

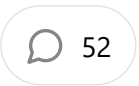
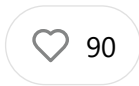
A year (more or less) at sea

Reporting from the vicinity of the Great Barrier Reef



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Actual photo of me disembarking from the Odyssey in Cairns, Australia . Courtesy of Joe Bauers/

I'm scheduled to permanently disembark from the badly-run boarding school that i [Villa Vie Odyssey](#) in 15 hours 20 minutes and 39 seconds. Not that I'm counting or anything.

38, 37, 36, 35 . . .

I've basically gone into hiding the last few weeks, hunkering down in my cabin, isolating, hoping I can get out of here with a minimum of drama. There's a lot of th going around these parts, the drama, I mean. It's been just a over a year since we left Belfast and lately you can smell the tension in the air, which is not altogether bad because it distracts you from the even-worse smell of rotting carpet. (Because, you know, leaky pipes.)

It's as if the one-year anniversary of our launching — officially celebrated on October 1 — opened some sort of psychological hellmouth on board, probably near Guest Services. Everyone seems a little on edge. Festering resentments have erupted into louder, more frequent complaints. No fistfights or anything (although there were a couple of times when it seemed like maybe a punch was about to be thrown), but a definite sense that everyone on board — both the Residents and the crew — have gotten tired of everyone's bullshit, mine included. We all need a break.

And, because I'm a goddam hero, I'm going to give them one. Today, November 8, is my last day on board, unless I sleep through the one-hour-only Australian Immigration disembarkation window in the morning, which is not unlikely. In that case, I won't be able to leave until February and that sound you hear will be the wai of a certain [top-hatted wanna-be witch doctor](#), whose worst nightmare would be coming true.

I've been ready to go for a while now, probably since somewhere in the Philippines, least a month ago. I'd originally planned this as a 3-and-a-half year voyage, one globe-circumnavigation's worth of adventures. But that plan, like so many others, got blown up in Belfast. The long-term itinerary got ripped asunder and Villa Vie's many missteps — no need to [recount](#) them in detail again, feel free to look at pretty much every previous edition of this Substack — made the trip considerably less enjoyable than any of us had envisioned. So, after 14 months at sea, having visited 6 continent-hemispheres and more beer joints and music clubs than I can possibly count, I chose to get out while the getting was good.





In the chair. Deck 5 Corridor. Yesterday. (photo by Starr Davis)

Which is not to say I regret the last year and half. Not all of it anyway. I've discovered some things about myself that I didn't know before. For instance, I don't mind cantaloupe. Who knew? I am not prone to seasickness. Also, no matter how many times I change time zones, waking up before noon will always be a struggle. Daylight is not now and has never been my friend.

I've been to places I'd never have otherwise visited, including some I'd never even heard of. Ceuta? Manta? Topolobambo? Hakodate? Yap?

I'll forever be able to impress people at parties by saying things like, "Ah, yes, I remember the time we encountered that typhoon in Cebu." Or, "As I was saying to my friend in that cafe on Tenerife." I'll have basically turned into Commander McBragg





So, was it worth it? Yeah, probably. I've made friends that I'll miss and enemies, many bearing pom-poms, that I definitely won't. The beer has been shitty but the company has been great. I'll miss my afternoons in the Deck 5 corridor and my nights in the Morning Light Lounge. I won't miss the endless safety drills. I'm pretty sure the epitaph on my tombstone will be, "Stand clear of the fire doors. Stand well clear."

If I make it off the ship tomorrow, I'll spend the night in Cairns, drinking non-shitty beer in the [Croc Bar at the Grand Hotel](#). I'll take a train to Brisbane the next morning and then hang around Australia until the end of the year. I'm particularly looking forward to Tasmania. And also adopting a wombat.





I'll fly to New Zealand on New Year's Eve and then fly back to the U.S. in January. I go back to living in the Traipsemobile until at least the mid-term elections next year. My new hobby will be baiting ICE agents all over America. I've already ordered big "Chinga La Migra" magnetic signs to put on the side of the van. Can't wait to get pulled over.

I'll write more about life on the Odyssey in a few weeks and I'll be keeping tabs on things from a distance. I sincerely hope that the ship and the journey will survive, but continue to have doubts and fears that they won't. My advice to anyone who is thinking about going aboard would be to rent before you buy and don't invest any more money than you can afford to lose. Keep your expectations low, your refrigerator stocked and your sense of humor intact.

10, 9, 8, 7, 6

Ahoy, motherfuckers. Bon Voyage.

