

No land? No problem. Gibraltar's \$200m five-star yacht hotel

By

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(CNN) -- Imagine this: in your hot little hands you hold a blueprint for a luxury hotel in one of the most idyllic -- and tiny -- locations in the world.

There's just one problem -- there's no space to build the thing.

The answer? Create a five-star yacht hotel.

That's exactly the thinking behind Gibraltar's new \$200 million Sunborn Yacht Hotel; a permanently moored vessel which could spell the future of architecture in land scarce cities around the world.

"In Gibraltar there's a huge demand for hotels, but how do you do it in such a small jurisdiction?" Sunborn Gibraltar CEO, Brian Stevendale, told CNN.

"Unlike traditional building -- which involves trucks, cranes and a huge amount of disruption -- we have a ready built product that can be delivered to these prime areas."

Ship-shape

The mammoth 142-meter superyacht will rest its anchor in Gibraltar's Ocean Village Marina, located off the southern tip of Spain, with plans to open its doors to the public by the end of this year.

Boasting 189 rooms, spa and gym, cocktail lounges, conference rooms, and even a ballroom, the luxury liner will be one of the grandest structures in the Mediterranean.

At seven storeys tall, the vessel will dwarf nearby yachts in the marina, with rooms expected to cost between \$300 and \$3,000 per night.

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Plug in, tune out

The whopping boat, originally built in Malaysia, will be attached to the dock via six superstrong hydraulic arms, each weighing eight tons.

Guests will enter through an enclosed glass bridge and Stevendale says once on board "they will feel no different to being in a five-star hotel on land."

"It's intriguing that something so large can literally just be plugged in to a port," he added. "We will have enormous power cables safely secured underground."

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Small territory, big ambition

Measuring just 6.8 square kilometres, the British territory of Gibraltar is a small state packing a big punch.

Much like Monaco or Singapore, Gibraltar is a sunny tourist destination with a thriving economy -- yet lacks the space for urban development.

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That's where the Sunborn Yacht Hotel comes in, with Stevendale saying it could pave the way for similar vessels across the world -- and even be used at temporary events such as the World Cup or Olympics.

Coming to a city near you?

Gibraltar follows the company's first yacht hotel -- the "Sunborn Princess" -- which was moored at Naantali Spa Resort in Finland in 2002.

There are now plans to anchor similar floating hotels in London and Barcelona. But with each contract usually spanning 10 years, Stevendale says its unlikely the vessels will be doing much cruising once they're in place.

And if Sunborn is on the right track, the most successful boats could be those which never even set sail.

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