

# Making the right choice

Choosing a product for a cruise ship interior involves more than just focusing on aesthetics. Designers must consider safety, durability, sustainability and practicality – while still delivering the ‘wow’ factor that passengers expect. Lindsay James asks leading designers and specifiers to share their selection criteria and explain the reasons behind their priorities



Choosing the right products for a cruise ship interior is far more than a matter of taste. Behind every choice is a complex set of considerations that often don't apply to land-based projects. What if a chandelier swings dangerously during motion? What if the fabric of a chair reacts to the salty sea air? What if replacement parts can't easily be stored or fitted?

“Cruise ships come with unique constraints but, as cruise specialists, we understand how to turn those limitations into opportunities,” says Ben Dowson, creative director at Conductr. “It's our job to design immersive spaces that work hard for every guest and every square metre.”

Some of the biggest constraints designers and specifiers face are regulation related. Consequently, the biggest non-negotiable when selecting products for a cruise ship interior is International Maritime Organization (IMO) certification, with every one of

the experts we spoke with agreeing that if a product doesn't meet these marine safety standards, it simply doesn't make it onboard.

“All materials and products must comply with IMO standards for fire safety and performance,” says Gonzalo Tudanca, principal at HBA Miami. “This is mandatory for any marine interior application. It's the first filter when selecting finishes or furnishings.”

Catherine Ondrizek, design manager at ICrave, a Journey Studio, is particularly appreciative of suppliers that make the IMO certification for their interiors products clear. “It's always a plus when products have their IMO ratings clearly marked and advertised,” she says. “If a company makes it hard to seek that information out, I will move on quickly.”

With repeated usage, salty air and constant vibration, products must also be built to last. “The marine environment is tough,” says Anne Mari Gullikstad, CEO

of YSA Design. “The air is very humid and salt particles on an outdoor deck can kill fibres. Colours easily bleach as well.”

Matteo Pace, senior associate at HBA London, adds: “Durability is essential. Materials need to hold up to constant use and movement – guests, crew, vibrations and shifting temperatures. Nothing ever stands still on a ship.”

For Petra Ryberg, owner and senior designer at Design Studio Berg, ensuring durability means choosing materials based on their functionality. “Design means nothing if it doesn't work,” she says. “I believe in using the right material in the right place. The goal is for a space to look as good after years of use as it did on day one. That's achievable with the correct material selection.”

Product maintenance is also a key consideration. “Can the product be easily cleaned?” questions Ondrizek. “Will it withstand scratches or bumps from service carts and guest luggage? Can it be easily replaced by a crew member?”



Design Studio Berg has customised vinyl leather stools made partly from recycled coffee beans

Depending on where a material is being used, those answers can range from a strong yes to a strong no.”

These are also key concerns for Pia Litokorpi, founder and creative director at Kudos Design. “We want the operational teams to recognise that we’ve kept them in mind when designing the spaces and selecting furniture and materials,” she says. “Our goal is to create inviting, timelessly beautiful interiors that are also functional and practical.”

Other practical considerations include modularity and weight. Given the operational realities of ships, space-saving and lightweight products are always going to be favoured. “Space is at a premium on ships, and every kilogram matters for fuel efficiency and stability,” says Gullikstad.

Daniela Herget, founder and principal consultant at Cruise Quality Consult, agrees. “My preference is for lightweight composites, aluminium honeycomb

panels, or thin but durable innovative materials,” she says. “Prefabricated or modular solutions save drydock time. Meanwhile, products that allow for easy access to hidden systems or are easily replaceable help minimise downtime.”

While safety and practicality are key, environmental responsibility is increasingly becoming a make-or-break criteria. “I actively seek out products with recycled or sustainable components, especially when I have control over material selection,” says Willie Traeger, a design manager at Holland America Line. “Prioritising the health of people and the environment just makes sense. While there’s still progress to be made, it’s exciting to see the strides in sustainable innovation. Finding inventive products that align with these values brings extra satisfaction to the design process.”

