NEBULA CLASS

LAUNCHED: 2360s
MAX SPEED: WARP 9.5
LENGTH: 442.23 METERS
CREW COMPLEMENT: 750
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Stand assembly:

The stand slots over the back of the engineering hull.

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**NEBULA CLASS**

**SPECIFICATION**

- **CLASS:** NEBULA
- **CONSTRUCTED:** UTOPIA PLANITIA FLEET YARDS
- **LAUNCHED:** 2360s
- **LENGTH:** 442.23 METERS
- **CREW:** 750
- **TOP SPEED:** WARP 9.6
- **WEAPONRY:** 6 TYPE-10 PHASER ARRAYS, 2 PHOTON TORPEDO LAUNCHERS
- **CAPTAINS:** BENJAMIN MAXWELL, SHELBY, SILVA LA FORGE, SOLOK

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The Nebula class vessels were a type of starship used by Starfleet in the latter half of the 24th century. They were primarily designed to carry out scientific and exploratory roles, but they often took on patrol and transport duties as well. They could also ably perform combat assignments when required.

The Nebula class was a contemporary of the Galaxy class and they shared several design features, including a very similar saucer section. There were, however, several significant differences between them. At 442.23 meters long, the Nebula class was about 200 meters shorter than the Galaxy class, and its crew complement was normally around 750 compared to 1,000 aboard the larger vessel. The engineering hull on Nebula-class vessels was also slightly more curved and rounded than it was on Galaxy-class ships. While the two classes of ship shared a similar design of warp nacelles, they hung beside the engineering hull on the Nebula class, rather than being supported above the secondary hull as on the Galaxy class.

**ADAPTABLE MODULE**

The most significant difference between the two classes was that the Nebula class featured a large equipment module at the rear of the ship that rose up behind the saucer section. This module could be configured for different mission profiles. For example, on the U.S.S. Phoenix NCC-65420, this pod rose high above the saucer section. The Nebula class was designed for exploration, but it was also often deployed in patrol and combat duties.
In 2367, Benjamin Maxwell, captain of the Nebula-class U.S.S. Phoenix NCC-65420, went rogue and used his ship to destroy a Cardassian outpost. When the U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701-D caught up with him, Maxwell claimed that the Cardassians were stockpiling weapons in preparation for war. Although Maxwell was brought to justice, his accusations against the Cardassians ultimately proved correct.

The Nebula class was equipped with two torpedo launchers as standard. The equipment module could be configured to carry additional torpedo launchers, thereby increasing its firepower. The U.S.S. Sutherland is seen here firing a torpedo from its adaptable superstructure.

Nebula-class ships swapped their normal exploratory duties for a combat role during the Dominion War. They fought alongside the U.S.S. Defiant NX-74205 in several major engagements of the war, including the final assault on Asskessa.

In 2373, Nebula-class ships battled the Borg alongside the U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701-E.

The U.S.S. Phoenix, commanded by Ben Maxwell, was fitted with an elliptically-shaped equipment module that rose high above the primary hull.

The Nebula class was designed primarily for exploration like Galaxy-class ships, but were smaller and slightly less powerful. Serving on board a Nebula-class vessel was still regarded as a plum assignment.

The standard weaponry aboard Nebula-class vessels included eight type-10 phaser emitters and two torpedo launchers, while some versions also had extra launchers in the equipment modules. The shields on Nebula-class ships were highly effective and could withstand a direct hit from a Cardassian warship’s disruptor weapon, but they did have one slight weakness. Every five-and-a-half minutes a Nebula-class ship would perform a high-energy sensor sweep, but between the sweep ending and another one starting, the shields would have to be realigned. This left the ship unprotected for a fiftieth of a second.

PRESTIGIOUS POSITION

Dr. Elizabeth Lense, the valedictorian of Dr. Bashir’s Starfleet Medical School class, chose to join the crew of the Nebula-class U.S.S. Lexington, much to the envy of her classmates. She spent several years on board the Lexington on a deep space mission charting unexplored planets.

Nebula-class ships also played a large part during hostilities with the Dominion. The U.S.S. T’Kumbra, which had an all-Vulcan crew, spent six months fighting on the front lines, while the U.S.S. Sutherland was part of the Ninth Fleet that saw action in most of the major battles of the Dominion War.

In 2367-68, the U.S.S. Sutherland NCC-72015 was under the temporary command of Lt. Commander Data when it was used as part of a blockade to stop Romulan ships supplying the House of Duras with weapons and supplies during the Klingon Civil War.

