

The Roundabout Reimagined: The Beating Heart of Brilliant Lady

Introduction: A Ship's Soul

Every ship has a heart. On Virgin Voyages, that heart has always been The Roundabout – the soaring atrium at the center of life on board. More than a lobby, more than a passageway, it has been the place where our Sailors first encountered the brand's daring spirit, where pathways crossed, where glances turned into conversations, where the pulse of the ship could be felt.

But design is never finished. The first three ships – Scarlet Lady, Valiant Lady, and Resilient Lady – established a strong identity for The Roundabout: bold, sculptural, filled with drama and personality. Yet as Virgin Voyages looked ahead to its newest ship, Brilliant Lady, the Experience and Design team saw an opportunity. The Roundabout could become more than a visual statement. It could become a living room, a social hub, a frame for breathtaking scenery, and a place where the rhythms of ship life could flow seamlessly from morning to night.

On Brilliant Lady, The Roundabout has been transformed. What was once striking but sometimes segmented has become open, warm, and versatile. What was once a through-space is now a destination. This is the story of how Virgin Voyages reimagined its most central space – and why The Roundabout on Brilliant Lady represents not just evolution, but reinvention.

The Original Roundabout: Bold Beginnings

When Scarlet Lady set sail in 2020, The Roundabout was a declaration. Virgin wanted a center unlike any other cruise line – not a grand atrium dripping in chandeliers, but a modern hub that reflected its playful, rebellious brand.

Sailors entered into a soaring two-deck space wrapped around a sweeping spiral staircase. Terrazzo tiles underfoot echoed the dramatic contrast of Virgin's design ethos, while bold lighting features – including a radial compass ceiling installation – made it clear this was no ordinary lobby.

Surrounding the staircase were Virgin's most irreverent offerings: a record shop, a tattoo studio, a beacon of a service desk called the Chart Table, and Draught Haus, a craft beer bar. Sailors could grab a drink, book an excursion, browse vinyl, or simply lounge and watch the world go by.

The effect was bold, but at times, the space felt more like a dramatic transit hub than a welcoming living room. The spirit was there. The energy was there. But Brilliant Lady would ask for something more.

The Brief: Listening, Learning, Transforming

By the time design began on Brilliant Lady, Virgin Voyages had three ships in operation. With them came invaluable feedback. Sailors loved the atmosphere, but they craved more comfort. They loved the energy, but wanted more openness and flow. They loved the bar, but wanted it to function across more moments of the day.

The Design Team took these insights and layered them with another challenge: Brilliant Lady's itineraries. Unlike her sisters, she would sail not only to the Caribbean but also to colder, more scenic regions like Alaska. That meant The Roundabout could not just be a place to pass through; it needed to be a place to linger, to take in panoramic views, to become a warm gathering point against cooler climates.

The brief crystallized: open up the space, elevate comfort, improve flow, expand functionality, and connect The Roundabout to the vistas beyond the ship's walls. In short, make the heart of Brilliant Lady beat with even greater vitality.

Design Concept: From Atrium to Living Room

The transformation of The Roundabout began with a shift in philosophy. On Brilliant Lady, the space would no longer be defined by a single bold gesture or iconic object. Instead, it would be a holistic composition — a living room at sea where every element contributed to comfort, sociability, and flow.

The name itself suggested direction. A roundabout is where paths intersect, where movement happens, where people meet. On Brilliant Lady, this would be taken literally and figuratively. The Roundabout would connect Sailors not only to different decks and venues, but to one another.

The design leaned into warmth and versatility. Jewel tones, plush banquettes, and soft seating replaced sculptural austerity. The bar was reimagined as a flexible anchor, offering coffee by

morning, juices and light beverages by afternoon, and cocktails into the night. Panoramic windows were unobstructed, creating sightlines that tied the space directly to the horizon.

The Roundabout would become the ship's living room, its village square, its compass rose — a place to arrive, to gather, to rest, and to celebrate.

Spatial Transformation: Opening the Flow

The most radical change was openness. On Brilliant Lady, Virgin removed partitions, walls, and oversized furniture that once chopped the space into compartments. The famous red Chart Table, while beloved as a design statement, was retired. In its place: air, light, and flow.

The Shore Things desk was reconfigured into a purpose-built nook, clearing congestion from the main floor. Draught Haus was opened up and re-positioned as a welcoming anchor rather than a tucked-away corner. Circulation paths were clarified so that Sailors could move fluidly between decks, bars, shops, and lounges without bottlenecks.

Sightlines became central. From the spiral staircase, Sailors can now look across the entire atrium and out through panoramic windows to the sea beyond. This openness makes the space feel larger, brighter, and more connected to the ship's environment.

Where the original Roundabout sometimes felt like a spectacular corridor, Brilliant Lady's Roundabout feels like a gathering place.

