

Retirement

Cruise into later life

There's a new wave of ships where the elderly can live full time – at a price

THE Queen loved her royal yacht so much that she openly wept when it was decommissioned in 1997.

"This is where I can truly relax," she said of Britannia, which had been her floating haven for 44 years and had hosted Winston Churchill, Noel Coward, Nelson Mandela, and several U.S. presidents in its 56-seat dining room.

She also transported four royal couples on their honeymoons – most memorably Prince Charles and Diana in 1981.

Only the super-rich can afford to own a yacht. But now, retirees can buy a slice of life on the high seas on board the world's first dedicated retirement ship.

British designers are creating Seascope – about to start construction in Vietnam – which will have the first drive-in, on-board marina where you can moor your yacht or two-man submarine.

It will also have a dive centre and whale-watching observatory and Skymast, a tethered electric drone hovering 180m up, giving its residents a 5G mobile network.

Not to mention kennels and play areas for pets, swimming pools, a smart restaurant, an observation deck, bistros, theatre/cinemas, a wellness spa, gym, sauna, library, shops and Harrods food hall-style supermarket.

Seascope will also have its own hospital with operating theatre and intensive care unit, and a floatplane that can act as an air ambulance.

There will be 206 apartments sold on 50-year leases when it launches in 2021, aimed at retirees with a

passion for cruising and travel. Figures from the UK Office for National Statistics show that the number of over-65s travelling overseas rose by 13.7 per cent from 2014 to 2016.

And, according to the CLIA Cruise Review report, a total of 2,009,000 took a cruise in 2018.

Of course, you don't have to buy a cruise cabin to spend your retirement at sea.

Lee Wachtstetter, 91, has been living on a cruise ship for the past 14 years. She has even written a

book about it. In *I May Be Homeless, But You Should See My Yacht*, she talks about selling the family home in Florida after her husband died. Instead of downsizing, she went cruising.

Life at sea provides Lee with companionship, all her meals, access to healthcare, and entertainment. She's visited more than 100 countries and still dances every night. "The day before my husband died of cancer in 1997, he told me: "Don't stop cruising," she says. "So, here I am today, living a

stress-free, fairytale life.' More and more cruise lines are catering to the 'permanent cruise' market.

The Utopia, planned to hit the waves in 2024, is set to be 'the most opulent residential ocean liner ever built' (utopiaridences.com). Its 190 'estates' cost from £3.4 million for a two-bed, rising to £27.9 million for a 6,500 sq ft three-bed.

Seascope, the first of ten planned floating retirement villages, will cruise continuously, circumnavigating the world three times over five years and always avoiding bad weather and trouble spots.

"There is a market for at least ten ships, which is only 2,000 apartments, to serve a potential world market of 70 million high net-worth individuals," says Seascope's chief engineer Ian Carne.

Apartments will cost from £950,000 for a 60 sq m home, rising to £2.4 million for 135 sq m on the highest deck. There is no stamp duty to pay, but there will be monthly charges and exit fees.

JANE SLADE



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