My Nguyen, Holland America Line’s director of interior design, agrees: “Companies that have sustainability in



“The feel of a fabric, the quality of stitching or the richness of a woven texture can all influence the atmosphere of a space”

**Liz Richardson**  
SMC Design

**Dickson-Sunbrella HP**

**Cainby QP**

**TVV Marine QP**

their core values go to the top of our list when selecting a product,” she says. “For example, companies that incorporate recycled content or have innovative ideas to keep waste out of landfill are particularly appealing.”

Circularity is also embraced by designers and specifiers who prioritise sustainability. “At YSA Design, environmental responsibility is a core value – we always seek to use the most responsibly sourced materials,” says Gullikstad. “For example, Aquafil, the producer of textile flooring yarn Econyl, is pioneering the use of circular materials in the maritime sector with its Born Regenerated to be Regenerable (R2R) initiative. Born R2R is redefining how carpets for cruise ships and ferries are designed and recovered at the end of their lifecycle. Unlike traditional maritime carpets – which often end up in landfills or incinerators – Born R2R carpets are dismantled and recycled.”

Herget is another strong proponent of circular thinking. “I actively support the Sustainable Maritime Interiors Declaration and work towards a circular approach to material selection,” she says. “I am particularly fascinated by Econyl because it is an endless recyclable yarn which has great potential to revolutionise the cruise industry and beyond. I have lately specified carpets which are made of it and are 100 per cent circular.”

Others are turning to new finishes and composite materials that balance eco-responsibility with performance. “Recycled composites, marine-safe eco-leathers and responsibly sourced woods allow us to weave sustainability into the design narrative in an authentic way,” says Pace.

Ryberg has even made use of customised vinyl leather made partly from recycled coffee beans, which she has printed and used as bar stool coverings. “The leather is sustainable and durable too, since it is easy cleanable,” she says.

The location of the material, either where it’s stocked or produced, is also crucial when it comes to making environmentally conscious decisions – and also has an impact on cost. “Often, contractors or installers handle procurement and logistical challenges can arise,” says Traeger. “For instance, if the product is based in the USA, but the contractor is in Europe and the ship is drydocking in Asia, using a US-sourced

## Delivering purposeful design at sea

Three selected designers share their advice for designers looking to find the right partners and products for passenger ship interior design projects



**My Nguyen**  
Director of Interior Design, Holland America Line

Good design is not only about the beauty of the space, but also about the partnership and trust you have in vendors. As designers, we are only as good as our vendors and their products. Selecting a product for the sake of a product is a short-term approach. Selecting partners that will continue to innovate and show beautiful products that meet our values is what separates good design and great design.



**Jason West**  
Managing Director, WDC Creative

In marine interiors, design must go beyond aesthetics to meet the demands of compliance, performance and sustainability. At WDC Creative, our product selection is guided by four key pillars: sustainability, customisation, agility and cost-effectiveness. These criteria ensure our designs enhance the passenger experience while supporting efficient operations and future-proofed solutions. We’ve been particularly impressed by suppliers such as Newmor, LX Hausys, Herculan and Muirhead – whose products not only meet IMO compliance standards, but also offer quick lead times, environmental credentials and flexible design options. Innovative materials like custom-printed wallcoverings, low volatile organic compound films, solvent-free flooring and fully traceable leathers show how the right product choices can elevate both form and function. Today, marine design is as much about how a space performs and adapts as it is about how it looks. Responsible, high-performance materials are shaping the future of cruise and ferry interiors.



**Yann Varin**  
Naval Design Expert, Design Eye

When choosing materials and products for cruise ship interiors, there are three important factors to consider. Firstly, they must have IMO fire certification. Secondly, they must be able to be customised in terms of pattern and colour. Thirdly, they must have reasonable costs and lead times for procurement and restocking. If any of these are missing, a supplier will most likely be excluded from the list, as the production and delivery of a cruise ship requires a strong commitment and flexibility from all stakeholders.

If I had to choose just one supplier of excellence for interior design production in my 30-year boat builder/designer career, it would be Spanish furniture manufacturer Candido Hermida, a company that combines all the qualities a customer could ask for.