Materiality and Atmosphere: Jewel Tones and Warmth

If Scarlet Lady's Roundabout was bold and graphic, Brilliant Lady's is rich and atmospheric. The palette leans into jewel tones — deep navy, jammy reds and purples, vibrant emerald — layered with warm woods, brass accents, and plush textiles. Sculpted banquette seating invites sailors to sink in, linger, and connect.

Lighting was reimagined to be both dramatic and adaptable. The compass feature remains as a nod to Virgin's design lineage, but now it glows in shades of twilight blue and purple — a subtle homage to the landscapes Brilliant Lady will sail through in Alaska. By day, light floods in through expanded windows; by night, the space glows like a jewel box, intimate and radiant.

Every detail was chosen to balance durability with delight. Marine-grade fabrics and finishes meet safety standards while feeling luxurious to the touch. The result is a space that is both practical and poetic, resilient and seductive.

The Bar: From Niche to Anchor

One of the most significant shifts was the reconceptualization of Draught Haus. On earlier ships, it was positioned primarily as a beer bar – quirky, yes, but niche. On Brilliant Lady, it becomes a central anchor of The Roundabout, designed for all-day activation.

In the morning, Draught Haus serves as a coffee and juice bar, drawing in Sailors for a quick start to the day. By afternoon, it becomes a casual lounge, perfect for a mid-day pause to check-in on work or to grab a light refreshment. And by night, it transforms into a cocktail hub, buzzing with energy as Sailors gather before shows, after dinners, or simply for the pleasure of being together.

Design supports this transformation. The bar is framed with warm wood, brass shelving with fluted glass, and illuminated displays of wine and spirits. It feels approachable yet elevated, casual yet celebratory. In many ways, it embodies the Roundabout's new identity: versatile, welcoming, alive.

The Sailor Journey: A Day in The Roundabout

Morning begins quietly. A sailor descends the spiral staircase and finds the space bathed in natural light. Jewel-toned banquettes glow softly in the sun, and the barista at Draught Haus offers them a cappuccino. They settle into a plush seat by the window, watching as the ship glides through calm waters. The Roundabout feels serene, like a luxurious living room at sea.

By afternoon, the mood shifts. Groups of friends gather at tables with fresh juices and small bites, while others linger with laptops, taking advantage of the comfortable seating. The energy is light, social, unhurried. The space feels flexible, able to accommodate whatever rhythm the day demands.

At night, The Roundabout transforms once again. Lighting deepens to amber and violet, music drifts across the room, and Draught Haus comes alive with cocktails and conversation. Sailors dressed for dinner gather for a drink before moving on to a show. Strangers strike up conversations, laughter echoes across the atrium, and the space hums with possibility.

This is the Roundabout reimagined: one place, many moods, each authentic, each alive.

Operational and Design Challenges

Transforming The Roundabout was not simply about aesthetics; it was about function. A central space on a ship must handle heavy traffic, serve multiple purposes, and meet rigorous safety and durability standards.

One challenge was flexibility. The same bar needed to serve coffee at dawn and cocktails at midnight, which required rethinking storage, service flow, and equipment integration. Another was visibility. Removing those dichroic fins improved openness, but also required reconsidering acoustics and lighting to ensure the space remained intimate rather than cavernous.

Durability was paramount. Every fabric, finish, and piece of furniture needed to withstand constant use while maintaining its luxurious feel. The Design Team sourced marine-grade materials that met safety codes without compromising on comfort or style.

Perhaps the greatest challenge was balance: keeping The Roundabout bold and distinctive — a hallmark of Virgin Voyages — while making it more welcoming, comfortable, and functional. Achieving that equilibrium required discipline, creativity, and constant attention to detail.

Continuity and Evolution

The Roundabout on Brilliant Lady is not a departure from Virgin's identity, but an evolution of it. The dramatic staircase, the functional compass motif, the irreverent energy — these remain as connective tissue to earlier ships. What has changed is emphasis.

Where Scarlet Lady's Roundabout was about making a bold first impression, Brilliant Lady's is about sustaining connection. Where the original was a statement, the new is a conversation. Where once it dazzled, now it embraces.

This continuity ensures that returning Sailors recognize the spirit they love, while new sailors encounter a space that feels timeless yet fresh. It is evolution as Virgin intended: daring, surprising, and always human-centered.

Conclusion: A New Heartbeat

On Brilliant Lady, The Roundabout is more than an atrium. It is a compass, pointing Sailors toward connection. It is a living room, inviting them to linger. It is a stage, transforming with the rhythm of the day.



Through openness, warmth, and versatility, it has become the true heartbeat of the ship – a place where design does more than look bold; it feels right. A place where form and function merge seamlessly, where the architecture itself encourages people to meet, converse, and belong.

The transformation of The Roundabout demonstrates Virgin Voyages' willingness to listen, to adapt, and to evolve. It proves that even a brand built on disruption understands the power of comfort, connection, and human experience. And it ensures that on Brilliant Lady, the heart of the ship beats stronger than ever.