

Downsizing to an apartment that sails the world

Inside a designer home on The World, the 'largest private residential ship on the planet'

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Rounded forms carry through the living room of this Studio Ahead-designed home on The World Residences at Sea, a softening feature that also serves as a safety measure at sea. A vintage Italian sofa is placed in front of a custom-made bookshelf, in which a sliding panel created by artist John Gnorski hides a television and bar. PHOTO BY INGE PRINS

For the price of a nice home in West Vancouver, you could own an apartment on what is widely regarded as the largest private residential ship on the planet.

Twelve decks high and stretching 644 feet, The World Residences at Sea operates like a floating luxury apartment building, where the residents collectively vote on where the ocean-going vessel will travel throughout the year.

Some 300 residents own The World's 165 homes, with more than half from the United States, and many from Europe, Australia, Japan and Canada. At any given time, between 150 to 200 residents and their guests are onboard. A handful live there all year, while most come and go depending on the itinerary. Community members include families with children, though the majority are retirees. The average ownership period tends to run seven to eight years.



The World Residences at Sea, a 644-foot, 12 deck private residential ship, has been continuously circumnavigating the globe since 2002. PHOTO BY THE WORLD, RESIDENCES AT SEA



The lobby of The World, widely regarded as the largest private residential ship in the world. PHOTO BY THE WORLD, RESIDENCES AT SEA

Outside of dry dock for upkeep, The World has been continuously circumnavigating the globe since 2002. It kicked off 2026 in Tasmania, Australia and New Zealand, followed by a semi-circumnavigation of Antarctica, then the South Pacific and French Polynesia, before heading to the Pacific Northwest and onward to Asia.

Homes range from compact 330-square-foot studios to two- and three-bedroom apartments upwards of 3,000 square feet. Owners can renovate — flooring, bathrooms, fixtures — during scheduled maintenance windows that

occur two or three times a year. Structural changes are permitted only when the ship is in dry dock, which happens every three years.

Residences are owned outright, priced from US\$3.5 to \$15 million, with annual maintenance fees around 10 per cent of the purchase price. Prospective buyers are typically hosted by a homeowner to determine whether the lifestyle suits them, and residents often sublet other residents' suites to host friends and family.



A dining area in a residence aboard The World, created for Studio Ahead's client who wanted room to host family and friends features walnut chairs by Hagerman Studios around a dining table by Karl Springer. PHOTO BY INGE PRINS

That instinct to host runs through much of life on The World. San Francisco-based design firm Studio Ahead took on a brief for Nora Lacey, a biotech entrepreneur who ultimately found her land-based holiday retreat in Lake Tahoe less than inspiring. Lacey was drawn to The World's combination of travel and a stable home base, embracing a much smaller footprint without sacrificing her love for hosting family.

“Even though she downsized, her priorities didn’t change,” says Studio Ahead principal Homan Rajai. “She still wanted to host her sister, her mom, her kids, her grandkids — while keeping her own space too.”

Lacey came to the project already familiar with the studio's work, having admired the design firm's rounded, sheepskin-upholstered furniture for years.

What began as a request to furnish a few rooms grew, within weeks of installation, into a full renovation of the roughly 1,400-square-foot residence. Getting there meant Rajai and project designer Seth Huxe spent nearly a year co-ordinating a build that stretched from Montreal to Boston to a fabrication house in Vienna to final installation in a Spanish shipyard, all timed to a dry-dock window that opens once every three years.



Appliances are tucked out of sight behind kitchen cabinetry, hand-formed from raw, undyed fibreglass. A backsplash formed from Moroccan tiles continues the sea green colour palette. PHOTO BY INGE PRINS



Studio Ahead's custom sheepskin-upholstered furnishings anchor the primary bedroom. The large ocean vista painting was sourced on a trip to Mexico City. PHOTO BY INGE PRINS

The studio's approach was less "yacht interior" than a small, deeply considered home. The kitchen counter and cabinetry were hand-formed from raw, undyed fibreglass, a material borrowed from Italian boatbuilding tradition. Shades of sea-green continue in a Moroccan tile backsplash. Cabinet interiors, invisible once closed, were finished in walnut.

Rounded forms carry through every room, a softening effect that doubles as a safety measure for a moving vessel. The custom sheepskin beds anchor the primary and guest rooms. Vanities, millwork and coffee table all pick up the same rounded language.

Every element carries hidden engineering such as locking mechanisms rated for rough seas, IMO-certified paint and materials, and storage niches grouted invisibly into tiled walls.

"It's really sweet to have these small, beautiful, cared-about homes that are bringing delight," says Rajai.

For more information about units available for purchase on The World, visit its [website](#).