

# THE SPEAR'S 500

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# THE WORLD IS THEIR OYSTER

*Boasting 270 crew on board at any one time and 16,000 bottles of wine, it's all hands on deck when it comes to ensuring luxury cruising on The World, says Christopher Silvester*



**CHRISTOPHER SILVESTER**  
IS THE EDITOR  
OF SPEAR'S

ABOVE: 'THE WORLD' IN THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE; ABOVE RIGHT: A WINE VAULT IN PORTRAITS; RIGHT: A RESIDENCE ON THE VESSEL

As I wait to board the tender to take me out to *The World*, which has anchored in the Thames near Greenwich, I notice that one of the returning residents or visitors is bringing a wooden case of Pomerol aboard.

Once I have deposited my passport with the Port of London Authority in a mobile dock attached to the ship, I enter the ship's lobby, which is like a large, communal living room. There is a bar and a grand piano, which is used for occasional performances, but the lobby also contains the reception desks and concierge desks, as in a hotel.

Yet this is no hotel. Instead, this is 'the largest privately owned, residential yacht on earth' and it has been circumnavigating the world since 2002. Although London and New York are the most popular embarkation and disembarkation points, *The World* is often quiet, with an onboard resident population of between 150 and 250.

*The World's* concierge team plan all destination experiences for residents. The concierge desk produces newsletters about ports of call with information about places to visit, maps, points of interest, restaurant recommendations, as well as recommendations from other residents who know the destination well. Unlike cruise ships – and it is quite unlike

a cruise ship, even though it may resemble one from the outside – *The World* spends twice as many days in port as it does at sea.

Managed by 38 personnel at *The World* HQ in Florida, the ship is collectively owned by 142 families, with 165 residences in all. One wealthy individual who owns the six-bedroom penthouse apartment bought additional apartments for family members. Annual service charges are based on the square footage of the apartments.

The ship contains 106 two- and three-bedroom apartments, nineteen one- and two-bedroom apartments, and 40 studios. Some have two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Every residence has a private verandah. Some people have a half-year share in a residence, taking as much as six months on board throughout the year. (There is plenty of storage space to keep personal things between visits.)

I was shown around two residences, one that was empty, and one by the residents themselves, a cheery couple from Texas. It was apparent that you can decorate your apartment in whatever style you like.

Every couple of years the ship has to go into dry dock. During the most recent dry-dock period in Cadiz, 70 apartments had work done on them, with some residents flying in architects and design teams to oversee changes.

The residents come from about twenty different countries and roughly half of them are from USA, Canada, Europe, Australia or South Africa. They are predominantly English-speaking. Most of the residents are self-made business people, quite a few of them retired, and the average stay for residents is three or four months each year.

There are 270 crew and staff on board at any one time, out of an employee pool of 400, and they live on the lower decks. These are temperature-controlled so that they don't boil alive or freeze to death, depending on where the ship happens to be, and they have access to a separate gym from the residents' gym. Residents form friendships with crew members, some of whom have been with the ship since the beginning.

There are six eating areas altogether. On the open upper deck are the Poolside Grill and East, a restaurant serving Asian cuisine. Marina, an American-style steakhouse and seafood bar, occupies the ship's rear platform at night, but during the day this

turns into a platform for water sports, polar plunges, and the departure of Zodiac rigid inflatable boats for expeditions ashore. Marina even contains an indoor pool.

A fine dining restaurant, Portraits, is divided into three compartments but can be fully opened out, with room for a pianist and able to cater for 60 covers in a sitting. The management arranges for guest chefs to drop in and cook. Tides, which serves Mediterranean cuisine, has panoramic ocean views.

Freddy's Deli is best for casual eating. It also stocks residents' favourite brands of foodstuff from around the world (think Marmite and Hershey Bars, though it can be anything).

Of course, if you insist, you can cook for yourself in your apartment's kitchen (each individual kitchen is fireproofed). For those who prefer something similar to a hotel's room service, there is also 24/7 in-residence dining.

*The World* knows that fine wine is something its residents appreciate. There are 16,000 bottles of wine on board, and over 1,100 different types of wine. The main restaurants contain custom wine vaults with retractable drawers and transparent doors for display purposes. Eighty per cent of wines are bought locally, with the sommelier organising winery visits and presentations, and there is a wine programme to educate residents about wine culture as well as a wine service.

*The World* abounds with amenities. There is the Colosseo theatre for films and lectures on subjects such as economics, the arts and photography, as well as Palette, a children's play area with camp, a meeting room, a non-denominational place of worship, a medical centre with two physicians and nurses, and treatment rooms with a full-time physio.

There are several bars, including the resident-run Regatta Bar, home to *The World* Yacht Club, which has reciprocal benefits with yacht clubs around the world. There is a library, a cigar club, a mini-casino, a boutique which features designer collections, a mini-casino. Card games can be organized for sea days. Performances at the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and the National Theatre (London) are screened onboard. There are also taped lectures you can watch whenever you want in the privacy of your residence, and video on demand.

For sports enthusiasts, *The World* boasts the only full-size regulation tennis court at sea. There is a golf simulator (just choose a course from around the world, set the weather conditions, and start swinging) and a putting green. And there's an on-board golf pro who can arrange for you to play at courses around the world whenever you put in to a nearby port. There is even a styroscopic billiards table so that you can continue to pot away in choppy seas.

Aft of the top deck are several double Bali beds, which can be reserved through housekeeping. These allow residents to sleep under the stars, with

just a blanket for covering, when the ship is in warmer climes.

'We love the ship, the travelling, and the lifestyle,' say my hosts, the Douses, at lunch in the Tides restaurant. They are a retired couple, both formerly in the insurance business, who live in Wimbledon for six months of the year and aboard *The World* for much of the remainder. The main thing they like about, apart from the friendly village-like community and the service of the crew and staff, are the expeditions to extraordinary places.

They explain that rather like a residents association in an apartment block, the ship's Itinerary Committee, composed of residents, decides where the ship is going – routes have to be planned a year or two ahead – and the ship's captain advises about ports and fuel. Unlike most ships of its size, *The World* burns marine diesel rather than heavy bunker fuel. This means that it is allowed to sail in areas where heavy bunker fuel is banned.

The ship offers two major expeditions per year. My hosts had sampled a family trip to the South Atlantic and Antarctica three weeks after Christmas, and another expedition to Papua and New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. It is not just about exotic tourism, however. They visited a village and gave the villagers a pallet of school supplies.

In 2016 *The World* sailed a distance of approximately 39,000 nautical miles and visited over 100 ports of call in over 40 countries. In 2017 it is starting out in Australia, and will visit the Ross Sea and Antarctica before travelling via New Zealand to East Asia, then across the Pacific to the western seaboard of the United States, up to Canada and Alaska in the summer, back down to Mexico and Central America, and finally through the Panama Canal to the Caribbean.

As I retrieved my passport and awaited the tender that would return me to shore, it was hard not to feel envious of the residents. *J*

## WORLD CLASS

For additional information on *The World*, please visit [www.aboardtheworld.com](http://www.aboardtheworld.com), or contact the London Global Ambassador on 020 7016 6740.

