

# BOAT

International

**SAVE THE GALÁPAGOS**  
Why this yachting paradise is in peril

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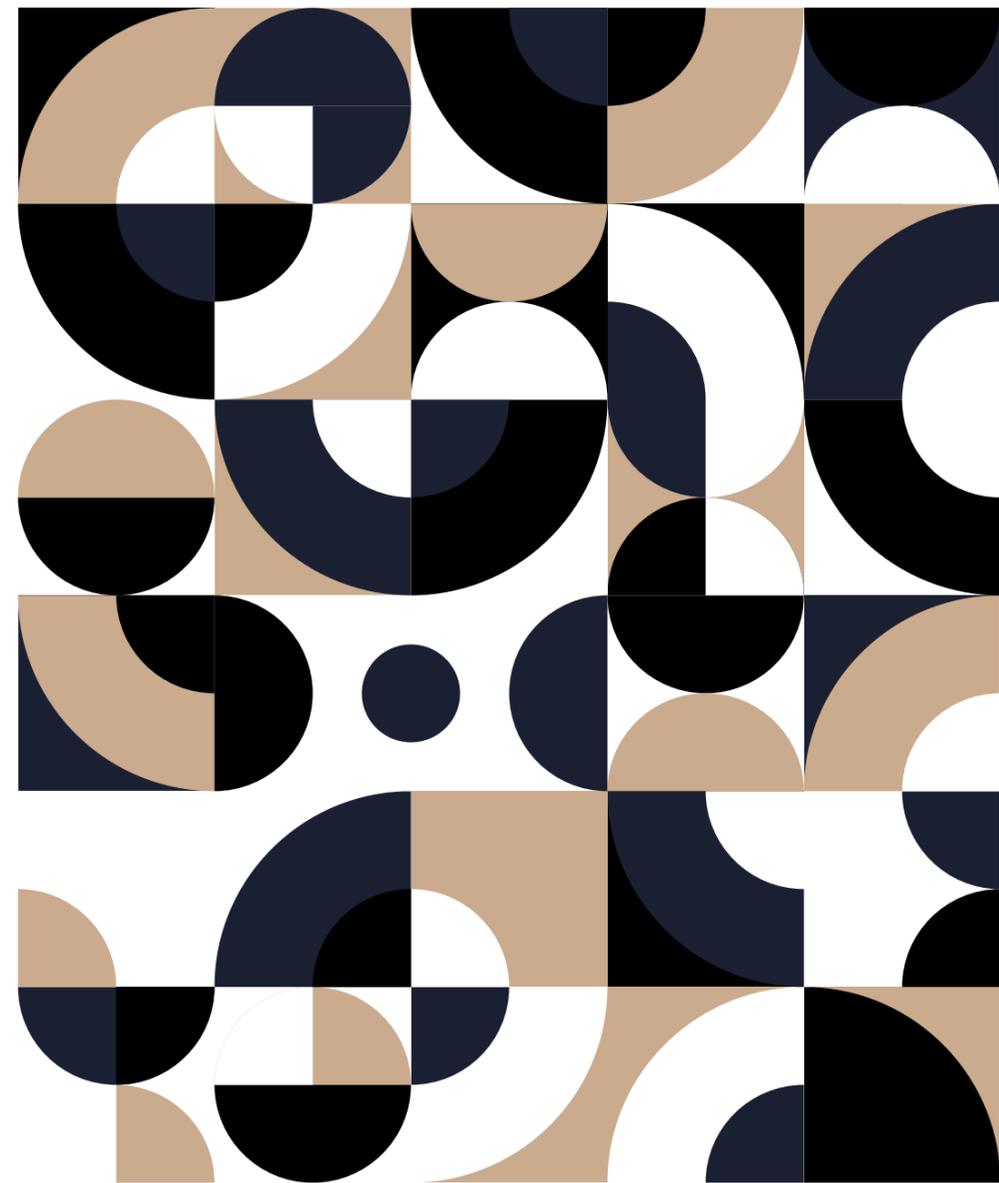
Tales from the Caribbean's best-loved hotels, from Eden Rock to Sugar Beach

Home and away: Hasna's owner on how he created a 73-metre family haven

Tennis ace Rafael Nadal talks multihulls from his new Sunreef catamaran



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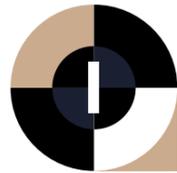


