

At Home On *The World*

What if I told you it was possible to visit exotic destinations while enjoying the comfort of your own home? Sounds like a dream, doesn't it? However, residents of *The World*, a floating community of 165 luxury apartments, have been doing just that since 2002.

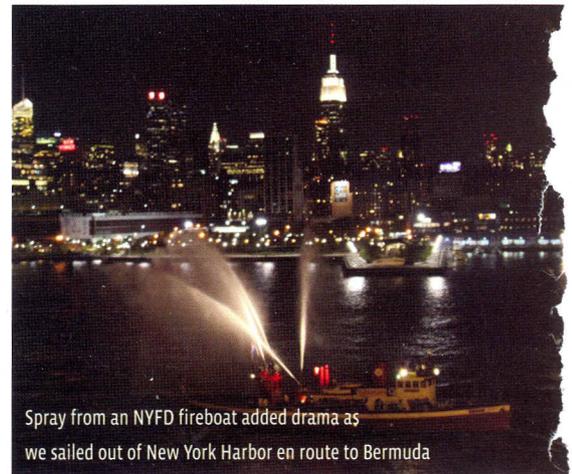
With 12 decks and an overall length of 644 feet, *The World* could easily be mistaken for a cruise ship — which it definitely is not. Instead, it is a strikingly beautiful home-away-from-home for owners of studio, one-, two-, or three-bedroom residences who spend an average of four months on board every year. These folks come and go as the ship continues to move around the globe on an itinerary that includes stays of up to five days in some ports and expeditions to places as remote as Greenland and Antarctica.

The World's refined atmosphere,

outstanding staff, and deluxe facilities attract enthusiastic travelers who prefer the convenience of being at home on the sea to enduring the frustrations and limitations of other types of transportation and lodging.

My husband Richard and I recently sailed on *The World* from New York to Bermuda as “vacationing guests,” meaning we were able to rent an apartment whose owners were elsewhere. Until we boarded, I really didn't know what to expect, but I was soon impressed with our one-bedroom, two-bath studio with its walk-in closet, veranda, and kitchenette facilities. I enjoyed listening to the Juilliard String Quartet before dinner and was moved to tears as we passed the floodlit Statue of Liberty — an experience made more dramatic by a water cannon salute from an NYFD fireboat. I later learned that such special treats are not unusual

on *The World* because residents — who come from North America (50 percent), various European countries (35 percent), and Asia, Australia, South America, and South Africa (15 percent) — enjoy myriad personal contacts around the globe.



Spray from an NYFD fireboat added drama as we sailed out of New York Harbor en route to Bermuda

The highlights of our first dinner — in Tides, one of the ship's four restaurants — were the warm ricotta custard with grilled zucchini, fennel, and cherry tomatoes, a wonderful Brolio Chianti Classico, and the remarkably attentive service that included acknowledgement of our pre-registered food allergies. It was at this point that I concluded that *The World* is to ships what Aman is to resorts. 'Nuff said?

In addition to Tides (which offers Mediterranean cuisine), *The World's* other restaurants are East (Asian cuisine and sushi bar), Marina (steak and seafood), Portraits (French fusion), and Fredy's Deli (quick bites and gourmet groceries). The night we dined in Portraits, the *amuse bouche* was frog legs; my appetizer was diver scallops on

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The 165 apartments on *The World* range from studios to three-bedrooms and include a wide range of interior design styles

puff pastry and my main course was Chilean sea bass. However, the *pièce de résistance* was the chocolate peanut dessert, which consisted of dark chocolate crème, lemon skin puree, and finely ground peanuts layered sandwich style — with a taste of praline-citrus sorbet on the side.

The next day we explored decks 11 and 12, where the fun and games are located. These include the only Wimbledon-size tennis court at sea, a jogging track, two putting greens and a golf simulator, a paddle tennis court, a pool, and Jacuzzi. In addition, another pool and water sports center are located on deck five.

While these places were all in use, the busiest area was the fitness center and spa — the only Banyan Tree Spa located on a ship. (Tip: book appointments well ahead to avoid disappointment.) It seems that residents use the time at sea to work out, catch up, and plan for the next port. Some also try to shed a few pounds by choosing the South Beach Diet dishes that are offered on every menu. I, however, found it hard to resist the numerous indulgent options.

Because it is such a unique ship, *The World* causes a stir wherever it docks — including Hamilton, Bermuda



At the safety lecture, we learned that 170 residents and guests were onboard, as well as 260 crew and staff, and I was impressed to hear that the ship had just received a 100-point inspection from the U.S. Department of Public Health — for the third year in a row. We were also reminded that due to the high regard for privacy, photography of residents and guests is not allowed.

In many ways, this floating community enjoys a camaraderie not unlike that of a land-based neighborhood. A Zumba class in the fitness center was taught by a resident volunteer, and Richard and I attended a hilarious play reading by residents in the theater. On the other hand, owners also have book groups, bridge clubs, private presentations, and signature tours that are not open to rental guests. All 106 two- and three-bedroom apartments have full kitchens where some occupants cook, while others take advantage of the ship's "call a chef" option.

Enrichment activities include lectures and exhibits designed to bring the next destination alive. During our trip, cetacean expert Howard Rosenbaum, PhD gave lectures on ocean giants and met with guests and residents on deck 11 for whale watching. He also spoke about the BP oil spill and its impact on the environment. Another lecturer, a former cabinet minister from Bermuda, provided insight into his island home.

During December, *The World* will be cruising around South America and will arrive in Antarctica on Christmas Day. If you haven't made plans for the holidays, it's not too late to inquire about one of the 50 or so studios and apartments that can be rented by vacationing guests. I can't imagine a more comfortable way to explore this rugged part of the world. (www.aboardtheworld.com)

For more details on *The World*, visit www.ranchandcoast.com.

ELIZABETH HANSEN



Tides, which offers Mediterranean cuisine, is one of four restaurants on *The World*