



Tatler

THE WILD HEART

Jane Goodall shares lessons from
her decades of fighting for nature
—and her hopes for the future

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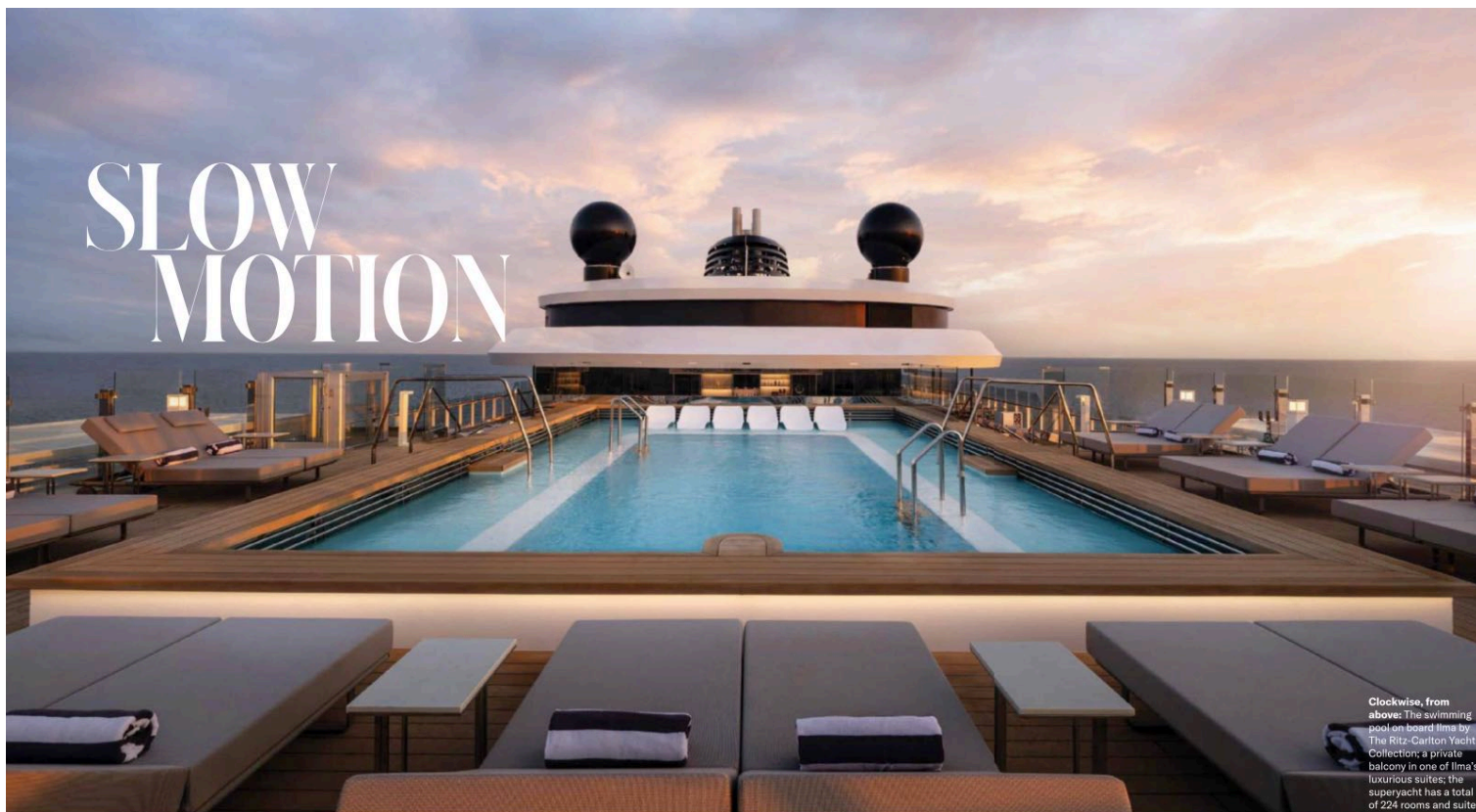
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SLOW MOTION



Clockwise, from above: The swimming pool on board Ilma by The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection; a private balcony in one of Ilma's luxurious suites; the superyacht has a total of 224 rooms and suites

Following a preview of one luxury accommodation group's newest vessel, we explore how hotel brands are embracing—and investing in—the slow travel trend

By Coco Marett

By all means, move at a glacial pace; you know how that thrills me,”

Miranda Priestly—the sharp-tongued editor-in-chief portrayed by Meryl Streep—famously snarled in *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006).