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PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY THE RITZ-CARLTON YACHT COLLECTION. RENDERINGS ARE ARTISTIC CONCEPTS. ALL FEATURES, PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

Where once there were only luxurious yachts or mass-market cruise ships to choose from, today there's a third category for those yearning to spend more time at sea. Private residence boats and single-cabin charter vessels are becoming big business, but can these hybrids compare to the real deal? *Sophia Wilson* investigates





"It took me less than 72 hours to decide to buy our two-bedroom home," says Trevor Rowe, who bought his property on board *The World* back in 2012. Having owned a series of game fishing boats and motor yachts over a period of 30 years, the largest private residential ship on the planet seemed like the perfect option to combine his passion for exploration with "worry-free studboating". "Aside from the expense of retaining a crew year-round, even when a yacht is not in use, it is reassuring for me to know that everything is taken care of by the management company - from crew recruitment and training through to provisioning and destination planning," he explains.

With 165 residences, *The World* is home to 150 families from 20 nationalities, and Rowe is by no means the only yachtie to have been taken in by the 196-metre vessel's charms. "Many of our residents are former or existing yacht and superyacht owners," says Pamela Conover, chief executive officer at The World Residences at Sea. "It's the perfect alternative to individual yacht ownership, offering services and facilities that would be challenging to achieve on one's own." Far from the perceived image of it being an old folks' home at sea, Conover says that residents tend to be "adventure seekers" with a "passion for travel, exploration and outdoor activities". "The average resident is a self-made entrepreneur whose business success has afforded them the financial ability to purchase a home on the ship and the time to enjoy it," she adds. "Many of our residents still work and are active in their businesses."

It is now 17 years since the first owners boarded *The World* and there doesn't seem to be any slowdown in demand for this kind of lifestyle. So much so there is soon to be another major player in the market: 282-metre *Njord*.

Scheduled for delivery in 2024, *Njord* will be the world's largest private residence yacht, with 118 apartments. "There is clearly a growing demand for private residential yachts," says COO of Ocean Residences Development Alain Gruber, who previously worked for nearly seven years on *The World*. "The *Njord* concept is very appealing to those who wish to share the superyacht lifestyle but also want to own a home providing personal enrichment and adventure." Construction is about to start at the DIV Shipbuilding Group's Kleven Verft shipyard in Norway and Brodosplit yard in Croatia, and designer Espen Øino has been brought in to give it the superyacht factor.

Famed for working with some of the world's largest superyachts, including *Kismet*, *Flying Fox* and *Dilbar*, Øino can see the attraction of the project. "For me, there is no better place to live



than on the sea," he says. "If I could do it, I would as well." With a basic GA for the interior already in place, Øino and his team predominately concentrated on the yacht's external design and exterior detailing. "We were asked to do something that would pass the test of time, that wouldn't be outrageously out of tune and that people would feel comfortable seeing. We also tried to incorporate detailing from the yachting world," he says. One of the biggest challenges he faced was balancing the exterior lines with interior living space. "The apartments are very much contemporary, modern apartments with big, full-height windows and lots of glass. You can see there are some diagonals and so on that are very carefully placed so that they don't obstruct the view from any of the apartments," he explains.

To meet the growing demand from clientele keen to be involved with marine conservation, the 12-deck yacht will be equipped with a professional oceanographic research laboratory, two submersibles and underwater drones. "Residents now include younger families that are interested in philanthropy, the environment, discovery and learning," explains Gruber. The boat, which has an ice-class hull, will also feature a gyroscopic telescope, which will scan the sky at night, while drones will monitor the atmosphere. "Throughout *Njord*'s annual circumnavigation of the globe, scientists and experts will research the changing environment, record sea and air conditions, and scanners will map the ocean floor. All this information will be processed and made available to further humankind's understanding of our planet's oceanic secrets," he adds.

