

## I spent six months aboard a never-ending cruise

Passenger Joe Rhodes details the highs and lows of his half-year on residential ship Villa Vie Odyssey



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Villa Vie Odyssey inaugurates in Bilbao Credit: Villa Vie Residences

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Six months of living on [residential cruise ship](#) Villa Vie Odyssey haven't been plain sailing for one passenger, who says he's been summoned to see the

captain – and been confronted by fellow travellers he calls the “positivity police”.

Straight-talking Joe Rhodes – who, following a four-month delay in Belfast, [described the early days of the world voyage](#) as a “clusterf---” – has been [blogging](#) about the journey, and spoke to Telegraph Travel about the latest ups and downs.

He’s told how, having missed the bucket-list destinations of the Galapagos Islands and Antarctica, the ship also had to skip most of its Brazilian ports and scrap an 800-mile journey down the Amazon.



Joe Rhodes has been on the Villa Vie Odyssey for half a year

But it was his questioning on a private forum about why they couldn’t visit the Falklands – as planned, and while other ships were there – that landed Mr

Rhodes in trouble, he said.

Other passengers accused him of undermining the captain, he added – before he was called to the bridge to discuss the situation. Although Mr Rhodes was nervous, he said “it was quite a pleasant conversation, actually. Only one ‘walking the plank’ joke was made. And not by me.”

It turned out the other ships in the Falklands were expedition vessels using Zodiac inflatables to land in bad weather.

Rules on how long ships with foreign crew can stay in Brazilian waters then scuppered the Amazon journey and forced the cancellation of several other ports.



Joe Rhodes claimed that other cruise passengers were hostile towards him when he questioned itinerary changes

“People were mutiny-grade pissed [off],” said Mr Rhodes. “Of the four most-anticipated stops originally included in our South American itinerary – the [Galapagos](#), Antarctica, the Falklands and now the Amazon – we would be visiting a total of... none.”

He added: “I hadn’t seen this many angry residents since [the ship’s delay in

BEAST. FUELED BY MARGARITAS, I IMMEDIATELY WENT ON FACEBOOK WHERE, USING THE PRECISE LEGAL TERMINOLOGY, CALLED IT ‘A F--K-UP OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS’”

He said his comments were seen by “members of the positivity police”, adding: “One of the cheerleaders messaged: ‘If you’re that unhappy, why don’t you get off the ship?’”

Mr Rhodes, who is travelling alone in an inside cabin, said of his fellow travellers: “It’s just like high school, only with more day drinking. There are jocks and hippies, rich kids and Mean Girls – so many Mean Girls, it’s as if Heathers were set in a retirement home.



Villa Vie Odyssey is the first perpetual world cruise that can reach locations which larger ships cannot access thanks to its compact size

“There are bullies and suck-ups. There are teacher’s pets and class clowns, organisers and loners, theatre kids, shy kids and even a few actual kids, all of whom seem remarkably well-behaved and none of whom, unlike certain adults, spend their evenings drinking vodka through a straw.”

Speaking to Telegraph Travel, Mr Rhodes said: “The plumbing still acts up every now and then, the internet comes and goes. As does the air conditioning. It’s frustrating on a day-to-day basis but it is still a very cool thing. We’ve been

able to see some spectacular scenery – I particularly loved the [Chilean fjords](#) – and the misadventures are still adventures.

“A lot of people have read some of the things I’ve written and said, ‘God, it sounds like you’re always miserable.’ I’m not – most days I have a pretty good time. It’s fun to be out in the world but the daily frustrations do take a toll.”

Among the residents thoroughly enjoying the “endless” voyage are John and Melody Hennessee, who say they are “living the dream”.



Passengers aboard the Odyssey participate in shore excursions together

John explained: “The food is wonderful, the chefs are great, and the community is filled with interesting yet eclectic people from very diversified backgrounds... and many with very interesting and remarkable histories.”

He admitted there were “a number of issues with the ship” but that much-delayed spare parts would be delivered when it arrives in Barbados.

Mr Hennessee added: “We have missed some destinations but we are experienced sailors and cruisers and know that itinerary changes are normal. There is a group of complainers on board who think they ‘bought a product’

that was not delivered but Melody and I are not concerned.”

Another resident, Holly Hennessy – who is travelling with her cat Captain – said: “I pay almost zero attention to the itinerary and really don’t care where we go or don’t go. I just know I’ll be deposited in another fascinating place every few days.”



Passenger Holly Hennessy travelled with her cat Captain

Passengers have set up around 30 social groups and have given lectures, performed plays and run fitness and dance classes. There’s even a resident choir.

Ms Hennessy said: “You’ll find unhappy people, but they appear to be dwindling. What’s not to love about world travel?”

Before the “perpetual” voyage began on September 1, two passengers were denied boarding for voicing complaints in a WhatsApp group. One, [Jenny Phenix](#), is taking legal action against Villa Vie Residences but the other, [Bonny Kelter](#), has been welcomed on board after coming to an agreement with the company.

Ms Kelter said: “I’m having a non-stop blast. The condition of the ship is

Ms Rhodes said: “I’m having a non-stop blast. The condition of the ship is constantly improving. It is a lovely place on which to live.”

In a statement to the *Telegraph* about Mr Rhodes’s comments, CEO Kathy Villalba said: “We completely understand the disappointment around missing some iconic destinations. To make it up to our residents, we’ve added a later segment that will offer extended time in Ushuaia, the Falklands, Antarctica and the Amazon, ensuring our community still has the opportunity to experience these incredible places.”

She said VVR had made “tremendous progress” on tackling issues with the pools, hot tubs and air-conditioning. The Starlink-powered Wi-Fi provided “some of the fastest and most reliable internet at sea”, she said, though signals could be lost in remote regions.



A Superior Suite aboard the Villa Vie Odyssey

The shipment of spare parts showed “our commitment to not just meeting expectations, but exceeding them as we fine-tune everything to ensure a world-class on-board experience”.

While not wishing to comment on Ms Phenix’s ongoing legal case, Ms Villalba said: “Like other cruise lines and hospitality businesses, we reserve the right to

said. Like other cruise lines and hospitality businesses, we reserve the right to deny boarding in cases where behaviour poses a risk to the positive and respectful environment we work hard to maintain.”

She added: “Our mission is to cultivate a supportive, enriching and adventurous community at sea. We’re focused on that mission every single day and remain committed to doing right by our residents and crew.”

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