Well, it turns out moving “at a glacial pace” is now very much in vogue—at least in the world of travel. The world's leading hotel brands are investing in modes of slow travel, from superyachts to sleeper trains, making the experience as much about the journey as the destination itself while evoking a sense of thrill in globetrotters who view time

as the ultimate luxury.

In 2022, Ritz-Carlton launched its Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection and its inaugural ship Evrima, with a vision to redefine traditional cruising by offering all of the perks—seamless travel to coveted destinations, all-inclusive packages—with none of the tackiness that makes many travellers, myself included, wince at the thought of signing up for a cruise: wasteful buffets, conga lines, swimming pools that look like they belong in a theme park, et cetera.

Instead, guests find themselves on board a stylish floating hotel, with

exquisite facilities and interiors. You'll find an art collection featuring works by the likes of David Hockney and Andy Warhol, suites comparable to the best Ritz-Carlton accommodation, all with private balconies, and the high standards of service that the brand holds itself to. In September last year, it debuted its second vessel, Ilma, an inky midnight-blue ship that boasts 224 guest rooms. Even though the ships are exponentially larger than even the most super of superyachts, they feel surprisingly intimate and still small enough to offer the freedom and



IMAGE: COURTESY OF SWIMMING POOL BALCONY

exclusivity of yachting while providing the amenities of a five-star hotel.

“There's a distinct difference, we believe, between yachting and cruising. The yacht experience is a much more intimate and immersive experience that's connected to the water,” Jim Murren, CEO of The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, told *Tatler*. “It's not just going from point to point; it's about that connection to the sea, where we can experience the joy of the ocean and access the smaller ports we're able to get into that the big cruise ships can't.”

One such port is Saint-Tropez in France, where Ilma stopped for about 24 hours on its maiden voyage between Barcelona and Monaco. While anchored a short distance from the port, smaller craft tendered guests from ship to shore and back at about 30-minute intervals. It was an excellent feature, allowing freedom of movement, so guests could spend as little or as long ashore as they wanted.

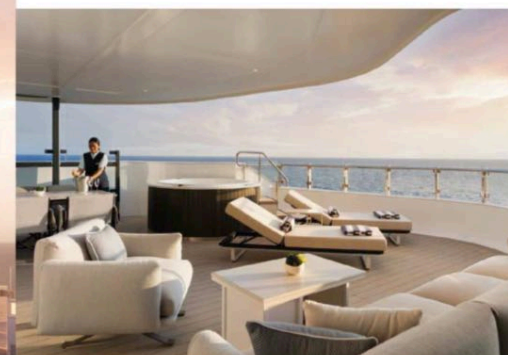
“We try to give [guests] time to enjoy the destination. For example, in

Saint-Tropez, we anchored overnight. This is to experience the destination as it should be—Saint-Tropez has great nightlife, discos, beach clubs,” says Ernesto Fara, president and CFO of the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection. “Big cruise ships cannot do this for a number of reasons: they aren't able to dock at these destinations, and they also have a tight schedule so you'll be off the boat at 8am and back on board at 4pm. We are way less stringent.”

Despite this flexibility, a surprising majority of guests were quick to return to the ship, realising it's hard to beat what's on board—whether that's the Ritz-Carlton Spa or one of Ilma's most beautiful features, the marina, complete with shaded cabanas and netted swimming areas.

“It's the largest floating platform in the world, where people can relax, get into the water, go kayaking and have that connection to the sea,” says Murren. “Cruise ships just don't have that kind of access [to the water].”

This year, The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection's third vessel—Luminara—will



take the brand to new waters with a series of voyages in the Asia-Pacific region, starting with a 14-night maiden voyage from Singapore to Hong Kong, homes to two of Ritz-Carlton's most celebrated properties. Other routes include a ten-night Tokyo round-trip voyage during *sakura* (cherry blossom) season, when petals blanket the grounds of Osaka Castle and accent the views of Mount Sakurajima from Kagoshima.

