

# TOP OF THE WORLD

Step aboard *The World* – the largest privately owned yacht – as we take you on a private tour of the mansion that floats on water

WORDS: STEPHANIE PLENTL

It's rare to meet a man of *The World*: a resident of the largest, privately owned yacht in existence. Though the highly exclusive residential ship – a floating city of luxury – launched amid a blaze of media curiosity in 2002, it promptly sailed off on the first of its frequent circumnavigations and out of public consciousness. Which is, of course, exactly how the residents prefer it. A community of self-made multi-millionaires – with industries that range from tech and finance, to medical development and construction – they may share a thirst for travel, adventure and the finer things in life, but they also value the privacy of, what is essentially, their home.

I'm sitting with 'Mr Resident' in an elegant, understated lounge above the flower-filled grand atrium – an arrival and concierge area where everyone knows your name. We are in port in Barcelona, one of the last stops on the ship's European tour. I must guard his privacy – a policy for all those on board – but can reveal that he is an amiable Scot in his 70s who is highly successful in retail. Keen on travelling by boat, he bought his 1,380 sq ft, two-bedroom



*'Captain Johan Dyrnes might be at the helm, but the residents rule The World'*



apartment as soon as he heard that the visionary Norwegian cruise ship magnate, Knut U. Kloster, had conceived the unique concept. 'The onboard community all have so much in common,' he tells me of the largely American, Australian and European nationals, all of whom have the requisite net worth of \$10 million or more. 'They've become just as good friends as those we've had for 60 years.' Call it a close-knit nautical neighbourhood.

A 644ft stately vessel that features 165 residences, 12 decks and five-star service, *The World* shares no common ground with a conventional cruise ship. The residents fully own their studios or apartments (visiting on average three to four months of the year) and are entirely free to customise them. When it launched, suites featured the designs of Nina Campbell and Juan Pablo Molyneux, but increasingly residents have refurbished with a contemporary aesthetic and modern artworks, casually picking up pieces from all corners of the globe. And since the residents bought out the syndicate of owners in 2003 they have, in addition, helped determine their wider environment, from the ship's overall decor to its jaw-dropping destinations (more of which later). As Mr Resident himself admits, 'Most of us are very used to telling other people what to do'. In short, Captain Johan Dyrnes might be at the helm, but the residents rule *The World*.

Crucial to the concept of *The World* lifestyle is that the best comes as standard. Onboard, the plethora of services must equal what residents have come to expect from the most illustrious hotels, restaurants or spas on land. My tour with the residence manager, David Stewardson, covers an impressive check list of amenities: a library (2,200 books, 2,700 DVDs), theatre, fitness studio, kids' games room, an outdoor putting green and virtual golf studio (a golf pro is always on hand), a pool table room, small casino, chess room, indoor and outdoor pools, a chapel, spa, deli and convenience store and two boutiques for clothes and jewellery. The full-size tennis court is a further surprise, as is all the →

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE WORLD



→ sporting equipment freely available – from golf clubs to scuba gear. Remarkably, I notice not one scuff or scratch, anywhere: ‘We have to protect the residents’ investment,’ David says simply.

Naturally, the residents are true gourmands with a penchant for fine dining. The concierge – a term that is truly pedestrian for the team that manager Ben Lake spearheads – organised for the ship’s residents to be the last group to eat at elBulli before it closed in 2011. Last night, I hear they dined at the current number one restaurant in the world, El Celler de Can Roca, in the suburbs of Girona. Securing a reservation is clearly never a problem when *The World* calls (neither is getting a handful of football shirts signed by Barcelona player Lionel Messi – a wish just granted for the birthday boy of one resident family).