At first glance it might seem that the major drawback of this kind of ownership is the inability to dictate when and where you can travel, but Gruber says it actually allows for greater exploration opportunities. "A privately owned superyacht may be the ultimate sanctuary and will

**"The *Njord* concept appeals to those who wish to share the superyacht lifestyle but also want to own a home providing enrichment and adventure"**

*Previous page: Ritz-Carlton's 190m Evrima launches in 2021. Right: Ocean Residences *Njord* project, which at 281m will be the world's largest private residence yacht*



PHOTOGRAPHY: FM ARCHITETTURA; COURTESY THE WORLD

provide great flexibility, but planning for global itineraries can be more complicated in terms of logistics, safety and security," he argues. Residents on *The World* vote three years in advance to approve a route, which varies from city stop-offs, to remote destinations (the ship recently set a record for the most southerly navigation in the Bay of Whales in Antarctica's Ross Sea). "I've visited places that I could never have imagined going to on my own yacht," says Rowe, who spends around nine months of the year on board and leaves when he is required for business meetings. "We've explored Antarctica three times, had some incredible experiences in the Galápagos Islands, Machu Picchu and the Russian Arctic."

Buying a slice of this roaming lifestyle doesn't come cheap: apartments on *The World* range from £1.5 million to £11.5 million (plus annual ownership charges, which are based on the size of the home and square footage - but the costs are still considerably less than normal ownership. "The initial investment of owning your own megayacht is significantly higher than the purchase of a home on board *The World*, and the operating costs of a yacht are substantially higher regardless of how much the yacht is used," says Conover. Prices for apartments on *Njord* are yet to be released, but Gruber says that financially it will also be a far more affordable option. "Running costs are shared by all the residents, making them less than a quarter of those of an individually owned superyacht," he says.

The idea of reducing costs while still offering a luxury yachting experience is also trickling down from ownership to the holiday market. The Ritz-Carlton luxury hotel chain has announced that it is launching a new Yacht Collection, with the first of three vessels scheduled to hit the water in 2021. With 149 suites, each with a private terrace, accommodating up to 298 passengers and amenities including a beach club-style aft deck,



Left: 196m *The World* is home to 150 families. Right and below: Espen Øino has been drafted in to give *Njord*'s interiors a superyacht feel



the boat has been designed to offer the "casual freedom of a yachting vacation". Tillberg Design of Sweden came up with the concept after spotting "a gap in the market" and has been responsible for the yacht's interior and exterior design. "Ships have been growing over the years and we saw that there was a demand for these smaller, more exclusive ships that you can sail into ports where other ships can't go," says Daniel Nerhagen, yacht director at Tillberg Design.

Nerhagen took on extensive research to work out how to ensure that the vessel has the feeling of a superyacht. "Simplicity was the main inspiration that we took from lots of different yachts," he explains. "On a cruise ship, every area has to have the wow factor, it has to outshine the previous area you went into. But being on a yacht is more like being at home, there is a flow in the whole design. We used common details and common materials throughout the ship, so you don't feel like you are coming into a new area every time." Other design tricks included light-up back bars being replaced with casual bar seating areas, without bottles on display and products for sale, and no signage. "You don't have signage on a yacht because it is so small and you know it because it is yours," he says.

All of this has been done to attract a wealthier level of client. "This is for the guest that doesn't want to take a cruise, because a cruise is mass market, but they can't afford to charter a yacht because that is a little bit too high end," Nerhagen says. "We would like to emulate the yachting experience on a slightly bigger scale."

Tillberg Design is not the only studio to notice this shift in demand. Wärtsilä and Pastrovich Studio recently signed an agreement to develop a sustainable boutique cruise vessel. The 60-metre catamaran concept offers accommodation for up to 36 passengers and incorporates a combination of hybrid propulsion and solar panels for minimal environmental impact. "I'm convinced boutique cruise ships of this calibre could spark a turning point in the charter market, attracting a new customer base of millennials and cruise veterans," says Stefano Pastrovich.

Aqua Expeditions founder Francesco Galli Zugaro saw a similar gap in the market when he