Creative technology studio Conductr has collaborated with Norwegian Cruise Line to create Glow Court, transforming an underused top deck area into a multi-use, interactive experience that adds real value to the guest journey

product may not be practical due to shipping time, tariffs and added costs. Being mindful of logistics and leveraging vendor relationships leads to smoother execution and makes for a savvy, reliable designer.”

It’s only once these boxes are ticked that designers can start thinking about styling, as Barbara Wiethoff, partner at JOI-Design notes. “Only when technical criteria are fulfilled can we fully focus on creating interiors that truly enhance

the guest experience,” she says. “The guest experience is always at the heart of our design decisions – we aim to create spaces that feel welcoming and authentic, with materials that offer a natural look and pleasant tactile quality.”

This is where a designer’s individual preferences can really play out and their attention to detail shines through. “Sometimes, performance can also mean something a little more conceptual to bring the magic into a space,” says Ondrizek.

“With this in mind, I often ask, ‘Does the material glisten in the sunlight in the right way? Does it reflect just the right amount of orange at golden hour?’”

It’s not just how a product looks that matters; how it feels is important too. “The feel of a fabric, the quality of stitching or the richness of a woven texture can all influence the atmosphere of a space,” says Liz Richardson, senior associate at SMC Design.

“We seek materials that invite touch and evoke emotions, warmth, creativity or a bespoke quality,” adds Tudanca. “These are the elements that elevate a space from functional to experiential, helping to tell a story.”

It’s this ability to tell a story through product selection that demonstrate the skill of designers and specifiers. In fact, some, like Liz Schneider, owner of Liz Schneider Interiors, deliberately seek out surprising or conversation-starting materials to create lasting impressions. “I’m looking for ideas that feel out of the ordinary,” she says. “Our guests deserve surprises in their vacations – and I believe our interiors can make memories.” **CFR**



“Cruise ships come with unique constraints but, as cruise specialists, we understand how to turn those limitations into opportunities”

**Ben Dowson**  
Conductr



# Picking the perfect product

CFR asked selected suppliers to share what makes their interior products ideally suited for use onboard cruise ships or passenger ferries



## Breton

For high-standard projects on cruise ships and yachts, it's essential for the furniture to unite three pillars: customisation, authorial design and excellence in the choice of materials. Breton can adapt each piece in size, finish and material, allowing it to deliver solutions that respect the identity of the project and the technical challenges of the onboard environments.

It has a team dedicated to the professional hospitality segment, which works with customers through all stages of a project, from conception and specification to after-sales. Each project is unique and treated with this care.



## Continental

Furniture onboard cruise ships and passenger ferries is subject to constant use, which means it must be covered in durable and stain-resistant fabric to ensure it remains in good condition and has no visible signs of wear and tear. Surface specialist Continental has developed skai Tovega EN upholstery with innovative staynu technology to enable passenger ship operators to achieve this goal. The surface finish makes the material hard-wearing and easy to clean, so stains cannot adhere or penetrate into the material. Stubborn soiling with ballpoint pens can also be easily removed with suitable cleaning agents.



## FEATURE

### Cristallux

Cristallux creates innovative and sustainable lighting solutions using its proprietary material, Alamar. The material is 100 per cent recyclable and produced without any waste, meaning it is part of a fully circular production process. Alamar's ultra-light weight makes it especially ideal for applications in the cruise ship and yacht industry. It is also shatter-proof, ensuring it is highly safe and durable.

In addition, Alamar's shape, texture and colour can be fully customised, giving designers total freedom to create unique, high-impact pieces that align perfectly with their vision.



### Dibella

Dibella provides high-quality durable bed linen and terry towels, bathmats and bathrobes, all of which are certified as sustainable and are designed to meet the rigorous demands of the cruise industry. One notable product is the Monaco terry towel, which is made from 100 per cent cotton and is particularly suited for use in onboard spas and wellness and beauty facilities. The soft, fluffy towel has a smooth surface and an American-style hem to offer understated luxury.