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As on most other classes of Starfleet vessel, the bridge on Nebula-class ships was located on deck 1 at the top of the saucer section. There were three entrances to the bridge: one on each side of the room and a third at the rear. The captain’s chair was in the center of the room with two free-standing consoles on either side, one of which was the science station, while the other could be used to remotely control the ship’s shuttlecraft. Separate conn and ops stations were on a lower level in front of the command chair, and as always on a Starfleet vessels, the main viewscreen was at the front where all the bridge crew could see it.

The Nebula-class U.S.S. T’Kumbra was commanded by Captain Solok and had an all-Vulcan crew. It spent six months fighting on the front lines during the war with the Dominion.

The Nebula-class U.S.S. Sutherland NCC-72015 was named after Horatio Hornblower’s flagship in the C.S. Forester novels. These books served as one of Gene Roddenberry’s original inspirations for STAR TREK.

Geordi La Forge’s mother, Silva La Forge, was captain of the Nebula-class U.S.S. Hera NCC-62006. It was on a routine courier run when it went missing. Despite a massive search, it was never found.

The viewscreen on the U.S.S. Prometheus (middle picture) was similar to the viewscreens aboard Galaxy-class ships, whereas the viewscreen on the U.S.S. Sutherland (above) was much smaller.

Nebula-class starships were equipped with a variety of auxiliary craft, including Type 6 and Type 7 shuttlecraft, as well as the smaller Type 15 shuttlepod.
The Nebula-class is one of the most frequently seen ships in Starfleet, but it has very humble beginnings and an unusual history...

The initial design of the Nebula-class has very humble origins. It was only intended to be a background ship and, as a result, it wasn’t developed in the normal way. Back in the early days of STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION before the introduction of CGI, making new starships was a big deal; building new physical models was expensive so wherever they could the VFX team reused existing Starfleet models.

In TNG’s first three seasons, whenever we saw a ship that wasn’t the Enterprise-D it was likely to be a reuse of the Excelsior, Reliant and Grissom models. That implied that Starfleet only had old ships. Senior illustrator Rick Sternbach and scenic art supervisor and technical consultant Mike Okuda put their heads together to try to find a cost effective way of producing a new ship that looked like it could be a contemporary of Andy Probert’s Enterprise-D.

BUDGET CONCERNS

As Okuda said, “The challenge was that the Enterprise-D was built out of elegant compound curves. It was a brilliant way to show how far Starfleet technology had come in the past century, but it meant that building the model required a lot of hand labor. And that translates into cost. Remember, this was long before 3D printing! The expense for the Enterprise-D itself made sense, since the ship was seen in every episode. For a guest ship, even one that is seen several times, the budget was much, much less.

“Our thought was that a design based on castings from the Enterprise-D molds could help hold down costs a lot. We discussed what such a ship would look like, but of course, the final decision would be up to our producers. I asked Ed Miarecki (model maker and artist) to come up with some study models to make it easier to see what such a ship might look like. I specifically asked him to do 24th-century versions of the Reliant and the Excelsior. Ed also came up with a number of other variations, just for fun.”

There was a major advantage to this approach—because the idea was to reuse existing components, Miarecki...
The Nebula-class model was substantially renovated at ILM for its appearance in STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION episode 'The Wounded.' The script specifically called for a "Nebula-class ship" that was a bit smaller than the Enterprise-D. Okuda and Sternbach realized this was the perfect opportunity to fully develop the ship they had been working on with Miarecki. "We presented Ed Miarecki’s study models to our producers," said Okuda. "They liked the model that was based on the Reliant, but felt it didn’t look properly balanced. I suggested adding an ‘AWACS pod’ like those found on military aircraft of today to match the Reliant’s weapons pod."

This new pod was more triangular in shape, giving it a more elegant appearance. Greg Jein carried out the necessary modifications to the studio model to match Sternbach’s updated designs and the revised model made its debut as the U.S.S. Sutherland NCC-72015, the ship that Data commands in "Redemption, Part II." This model of the Nebula class made several more appearances in STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION and STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE, most notably in the episode "Second Sight" where it appeared as the U.S.S. Prometheus NCC-71201. The model was then accepted by the producers, and Greg Jein started construction of a studio model that would stand up to the rigors of filming. Jein had worked on the original 6-foot Enterprise-D model when he was at Industrial Light & Magic, and had recently built the new 4-foot version, so was able to cast pieces for the new ship from existing molds.

SAUCER SIZE
“One thing I suggested to Greg [Jein] was for him to make the windows bigger and more widely spaced than on the Enterprise-D,” said Okuda. “This was intended to suggest that the Nebula ship was smaller than the Enterprise-D. Unfortunately, a tight schedule didn’t permit this, so the Nebula’s saucer ended up the same apparent size as the Enterprise-D.”

