

# GUIDE

## LUXURY CRUISES

# Another day in PARADISE

**Gabriella Le Breton** finds comfort and gastronomy in abundance aboard *Seabourn Sojourn*



■ The *Seabourn Sojourn* caters for its 450 passengers in style

‘**A**nd the sun goes down on another day in paradise,’ sighed a woman at the next table. This might have seemed an ill-placed, even annoying remark. We were looking at slate-grey clouds, behind which the sun was sinking. The wind whipped the flag outside and drizzle streaked the windows. Yet sitting in the comfort of *Seabourn Sojourn*’s Observatory Bar, champagne in hand, it was impossible not to agree.

We were sailing between Estonia and Poland, having made our way

around the Baltic from Copenhagen to Tallinn, via Stockholm, Helsinki and St Petersburg. With another four days to go and despite the inclement weather, *Sojourn*’s passengers were content, enjoying being between destinations almost as much as being in them.

‘Cruising’ is a word that conjures more hackneyed connotations than that describing any other form of travel. The experience of sailing onboard Seabourn’s newest ‘mega-yacht’, however, is a million miles away from being on a floating fusty retirement home. My 449 fellow

passengers are a well-travelled, well-heeled, cosmopolitan bunch, from 24 different countries. They range in age from 19 to 83, with the majority falling into the under-65 bracket. All have high expectations of service and quality — and with prices for an all-inclusive Seabourn voyage starting at about £3,000 per person, so they should.

While most guests have cruised before, many with Seabourn, none rivals the remarkable Mrs W. An elegant and spirited octogenarian, Mrs W has spent some 3,000 days on Seabourn ships and has not left *Sojourn* since its maiden voyage in June.



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■ The Spa Terrace aboard the *Sojourn*

She will remain with the ship for a further three months, enjoying a brief spell at home in Fort Lauderdale before re-embarking for a four-month World Cruise. Her loyalty tells you everything you need to know about Seabourn, as does the presence of the BBC's Hotel Inspector, strictly off-duty.

Mrs W enjoys a comfortable daily routine — you can set your watch by her 7.15 p.m. sundowners in the Observatory Bar (Jack Daniel's, rocks on the side). She doubtless finds *Sojourn's* extensive facilities superfluous. Together with the other 'short-timers', however, I spent my time happily exploring the swimming pools, outdoor hot tubs and two-deck spa, the shops and the casino, watching entertaining shows, and enjoying the restaurants and bars. There's even a lively club.

At 650 feet and 32,000 tonnes, *Sojourn* is three times the size of Seabourn's first three ships, yet carries just over twice the number of passengers. The term 'floating hotel' is frequently used to describe cruise ships and, in the sense that they provide a fixed abode for the duration of a voyage, it is accurate. *Sojourn* is the water-bound

equivalent of the Ritz. She is spacious and well-equipped, and her understated décor exquisite, with beautiful feature windows, sculptures and paintings, justifying the six-star rating awarded to her.

Not content with mere cabins, *Sojourn* provides all passengers with outside suites, 90 per cent of which have a private balcony. The suites range in size from 295 square feet to a whopping 1,682 square feet, and come with vast beds, walk-in wardrobes, palatial double-sink marble bathrooms with bath and shower, complimentary 24-hour room service, mini-bar stocked with your preferred drinks and interactive plasma TV. I could go on.

But it takes more than facilities and décor to create an 'ultra-luxury' experience. On *Sojourn*, the real stars are the crew. Not only are they courteous, friendly and efficient, they're skilled in the art of anticipation: warm blankets emerge within seconds of a cloud covering the sun and ice-cold drinks mysteriously replace half-drunk, lukewarm ones.

And then there's the food, which is superb. Over the course of our 12-day

voyage, we quaffed more than 3,000 bottles of champagne and plundered some 30kg of caviar, 4,100kg of lobster, fresh fish and seafood, 2,750kg of prime beef and 1,800kg of veal. Suffice to say, regardless of which of *Sojourn's* four very different restaurants you dine in (or if you plump for meals served course by course in your suite), you are guaranteed world-class, six-star cuisine.

So, exceptional food and drinks available around the clock, luxurious suites and public areas, unparalleled service and excellent facilities, gratuities included. Suddenly £300 a day doesn't sound so much, does it? ●

Yachts of Seabourn offer seven- to 111-day cruises across the world on board *Seabourn Sojourn*. Prices start from £3,099 for the 12-day 'World Cruise Segment 6' voyage departing Civitavecchia (Rome) on 11 April 2011, including full-board and gratuities.  
[www.seabourn.com](http://www.seabourn.com)  
 0800 070 0500