



All at sea

A FEW DAYS ON THE OCEAN WAVE
MADE STEVE DEEKS REALISE THAT
THE POSH, POSH TRAVELLING LIFE
IS SOMETHING TO SAVOUR >

WORDS AND PICTURES:
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ALL AT SEA



Quality. They say it never goes out of fashion. Someone should have told this decade that, because it is getting increasingly hard to find. And spending a lot of money is no guarantee of securing it, unfortunately. So it is incredibly refreshing when something, someone or some business manages to exceed your expectations, and in many interesting ways that you didn't expect, as well as those you hoped for. Seabourn, I salute you.

For a few days last May, I joined Seabourn onboard its beautiful vessel the Sojourn, as a guest speaker. I hosted one of the 'Conversations' sessions that they hold onboard while travelling from port to port in the afternoons. This was for a leg of the company's 'Tyrrhenian Treasures & Malta' adventure.

I'm a lifetime racer, Silverstone's Chief Training Instructor, and I have the honour of being, for the last decade or so, the Club's compere at key events. There's more about me at stevedeeks.com, but suffice to say that the FOC has become my favourite club to work with and many members have become friends, among them many interesting and inspirational people.

Through the Club, last year I discovered a potential new obsession: beautiful ships, because that is what Club partner Seabourn is all about. Until last year I had never been on a cruise; in fact over the years I have rarely holidayed because chasing my racing dream didn't allow spare cash for anything that

wasn't propelling me fast. But in May 2025 I discovered what I had been missing, which is a great deal. I imagined that cruising wasn't for me, but I travelled for six days with Seabourn last year and it's fair to say that it's the most relaxing thing I have done in my adult life. It was simply unforgettable.

The problem is that I now don't want to cruise with anyone but Seabourn, because, like owning an Italian supercar, or in my case a Ducati and a couple of Alfa Romeos, cruising with Seabourn means you've hit the sweet spot. It's a brand that's obsessed with quality and authenticity; Seabourn provides an experience that's excellent in every measurable metric.

I wrote two bespoke presentations to deliver onboard to my fellow travellers, only they weren't presentations because they were 'conversations'; the audience quickly become your friends. My partner JoJo and I hosted two tables at dinner in the Grand Salon during our six days on the ship, and every day I met fellow travellers – and car enthusiasts – onboard, ashore, around the pool, at the bar, in the gym. We spent quality time together sharing our passions.

My two conversations were straight from the heart: 'From the Pavement to La Portierre', charting my own incredible racing journey, and 'Speed Secrets from the fastest men on earth', reflecting on all the interviews, events and shows I have had the good fortune to host alongside my racing icons from James Hunt through to today's gladiators. Thanks to the Club I can now add Sir Richard Noble, who I interviewed at the RAC last year, at the Club's competition awards dinner. The ➤



conversations were staged in the splendid ambience of the ship's central theatre, during the relaxed afternoon hours.

Seabourn handled all of our arrangements impeccably; every touch point was warm, professional and genuinely caring. We boarded in Monaco, having flown into Nice airport the night before. My first impression, and what has potentially ruined us for future sorties anywhere other than Seabourn, was of our ship being a small, personal yacht, with a crew completely committed to a guest's every need. My second impression was how relatively few guests we shared with; this was far more exclusive than the cruises we see advertised on TV and in print. We settled in immediately, discovering the excellent coffee bar with fresh pastries in the lounge. We could have based ourselves there for the next six days and been very happy ...

Thus started a whirlwind adventure that included being lulled to sleep by the gentle motion of the ship and the twinkling lights of the exotic European coastline. We would wake up to the sounds of mooring in some beautiful harbour, or at sea anchored near a picturesque town (Amalfi and Malta were standouts), enjoying breakfast on the stern of the ship, with a vista of the coastline that one simply cannot get anywhere else. It was exquisite.

The food and drink reminded me of shopping at – and eating in – Selfridges. Whatever we ordered it had been hand-picked and prepared expertly by talented people. One more day on board and we probably would never have left; I would have either stowed away, taken the ship prisoner in an act of piracy, or replaced the Captain.

My two afternoon shows were a delight, with an appreciative, friendly audience, a

chilled, attentive vibe, plus a shared love of racing, performance cars and iconic champions. So many memories made in just six days. Five months earlier I had experienced a traumatic retinal hemorrhage that stopped me racing for a while, so I was in a really stressful place in life. Despite that, the Seabourn adventure filled the year with light, laughter, and many new people.

Our time on board was filled with fabulous experiences, like getting up at 2am to go on deck, wrapped up warm, to watch the embers of Stromboli twinkling as they rose red into the black sky. Hosting the tables full of the most interesting, eclectic and experienced world travellers from all over the globe, early morning on the bow, catching pre-breakfast sun and dipping in the whirlpool jacuzzi. Then there were the lazy afternoons in the sun around the pool sipping whisky and Coke, tenders to the shore to discover Sicily, Amalfi, to sample local flavours, to say a prayer in the holy church, to eat lemons stuffed with Limoncello ice. We sampled it all.

Perhaps the thing that impressed the most was the quality of Seabourn's people. They were uniformly superb, whether front of house, at the bar, in the restaurant, the entertainment staff or the crew. There were no chinks in the armour which is a very difficult thing to pull off, but here was a textbook example of achieving it.

The itinerary was superb, the blend of culture, heritage and beauty unrivalled. But most of all the feeling of deep decompression. Coming off the back of a (temporarily) life-changing injury I can see immediately why Victorian doctors would prescribe an ocean voyage to an ailing patient. The only other time I have been able to relax this deeply was back

in the West Indies, rolling in the surf.

Has it changed my view on cruising? Absolutely. Would I chance another operator? Unlikely. Would it have been worth the money if I was a paying customer? Well, I kind of was because I put many days of work into creating my conversations, plus I turned down contracts to work to free myself up for the six-day sail. It was totally worth it though, because it was a good trade.

This was one of my favourite ever sorties because it was good for the soul, and I highly recommend it. Getting on at Monte Carlo set the scene, and it got me thinking about whether we could organise a tour of the Ferrari, Ducati and Alfa Romeo factories (six days is a long time to go without seeing an Italian thoroughbred...), but thanks to Seabourn we got to experience some evocative locations, met and made friends with charming and interesting people, and saw Europe from an interesting vibrant new perspective – a kilometre offshore.

When the ship docked in Malta at the half-way point, and the new conversationalist got on board, we were genuinely sad to be getting off. Our last view of the ship as the taxi headed towards the airport was a fond one. It's hard to put into words how quickly we settled into the ocean groove. The gentle pulse of the engines ushering in sleep, then the excitement of waking up in a fresh hand-picked location each morning. I strongly suspect that the 'posh, posh travelling life' never gets old. I'd like the chance to find out. ■

** Steve travelled with Seabourn on a sector of the 10-day Tyrrhenian Treasures & Malta voyage. Seabourn offers similar cruises every summer. Visit seabourn.com or call 0344 338 8615.*