After the Nebula class’s appearance as the U.S.S. Phoenix in ‘The Wounded,’ it was felt that its ‘AWACS pod’ above the saucer did not look as integrated with the rest of the ship as they had hoped. As Okuda explained, “After ‘The Wounded,’ our producers decided that while they liked the Nebula-class ship, they thought the ‘AWACS dome’ didn’t quite fit with the ship, so they asked Rick Sternbach to design a cool-looking equipment pod.”

This new pod was more triangular in shape, giving it a more elegant appearance. Greg Jein carried out the necessary modifications to the studio model to match Sternbach’s updated designs and the revised model made its debut as the U.S.S. Sutherland NCC-72015, the ship that Data commands in ‘Redemption, Part II.’ This model of the Nebula class made several more appearances in STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION. However, it was not until the episode "Second Sight" that it was seen in its true form, looking more integrated with the rest of the ship.

DESIGNING THE SHIP
The Nebula-class model was extensively refitted with the new triangular-shaped equipment module for its appearance as the U.S.S. Sutherland in the episode ‘Redemption, Part II.’

The second Nebula class study model met with a happier fate, becoming part of the decor in Ben Sisko’s office on Deep Space 9.

SEIZING THE MOMENT
The Nebula class made its proper debut in the fourth season STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION episode 'The Wounded.' The script specifically called for a “Nebula-class ship” that was a smaller contemporary of the Enterprise-D. Okuda and Sternbach realized this was the perfect opportunity to fully develop the ship they had been working on with Miarecki. “We presented Ed Miarecki’s study models to our producers,” said Okuda. “They liked the model that was based on the Reliant, but felt it didn’t look properly balanced. I suggested adding an ‘AWACS pod’ like those found on military aircraft of today to match the Reliant’s weapons pod.”

This pod was elliptical in shape and mirrored the shape of the Nebula’s saucer section. This design was accepted by the producers, and Greg Jein started construction of a studio model that would stand up to the rigors of filming. Jein had worked on the original 6-foot Enterprise-D model when he was at Industrial Light & Magic, and had recently built the new 4-foot version, so was able to cast pieces for the new ship from existing molds.

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DESIGNING THE SHIP
The Nebula-class model was extensively refitted with the new triangular-shaped equipment module for its appearance as the U.S.S. Sutherland in the episode ‘Redemption, Part II.’
refurbished by John Goodson at the Industrial Light & Magic workshop for its big screen debut in *STAR TREK GENERATIONS*.

**COLOR CHANGE**

During its overhaul, its original white-blue color scheme, which matched the Galaxy-class model, was changed to a blue-gray, and more detail was also painted on. In this new livery, the Nebula-class model appeared as the U.S.S. Farragut NCC-60597 in the closing scenes of *STAR TREK GENERATIONS*, where it rescues the crew from the surface of Veridian III.

It made its final appearance as an unnamed Nebula-class ship in the battle sequence with the Borg at the beginning of *STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT*.

In 1997, a new CG version of the Nebula class was built for the *STAR TREK: VOYAGER* episode ‘Message in a Bottle’. This show was to feature the U.S.S. Prometheus, a prototype vessel with state-of-the-art weaponry. The Prometheus was only going to be built in CG, but the script called for it to destroy a Nebula-class vessel. The logistics of filming a battle sequence featuring one CG ship and one studio miniature were far too complex, not to mention expensive and time consuming.

**REBUILT IN CG**

It therefore made sense to build a CG version of the Nebula class. The task was undertaken at the digital effects house Foundation Imaging by CG supervisor and artist Rob Bonchune.

“I had wanted to build a classic starship for a while,” said Bonchune, “so I was thrilled. This was also the beginning of adding some of the classic *STAR TREK* ships to the ever growing CG inventory. It was going to happen eventually and the producers felt this was the episode to move ahead with. To my amazement, Paramount delivered the actual full size filming miniature to our facility for me to reference. Since our facility was not huge, they just set it up right in front of my desk.”

**FAMILIAR PIECES**

The model dwarfed Bonchune’s workstation, but he couldn’t have asked for better reference as he set about making a highly detailed digital rendering of it, but time was against him. To meet deadlines he had to use elements of the CG Galaxy class that had already been built in the 3D software. As a result the CG version of the Nebula class differed from the studio model slightly, and reverted to its original white-blue color scheme.

Bonchune points out that when the Nebula class is fitted with a weapons pod at the back it becomes one of the most heavily-armed ships we’ve ever seen in Starfleet.