## Elledue

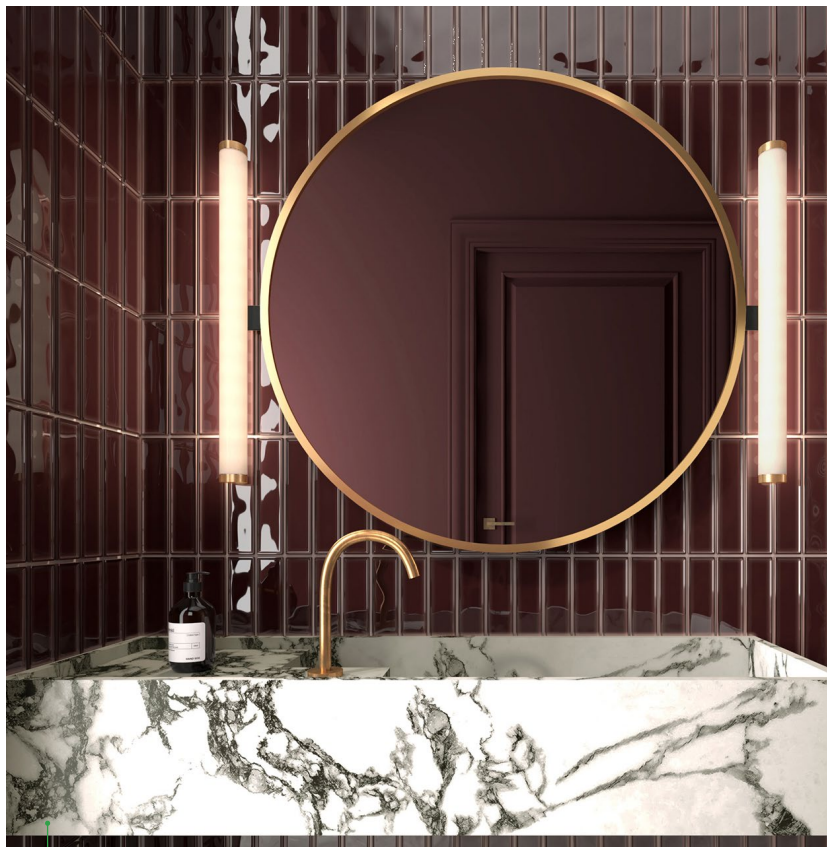
Elledue delivers turnkey interiors for cruise ships and ferries. Its high-performance custom furnishings, which fuse Italian artistry with marine engineering, are durable, safe and comply with regulatory requirements. Every finish is designed to transform onboard environments into refined, functional sanctuaries.

With over 35 years of experience, Elledue provides end-to-end support for every project – from design development and technical drawings, to prototyping and installation, ensuring precision and consistency throughout. The company's solutions are optimised for ergonomics, spatial efficiency and lasting beauty.



## Jover

Jover is a Spanish textile manufacturer that specialises in high-performance flame-retardant (FR) fabrics for contract use. The company's wide collection includes blackouts, dimouts, sheers, upholstery and decorative textiles that combine aesthetic value with strict technical requirements. All fabrics meet international fire safety standards, including IMO certification for marine applications. Thanks to its in-house production facility, Jover can offer customisation options for large-scale projects, including bespoke colours and prints. Its safe, durable and elegant fabrics are used in demanding environments and hospitality on numerous passenger ships, such as ferries and cruise ships.



## Luma Mirrors

Luma Mirrors supplies and installs bespoke LED bathroom mirrors, shaving mirrors, guest cabin mirrors and bathroom vanities that have been specifically designed for marine environments. All our products are crafted using marine-grade stainless steel, with IP65-rated options available to ensure durability in high moisture conditions. Each mirror includes safety backing for added protection. The company's fully bespoke service enables cruise lines and ferry operators to create mirrors tailored to specific spatial and design requirements. It also offers an extensive range of finishes and colours, giving design teams creative freedom without compromising on functionality or aesthetics.



