



CLOCKWISE
FROM LEFT:
Rooftop Garden
Grill; *Celebrity
Ascent* at sea;
Journey to Eden
art installation. FAR
LEFT: *Le Voyage*
PICTURES: Michel Verdure



Celebrity Ascent
Celebrity Cruises

Tried & Tested

THE FACTS: With Greek brothers Dimitrios and Tasos Kafetzis appointed as co-captains of Celebrity Cruises' new *Celebrity Ascent*, it was only fitting that two sisters – Sandy Yawn (aka Captain Sandy from the TV series *Below Deck*) and Michelle Dunham – were selected as godmothers. They named the 3,260-passenger vessel in Fort Lauderdale during a gala ceremony by the main pool in December 2023.

BOOK IT: A seven-night Greece, Turkey and Italy cruise from Piraeus (Athens) to Civitavecchia (Rome), departing on July 20, starts at £1,182 per person, based on two sharing an Ocean View cabin. An upgrade to include drinks and Wi-Fi costs £39 per person per day.

CABINS: Clients looking to splash the cash on palatial suites or two-storey villas are rewarded with accommodation that comes with butlers and packages that include premium drinks and Wi-Fi. Even the more modest Infinite Balcony cabins are decked out in stylish greys and creams, and boast a fair-sized bathroom, sofa and plenty of storage – everything, in fact, except a traditional balcony. Instead, there is a wall of glass facing the ocean that opens from the top down allowing fresh air in and freeing up space in the cabin, compared with a door. There are 36 solo Infinite Balcony, 184 Ocean View and 138 Inside (no window) cabins.

FOOD AND DRINK: With four main restaurants, all-day buffet dining and various cafes, you can spend a week on *Ascent* and not pay extra for food. But you would be missing out big time. *Ascent's* speciality restaurants are not cheap – from \$45 to \$125 per person – but the food is far superior. Fine Cut and Raw on 5 are respectively for steak and fish lovers, while in Eden, chefs experiment with tastes and textures. The Rooftop Garden Grill is brilliant on a sunny evening, but topping them all is *Le Voyage*, which serves dishes created by Michelin-starred chef Daniel Boulud. There

are as many bars as places to eat. Choose the Sunset Bar at dusk, the Martini Bar for lively entertainment and Craft Social for beers.

FACILITIES: There are clubs for kids and teens, as well as an adult-only solarium and pool where grown-ups can relax in peace. The spa offers unusual-sounding massages and facials, and the theatre stages nightly shows notable as much for their technical prowess as the performances, while Eden and The Club entertain with singing and acrobatics (space is limited, so get in early). Suite passengers have all that plus access to The Retreat, a gated residence with a private lounge, a restaurant with Bould specials on the menu, sun deck and pool.

WOW FACTOR: See that orange gantry at the side of the ship? That's the Magic Carpet, a platform that 'flies' up and down the decks. It's a bar when adjacent to the pool deck and an alfresco extension to Raw on 5 as it slides down – but the magic bit happens at sea level, where it provides a stable platform from which to board tenders to go ashore in ports *Ascent* can't fit into. No more swaying gangplanks – magic indeed!
celebritycruises.co.uk **TW**

REVIEWED by Jane Archer

