

# TRAVEL+ LEISURE

## This Private Residential Ship Lets Owners Live at Sea—Here's What It's Like On Board 'The World'

From multi-million-dollar apartments to Antarctic itineraries, life aboard this privately owned ship is built on community.



The World, a private residential yacht that offers residences at sea.

Credit: The World, Residences at Sea

It's late afternoon at Quantum sports bar on deck five of [The World](#) and crisply dressed residents are filing in for afternoon cocktails and canapés. Irish-born Gary arrives and, moments after we've met, offers to buy me a beer.

He and his British wife, Lisa, split their time with San Diego and are currently working on their third (unspecified) start-up. They're also among the newest residents aboard this privately owned residential ship, having purchased their apartment in June 2025—just three months after a trial cruise through the Caribbean. “The trip was to make sure it wasn't a bunch of stuffy people,” Gary explains. After testing the waters, and finding them to their liking, they put an offer on an apartment before disembarking.

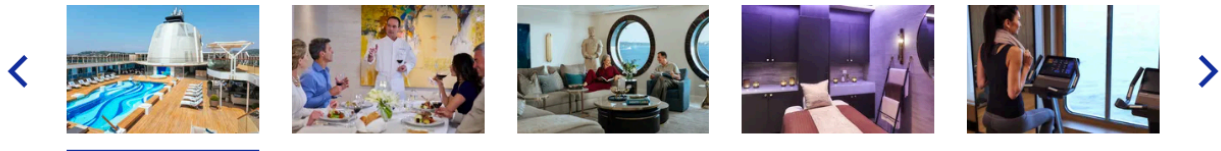
It's not the sort of place where you casually ask what someone paid. Apartments range from roughly \$3 million to \$15 million, with annual maintenance fees hovering around \$600,000. At the moment, there's just one on the market: a slightly garish but generously proportioned three-bedroom condo with, obviously, endless sea views, listed at \$9.9 million.

Not everyone onboard is an owner ... yet. A couple from Monaco boarded in Melbourne the same day I did, testing whether life on *The World* is their scene. They'll remain through New Zealand, before the ship continues to Antarctica and then South America as part of its 2026 Pacific circumnavigation.

Gary and Lisa's story echoes across the ship. Chris and Theresa, from Arizona, bought in February 2025 after just five days cruising the California coast. “I was concerned about the community, but that's the biggest selling point once you know it,” Chris says. “I was like, I don't know if I'm gonna find people that I want to hang around. But you quickly get a feel that that's not the way.” In fact, the community becomes the draw. The staff, too, stand out—engaged, polished, and refreshingly genuine in a way that sets them apart from typical cruise crews. The ship itself begins to feel less like a vessel and more like an amusement park.



The World's pool deck.  
Credit: The World, Residences at Sea



There are six restaurants and, by my count, seven bars, spanning everything from the formal dining room, Portraits, to seafood feasts at Marina—think Sydney rock lobster and oysters—along with Asian cuisine at East and vintage ports and rare liqueurs at the Cigar Club. At Fredy's Café and Deli, residents can pick up anything from dragon fruit to a bottle of Louis XIII cognac, retailing around \$5,000, alongside Champagne and caviar.

The wellness offering is equally extensive: a spa with five treatment rooms, a hair and nail salon, and a traditional barbershop, alongside treatments ranging from cold laser therapy for weight loss to radio-frequency facials designed to “remodel” the face. Staff say plans are underway to bring in a doctor to offer Botox and fillers.

Then there’s what I call the “Gym of the Immortals” —a sprawling fitness space equipped with cutting-edge equipment and programs, from sound therapy to Reformer Pilates. Residents, whose average age is in the early 60s, embrace it all with notable enthusiasm. There’s also a full-sized tennis and pickleball court, bocce, and even a golf simulator offering access to 60 virtual courses, complete with a resident pro.

For the mind, there are expert lecture and art programs and a vast range of “destination experiences” (aka shore excursions) and overland journeys designed to take residents deeper into each region.



Batemans Bay, on the south coast of New South Wales, Australia.  
Credit: The World, Residences at Sea

On my three-day voyage from Melbourne to Sydney, there's a single stop at Batemans Bay on the New South Wales south coast. I kayak along the Clyde River, weaving between oyster leases, before settling into a riverside shack to feast on freshly shucked oysters alongside billionaires and multimillionaires. For a few sunlit hours, titles and fortunes dissolve — and we're just all fans of fitness, nature and bivalves.

This is my third time aboard *The World*, and the easy camaraderie is striking. When I first sailed in 2002, the ship was brand new and still operated partially as a hotel. Mixing paying guests with ultra-wealthy residents proved awkward, and within a year, the ship went bankrupt. Residents rallied together to purchase it, transforming it into the fully owner-occupied vessel it remains today.

I returned in 2016, when a handful of apartments were on the market and the ship's marketing committee was quietly courting Australian buyers. Back then, access to residents was tightly controlled; I was granted just two interviews. This time, the atmosphere is entirely different. People are open, curious, and happy to speak to the visiting journalist. It feels like a completely different ship.

"Look, this is an opportunity," explains The World's president and CEO Jessica Hoppe. "As you've rightly noted, 10 years ago our ship and the residents had very much decided that we would be very, very exclusive."

But with potential competitors — at least two other residential ships have been proposed, though none has launched — there's a growing recognition that visibility matters. "I think there was awareness (among) the residents that we should be out there," she says. "When something becomes so exclusive that ... nobody knows (about it), then it's a little too exclusive."

Which raises an obvious question: if you have this level of wealth, why choose a shared ship over a private superyacht? “All of them have had their private yachts in the past,” explains The World residential director Eddie Wong. “The number one thing that I hear is the convenience of being here, not having to deal with the crewing, the staff, logistics ... It’s the ease of not having to think about anything.”

“Owning a boat is a lot of work,” Gary agrees, saying what drew him to The World was its “community,” a phrase I hear repeatedly from owners.

So, it’s a ship of peers, I ask? “It’s more than that. It’s a ship full of adventurers,” Gary says. “That’s what we like about it.”