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THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER



For its inhabitants, life on the largest residential yacht on Earth is truly out of this world

BY JONATHAN WHILEY

There is an in-joke on board *The World*, the largest privately owned residential yacht on Earth. It's said that you are not considered a "full resident" of the ship until you have a dish named after you. One has an omelette; another has a chicken curry wrap.

You can't help but smile. I'm in sumptuous Sardinia, having dinner with residents of the most exclusive ship on the planet – 644 feet of voluptuous vessel housing 165

sprawling residences, all with six-figure price tags – and they are playfully telling me that their own piece of self-titled comfort food remains the ultimate accolade.

This endearing episode is indicative of an extraordinary community completely at ease with itself. Having played the game of life – and proved highly successful in their chosen fields – it's now time to, as one resident puts it: "reconnect as people."

As such, big egos are duly dispatched and hierarchy is left at the gangplank. By the very nature of the yacht's exclusive operation – where the CEO of the company is essentially accountable to you and security and anonymity are of paramount importance – this could be viewed as an extravagant, gated community.

Except that tag does it an injustice. The warmth and friendliness we encounter soon dispels any notion of a floating members' club that has closed its books.

Within hours of arriving, we join a group of residents at a private vineyard tour and dinner in the Instagram-friendly Sardinian hills. Crisp prosecco flows as easily as the conversation and broad smiles are exchanged over homemade pasta with a humble tomato sauce.

Shared experiences like this become life's greatest leveller and residents of the



ship share a universal love of engaging with local communities and experiencing authentic culture, cuisine and customs. *The World* and its accompanying lifestyle means that once-in-a-lifetime experiences are commonplace and yet never regarded as such. Staff – 173 at all times – and residents remain aware of how fortunate they are to enjoy this unique way of living.

Since 2002, *The World* has been continuously circumnavigating the globe, largely chasing the sun. Every home on board has a voting right; the bigger your home, the more say you have. This year saw residents celebrate New Year's Day in Miami, before a jaunt to the Bahamas and on to South America. Itineraries are decided two to three years in advance with 20 new locations added each year. For each stop – usually two to three days in each port – a member of the local tourist industry boards the ship to provide insider recommendations.

Boogie Street is the neatly titled staff quarters and with a no tipping culture and internal awards, they are treated as friends by residents. Crew welfare is no token gesture; a pot of money is set aside and proved vital for the families of kitchen staff caught up in a recent typhoon in Asia.

A professional yet relaxed atmosphere reigns. The ship's residential director, a former employee of the *QE2* no less, tells me he has travelled around the world an astonishing 14 times now. Worth the four-month training and two-month interview process that ensured he was the right man for the job.

New York-born executive chef Geoffrey is equally smitten. He has the world as his larder; cultivating relationships with farmers who supply A-list ingredients including Kobe beef from a breed of cattle that is hard to find even in Japan.

Despite a team of 50 kitchen staff on board at any one time and with six restaurants, he seems unflustered. "I can't think of anything I want to do, other than what I do now," he says.

Sommelier Marinela echoes his sentiment, telling me it's a "dream job". She shows me a state-of-the-art wine vault, recently installed for a cool £230,000, and prides herself on providing a knowledgeable and interesting selection. "It's not about showing off," she says.

While the fixtures and fittings are impressive – a full-size tennis court, the only affiliated golf club at sea, casino, pilates studio, deli – it's the cultural events and access all areas that prove truly show-stopping. The Colosseo has hosted a Nobel Laureate series of guest lectures, the plaza has played host to performances from MET Opera principals, and the showroom has held world exclusive brand unveilings by the likes of Bvlgari.

Perhaps the pièce de résistance, however, is the ship's series of expeditions. In January last year, *The World* broke the record for the most southerly navigation in Antarctica's Ross Sea, part of a 22-day trip to the polar region.

It took two years of preparation, enabling residents to travel to the end of the Earth in the comfort of their own home.

One resident tells me she has lived on the ship for 13 years, joking that she is "part of the furniture now" and perhaps hoping that one day soon, she too will have a dish named in her honour.



A small selection of residences is available to purchase each year and range from \$2 million to \$20 million, in addition to annual ownership fees. For those interested in ownership, it is possible to arrange a tour of the ship or short sailing. To learn more about *The World's* unique lifestyle, tel: +1 (954) 538-8449 or visit: aboardtheworld.com