Last year, Four Seasons also announced its entry into the yachting space. From January to March 2026, the first Four Seasons Yacht—which boasts 95 suites, and interiors designed by Tillberg Design of Sweden in collaboration with Four Seasons Yachts creative director Prosper Assouline—will sail the Caribbean and Mediterranean, visiting destinations such as St Barts, Barbados,

Martinique, the Greek islands and the Adriatic. If guests are not Four Seasons-ed out by then, the itineraries can be combined with on-land stays at Four Seasons hotels.

Investing in slow travel is a clever way for hotel groups to attract travellers to multiple properties, particularly those in harder-to-reach destinations. In February last year, Aman announced a luxury train service from bustling Jakarta to one of its most awe-inspiring hotels, Amanjiwo, in Central Java. During the seven-hour journey, guests ride through jungle and rice paddies in a chic carriage designed in Aman's signature style. Breakfast and lunch are served, along with afternoon tea hosted by Amanjiwo's resident anthropologist Patrick Vanhoebrouck. He shares historic and cultural highlights of the region to build guests'

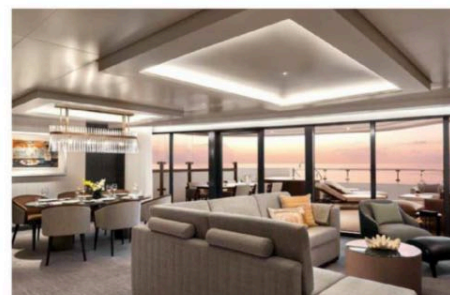
excitement for their stay at this magnificent retreat, which overlooks the ninth-century Buddhist sanctuary of Borobudur, a Unesco World Heritage Site. The hotel, built entirely from locally quarried limestone and featuring dramatic domes and soaring columns, feels as though it could be the last-surviving structure of an ancient civilisation.



Belmond has been doing an exceptional job of slow travel via train since it launched its Venice Simplon-Orient-Express route in 1982. Its most recent addition to the line-up is in Peru, with its ultra-luxurious Andean Explorer train. Journeys are bookmarked by stays at the group's magnificent properties, such as Monasterio in Lima, a boutique hotel housed in a



The Marina Terrace on Ilma; five-star accommodation on board Ilma. **Opposite page, from top:** A suite on board the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express; a Belmond Train; Belmond's collection of trains offer old-world opulence



pan-Latin menu developed in collaboration with James Beard Award-winning chef Michael Mina, and Memori, where you'll find Japanese favourites from sashimi to miso black cod—each with regularly rotating menus to avoid the risk of becoming mundane. All dining is included, except for at Seta su Ilma, a fine-dining restaurant by chef Fabio Trabocchi that celebrates the flavours of the sea.

"The level of service you get [on a yacht] is more than you would in a hotel," says Fara. "The hotel is a compressed experience: you sleep there, maybe you get breakfast and perhaps a few meals in between, but on our yachts, we are lucky to have so many interactions with the guests. This means it's important to keep things exciting in the kitchen."

The service and accommodation are nothing less than you'd expect from luxury brands such as these. But the greatest luxuries of slow travel are the little things: like stepping out of your suite onto the balcony in the morning, with no clue as to where you are, and not caring; or sitting on a ship's floating terrace—complete with a bar and a caviar station—perfectly set-up to catch those Côte d'Azur sunsets.

"Our guests are less interested in consumable items and more interested in a visceral emotion that they get from a journey," says Murren. "An excellent yachting experience is one where people feel like they're one with nature, one with the water, they're enjoying something new and exciting and different that they can share with their friends."

lovingly restored monastery originally built in 1592.

A major draw of these luxurious modes of slow travel is dining. Eastern & Oriental Express, a Belmond Train, boasts seasonal menus curated by acclaimed Taiwanese chef André Chiang, who puts a fine-dining spin on classic Chinese and Malay dishes for passengers. Curry puffs sit beside finger

sandwiches on the cake stand; a saucy, sizzling clay pot of marinated pork belly served with rice evokes childhood memories in a *Ratatouille*-like moment; and a nine-pepper jus beef cheek, braised for 16 hours, brings the occupants of the dining car to an awed hush.

Ilma, meanwhile, has five restaurants—from casual dining options to Beach House, which serves a