## FEATURE

### Martinez Otero Contract

Martínez Otero Contract provides tailor-made interiors made with precision, passion and full control – from the substructure to the last decorative detail. The company was founded in 1942 by María Martínez and it is still family owned. As a specialist manufacturer Martínez Otero Contract is a full-service company which brings craftsmanship and industrial power to the world of luxury cruising. It takes a turnkey approach to projects, offering design, technical development, production and installation. The company most recently served as an interior outfitting partner for The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection's new yachts, Evrima, Ilma and Luminara.



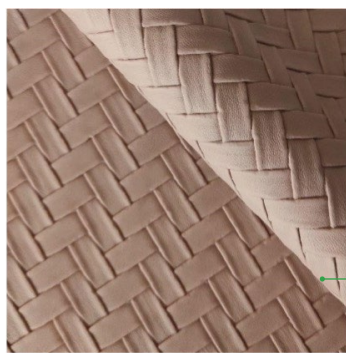
### Morbern Europe

Interiors upholstery for cruise ships and ferries must meet strict maritime standards whilst also being durable, easy to maintain, aesthetically pleasing and comfortable. Coated textiles are designed to withstand high traffic, moisture and rigorous cleaning protocols, bringing both versatility and elegance to onboard spaces.

Sundance – which is from Morbern Europe's large range of sustainable International Maritime Organization-Marine Equipment Directive fabrics – combines fabric-like softness with robust, long-lasting performance. Featuring a 100 per cent recycled polyester backing that repurposes 12 post-consumer PET bottles per metre, Sundance's cleanable topcoat offers protection against the toughest of stains – from coffee to mustard, wine and lipstick. Ideal for use in busy seating areas, Sundance also has a subtle sheen that enhances any interior or exterior environment.







## Pytóncontract

Pytóncontract manufactures and supplies a wide range of leathers, synthetics and fabrics for upholstery and curtains. The company takes design inspiration from Barcelona in Spain – where it has been based since it was founded in 1939 – and works in synergy with Pytónmoda to offer a range of products which complement the varied aesthetics required for different onboard spaces. The range complies with the passenger shipping industry's fireproof and technical standards, including the IMO FTPC-standard, and can be customised when it comes to technical quality, colour, finish, embossing and patterns.



## Pfleiderer

Pfleiderer offers a range of decorative wood-based panels, which have been certified for use onboard passenger ships by the International Maritime Organization. Made in Germany, the panels are built for durability, safety and sustainability and are available in an extensive range of colours. This ensures the panels provide high levels of technical performance, as well as creative freedom for designers working on interior spaces onboard cruise ships, passenger ferries and yachts.



## Robos

Custom-made cabanas from Robos provide cruise guests with shade and privacy, offering them an exclusive place to relax, thereby elevating the onboard experience. Cruise brands can fully customise each cabana to match their design vision by changing everything from the fabrics and materials to the dimensions and finishes.

Robos recently delivered its Alcove Cabanas (pictured) to eight Norwegian Cruise Line ships and provided instructions to enable the onboard team to easily install them.



## FEATURE



### Schnick-Schnack-Systems

The Schnick-Schnack-Systems LED strip C12-500 CUT offers professional-grade, customisable and sustainable lighting. It has been engineered for precision, performance and quality and includes individual colour-calibrated LEDs to provide vibrant, consistent and true-to-life colour, as well as spotless illumination for both commercial and creative applications. With global control channels, it integrates with existing control systems, making it ideal for large-scale projects and automation. Up to four metres of strip can be powered from a single cable, reducing installation complexity. Thanks to average 10 kilohertz refresh rates there's no visible flickering, either to the naked eye or when captured by digital camera. Schnick-Schnack-Systems offer long-term product support, often exceeding 10 years.



Photo: Regent Seven Seas

### Ulster

Beyond the eye-catching colours and custom designs, durability is the main reason an Ulster carpet is ideal for any cruise ship or passenger ferry. Ulster's carpets and rugs offer a luxurious finish that will stand the test of time having been specifically designed for passenger ship environments. Wool is naturally durable, dimensionally stable and stain repellent; it also looks good and feels luxurious. Additionally, the Axminster weaving technique enhances the wool's properties to create in-built durability and enhanced performance. Ulster's patented weaving technology also offers customers increased design possibilities.