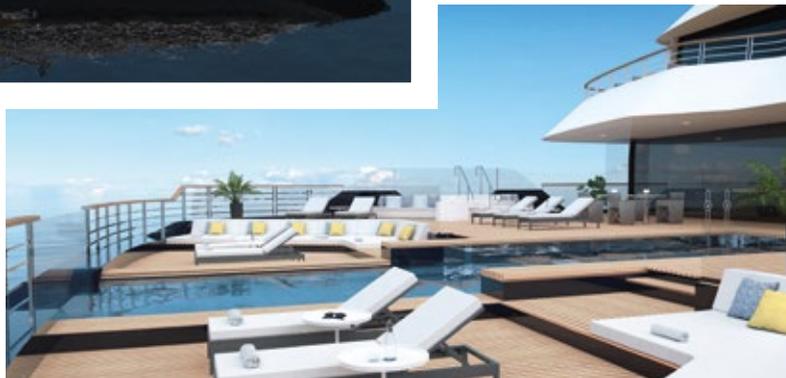
decided to find a coastal motor yacht to add to his fleet of luxury river cruise boats three years ago. "I didn't want a super sleek megayacht," he says. "A, because I couldn't afford it, and B because it would not make commercial sense." He eventually settled on a 60-metre vessel, which was built as HMS *Beagle* in the 1960s and was converted into SOLAS-classed 11-cabin superyacht *Titan* in 2006. After purchasing and renaming her *Aqua Blu*, Zugaro went about reconfiguring her interior. Her 90-square-metre master cabin was split into three, so she now has 15 suites for up to 30 guests. With the help of yacht designer Cor D. Rover he also refitted her. "All our ships have an understated elegance. I want people to feel like they are coming on board our private yacht," says Zugaro.

Cruising in Komodo National Park, Spice Islands and Raja Ampat, *Aqua Blu* is available for private hire, but Zugaro's primary business model is based around cabin bookings with fixed itineraries. Similar to *The World* and *Njord*, he sees exploration as a big draw. "Many of our guests can afford to charter privately, but the logistics and organisation of co-ordinating a multi-generational or multi-group buyout, where everyone has different interests, can be complicated," he says. For those venturing away from the traditional yachting grounds of the Med or the Caribbean for the first time, *Aqua Blu* can be an attractive option.

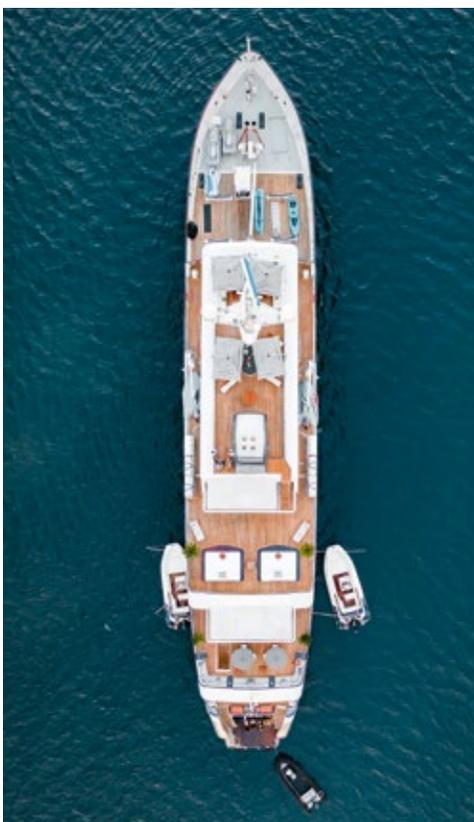
Ben Lyons, co-founder of EYOS Expeditions, which plans to run single-cabin charters to adventure destinations such as Svalbard and Greenland in 2021 - and also oversees expeditions from *The World* - agrees. "We've seen a definite



*Penned by Tillberg Design of Sweden, the Ritz-Carlton's three-strong Yacht Collection fleet will include Evrima (pictured), with 149 balcony suites, multiple restaurants and a beach club-style aft deck (below)*



*Above and below: this 60m boutique cruise concept from Wärtsilä and Pastovich Studio promises a sustainable cruising experience. Right: Aqua Blu offers fixed-itinerary explorer cruises for 30 guests*



**“Running costs are shared by the residents, making them less than a quarter of those of a superyacht”**

increase in interest in single-cabin charters,” he says. “They work particularly well for remote locations, as it is challenging to get a full group together, given limited dates and available yachts.”

Of course, no-one knows how a new generation of Covid-alert travellers may react. Those with reservations about sharing a space with non-family members may be against the idea, yet the pandemic has inspired an increasingly large group of ocean lovers, who are desperate to escape to far-flung corners of the globe. Either way, they'll certainly find plenty of advocates ready to take the plunge.

For those who've bought into this new wave of yachting, sharing your boat with other like-minded enthusiasts seems the perfect compromise. The proof is in the pudding. Asked eight years later whether he could see any downsides to purchasing an apartment on *The World*, Rowe's answer was simple: “None.” ■

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