

BOAT

International

*"I like my boats fast,
lean and mean"*

LAPO ELKANN

*at full throttle,
page 162*



G FORCE

THE IRRESISTIBLE ANN G

+ FRANK GEHRY'S SECRET SAILER

GO DEEP: MILLION-DOLLAR SUPERYACHT SUBS

CORAL KINGDOM: 5-STAR DIVING IN RAJA AMPAT

Yearn to sail into the wild but don't want to dust up your yacht? Laura Chubb explores The World, the ship that lets owners leave their own boat at home and still voyage to the furthest reaches of the earth in superyacht luxury

THE WORLD IS ENOUGH

The World is the largest private residential yacht on earth



In June 2014, a TV crew making a documentary about the planet's ten most remote islands pointed their sailing boats towards the shore of Utupua, a 69 square kilometre tangle of mountainous jungle and tiny palm-hut villages, lying 250 miles east of the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific. Untroubled since WWII by any boats – other than the dugout canoes of its own 848 inhabitants – the crew was an uncommon sight. Days later both locals and crew awoke to a site that was equally astounding to both groups: the arrival of the 196 metre *The World*, decks lined with passengers sipping Champagne.

I'd be in trouble for calling them "passengers", of course; aboard *The World*, everyone is a resident, owning their own apartment-at-sea on what is billed as the largest private residential yacht on earth. One resident tells me it's "like living in a small, travelling village". Part high-end hotel, part elite housing development, the ship spends each year traversing the globe, splitting her time between off-grid expeditions and cruising more typical Mediterranean and Caribbean routes.

An even dirtier word than "passengers" here, however, is "cruise". "It looks like a cruise ship, but in operation, it's more like a yacht," insists Captain Johan Dyrnes, a sturdy Norwegian with more than 25 years of maritime experience. Dyrnes has worked for luxury cruise lines including Seabourne and Regent Seven Seas, so he should know. "I'd call it a hybrid," he tells me, "because the way it's operated is so different from any cruise ship I've been on. You really can't compare it at all."

When I join *The World* on a searing July afternoon in Porto, Portugal, I'm sceptical. The ship is huge – "superyacht" is just too small a term. But the more time I spend on board, the more the lifestyle feels like that of a superyacht – and, as plenty of people tell me, without any of the hassle of running your own boat.

One couple used to own a Hargrave – "my dream boat, it had these

“
The size of the ship allows you to reach parts of the world that 'ordinary' superyachts would not normally visit
”



“

This 12-deck beauty is part high-end hotel and part your own luxury apartment – passengers are known as ‘residents’

”



Picasso adorning the wall, the masterstroke is the wraparound balcony, giving the ship's best view after the bridge.

Residents join and leave *The World's* travels as they please; there's a maximum of 200 people on board this 12-deck vessel at any one time. General manager Thomas Legner tells me about a time when they had just 40 and because of the manageable numbers, they were offered the chance to get off and swim across the Equator. (They took it.) The boat also has a policy of spending nearly twice as many days at port as at sea, leaving residents free to properly explore.

Not that I was stuck for anything to do at sea. At the spa, I watched a pod of 30 dolphins play in the ship's wake as I sipped my post-massage ginger tea; that evening, three Michelin-starred chef Curtis Duffy, flown in for the occasion, served a seven-course dinner with wine pairings (the ship's cellar holds 12,000 bottles from the best vineyards). The night before, I'd marked the ship's departure from Porto into the Bay of Biscay with Champagne and a night under the stars in a Bali bed, open to the elements on the upper deck.

Launched in 2002, *The World* was built specifically to do what she does: with a tank carrying 343,400 gallons of marine gas oil and certified Ice Class IC, she's well positioned to sail to Antarctica's Ross Sea from Tasmania next January. She also boasts a full-size tennis court, gym, open-air putting green, and indoor golf simulator, with resident PGA pro. For the more sedate there's a cinema, cigar room and chic bars. Though it might be tempting to think of her as the world's greatest retirement village, the average age on board is 55.

Perhaps the appeal is summed up best by a British resident I meet one afternoon. Since buying in 2009, he and his wife have been diving in Burma's Mergui Archipelago, sailed through the Bering Strait to explore Wrangel Island (where they saw hundreds of polar bears), and were on board when *The World* became the largest passenger ship to traverse the Northwest Passage. He recalls taking a ride in the ship's helicopter at that time to watch the caribou migration. And how much personal effort has he put into making these expeditions a reality? He looks pleased with himself. "None whatsoever." ■



Guests are made at home with cuisine from around the world; there are also swimming pools, a tennis court and indoor golf range

beautiful Burmese teak handrails," says the husband – but sold up after a taste of life on *The World*. Here, they say, there are no crew issues ("sometimes it was like having children," says the wife), no planning, provisioning or maintenance headaches, safety and security is taken care of, and then there are the one-of-a-kind journeys. "You get to see so much more," they say, recalling the feeling of jumping out of a Zodiac on to Pitcairn Island (population: 56) in the furthest reaches of the South Pacific, and walking on the White Sea at midnight when *The World* sailed the Russian Arctic.

Life on board might be a breeze for residents, but behind the scenes, the crew spend years planning itineraries (residents vote on a choice of three world-spanning routes each year). Having completed a complex bureaucratic process to become a member of IAATO, *The World* visited the Antarctic and South Georgia last Christmas, bringing aboard a 15 to 20-strong team from expedition specialists EYOS to add local expertise. The ship also makes regular voyages into uncharted territory to reach remote islands, demanding serious skill and equipment. "We're going to places where the map is literally just a white sheet of paper," says Captain Dyrnes.

The second thing that strikes you about *The World*, after her sheer size, is the sense of privacy. With residents perfectly at home in their own apartments, when you do venture out to the lounges and restaurants – formal haute cuisine at Portraits or sashimi at East – it can feel like you've got the ship to yourself. Little wonder so many choose to stay at home; one three-bedroom, £12 million pad I'm permitted a peek at is the size of a large Park Avenue apartment. Decked out in white and with an original