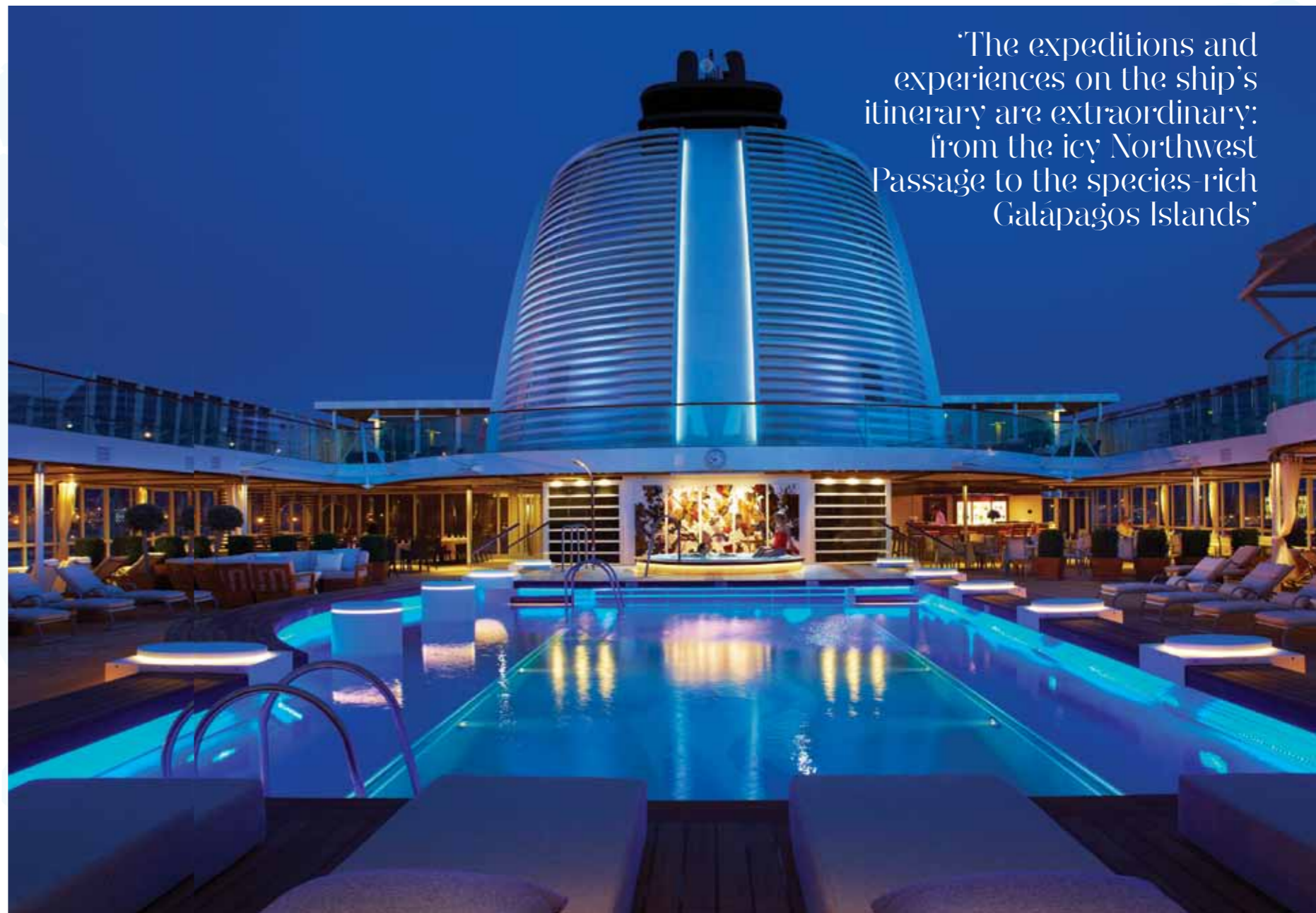
The four exceptional onboard restaurants – East (pan Asian), Tides (Mediterranean), Marina (seafood and steak) and Portraits (black-tie haute cuisine) – are compelled to reinvent their menus while maintaining residents’ favourite dishes. Meanwhile, the therapists in the 7,000 sq ft spa and salon provide expert reinvention and maintenance of their own: here, premium brands Natura Bissé and PHYT’s help keep clients glowing between doctors’ appointments in Miami or New York.

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of

*The World* is the access it grants to specialist knowledge, foreign cultures and rarely seen landscapes. The expeditions and experiences on the ship’s itinerary are extraordinary: from the icy Northwest Passage to the species-rich Galápagos Islands, each trip utilises a hand-picked selection of geologists, biologists and cultural historians who lecture first in the theatre and then lead on land. ‘It can feel like a David Attenborough programme at times,’ laughs Andrew Dinsdale, the enrichment manager who is responsible for co-ordinating the ‘wow’ moments. Think sleeping on deck under the Northern Lights, sunrise with king penguins in Antarctica or sunset with polar bears in the Russian Arctic (with access to Wrangel Island signed off by Putin himself).

The original inventory on *The World* sold out in 2006, but there are currently five residences available for resale. Potential owners are permitted to join the ship for up to three separate occasions before needing to commit to purchase, with properties ranging from \$800,000 to \$7.7 million (plus annual maintenance charges that are rendered hefty with the ‘clean’ marine diesel price.) For many, this is a hassle-free alternative to owning a private yacht, but as Mr Resident explains, there are a handful of further qualifying characteristics: ‘A love of travelling, an availability of time, the required finances and, crucially, a good relationship with your spouse.’

Evidence of a genuine camaraderie between the neighbours is that they commonly host one another in their native land and keenly offer their personal contacts to the concierge. A recent visit to Ireland included a gala dinner at the Titanic Exhibition Centre and an invitation to the estate of the apartment owner. Mr Resident himself throws an annual Burns Night supper onboard, flying in Dover sole, haggis, thistle and heather from his native Scotland. In 2014, Burns Night fell when they were between New Orleans and Peru. Several residents flew in specially, and why not? For these captains of industry, *The World* is their oyster. ☑



‘The expeditions and experiences on the ship’s itinerary are extraordinary: from the icy Northwest Passage to the species-rich Galápagos Islands’

