instance, you can purchase Holland America Line's signature bedding collection. You can order the Carnival Comfort Collection online as well (www.carnivalcomfortcollection.com). The new signature Princess Luxury Bed (www.princess.com/ships-and-experience/princess-luxury-bed/) created in collaboration with Dr. Michael Breus, "The Sleep Doctor," and highly acclaimed designer, Candice Olson, star of the hit HGTV shows "Candice Tells All" and "Divine Design," will soon be available online at retail prices.

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