Given its humble beginnings and the changes it went through, the Nebula class has stood the test of time. In fact, it has achieved the remarkable feat of appearing in more incarnations of *STAR TREK* than any other class of Starfleet ship.
By the fourth season of STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, the writers knew that they wanted to add a new recurring race to the show that could act as villains. As writer and executive producer Michael Piller explained, it was time to introduce a new threat. “We did feel that we needed to dot the map with more alien races,” said Piller. “I don’t think there was any disagreement about it; we did not see the Borg being a continuing factor, even after ‘The Best of Both Worlds.’ By that time, we had done a lot of Romulan stories, we had done a lot of Klingon stories, and we were worried that we were mining those races over and over again and that the audiences were going to want to see something new.

There are two kinds of aliens on STAR TREK; the ones who are passing through, and the kind we are going to keep around. I think by season four we all felt that we needed another race that were going to provide new and continuing threats. That’s how the Cardassians were developed.”

The Cardassians made their debut alongside the Nebula class as the villainous aliens Captain Maxwell was so convinced posed a threat.

Westmore, which determined their mendacious and ruthless nature. “This was a species that we were probably going to bring back again,” said Westmore, “so we wanted to design something neat. I did a plaster cast of Marc Alaimo’s [Gul Macet] head, and I was sitting there looking at it; he has this very long neck, and the producers had said this was going to be a sneaky character, so all the adjectives indicated that this would be a sly, lizardy personality, and for inspiration I went to reptiles!”

The connection Westmore had made between Cardassians and reptiles helped to further establish their look and characteristics. For example, while their skin is closer to that of humans than reptiles, their neck ridges bear a resemblance to scales. Additionally, they prefer relatively warm rooms, enjoy the heat, are intolerant to cold (reptiles are cold-blooded), and are frequently portrayed as aggressors, an attribute often associated with reptiles.

The Cardassians were meant to be nasty and untrustworthy and distinctly different from the 24th-century humans, but they were also highly intelligent. Introducing these elements made them a great new villain and one that would add conflict and drama to the show in a different way. As Chip Chalmers, the director of ‘The Wounded,’ told Cinefantastique, “We introduced a new enemy that’s finally able to speak on the level of Picard. They’re not grunting, they’re not giggling, they’re not mutes or all-knowing entities. Here are the Cardassians who also graduated first in their class and they’re able to carry on highly intelligent conversations with Picard, but they’re sinister as hell.”

This decision proved vital to the continuing presence of the Cardassians. As the Bajorans were to be a major race in STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE, it meant that their chief enemy and tormentors, the Cardassians, would feature heavily, too, firmly cementing their place in the STAR TREK universe.

The Cardassians could be cruel and ruthlessly cold-blooded. They were as clever as their Starfleet counterparts, but extremely untrustworthy, all attributes that made for great intrigue, conflict and drama on the show.

The Cardassians were introduced in TNG’s fourth season to add a new recurring race to the show. The design of their makeup played a significant role in bringing them back and helping define them.

REPTILIAN CHARACTERISTICS

The writers may have decided that the Cardassians were going to be a new threat, but their characteristics were far from fully formed. In many ways it was their reptilian appearance, developed by make-up designer Michael Westmore, which determined their mendacious and ruthless nature.

The Cardassians were introduced in TNG’s fourth season to add a new recurring race to the show. The design of their makeup played a significant role in bringing them back and helping define them.

INTRODUCING THE CARDASSIANS

The Cardassians were partly inspired by actor Marc Alaimo’s long neck. Alaimo was cast as Gul Macet and later played Gul Dukat.

INTRODUCING THE CARDASSIANS

The Cardassians were introduced in TNG’s fourth season to add a new recurring race to the show. The design of their makeup played a significant role in bringing them back and helping define them.
Some of the crew from the Nebula-class U.S.S. Sutherland were seen at a party in Jadzia Dax’s quarters on board Deep Space 9 the night before her wedding to Worf. These included Lieutenant Manuele Atoa and several other crew members who were also from the Pacific Islands. Writer Ronald D. Moore has revealed that it was intended to make these crew members a more regular element of the show, and they would have appeared when the script called for “wacky party guys.”

Benjamin Maxwell, the captain of the Nebula-class U.S.S. Phoenix, served with Chief Miles O’Brien on the U.S.S. Rutledge. Maxwell described O’Brien as being the best tactical officer he’d ever had.

The Nebula-class U.S.S. Bonchune NCC-70915 that appeared in the STAR TREK: VOYAGER episode ‘Message in a Bottle’ was named after Rob Bonchune, the visual effects supervisor who created the CG version of the ship. The registry numbers of the ship were taken from his birthday: 15th September, 1970 (09/15/1970).

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- A 22nd-century ship used by an aggressive insect-like species
- A look at production illustrator John Eaves’ designs for the ship
- The origins of the Xindi race

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