

outandabout



Voyager Beach Resort has infused a cruise theme into their design and activities. [PHOTOS: PETER MUIRURI AND COURTESY / STANDARD]

Hotel designed, run like a ship

In Mombasa, a uniquely ship-themed hotel is giving guests sea-experience in the form of cabins, uniformed seamen and cruise-themed restaurants, writes **PETER MUIRURI**

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome aboard this luxurious ship. We hope you will have an enjoyable cruise. Please take a few moments to read about some of the exciting activities that will occupy your time aboard the ship. On the control deck, we will do everything possible to make your stay with us as enjoyable as possible."

Let me set the record straight. I have never been on one of those luxurious cruise ships, or any ship for that matter. The closest I have been to a cruise liner is a single sighting, years ago, as it made a grand entry into the port of Mombasa.

I had set my camera to take that memorable shot as it passed the channel next to the picturesque Mama Ngina Drive. Before I could press the shutter, my camera battery gave up, denying me the bragging rights of catching the luxury liner on film.

The opening words above are the hype created by one of the hotels in Mombasa: the ship-themed Voyager Beach Resort located in the exclusive Nyali suburb.

I had arrived here on a warm Saturday afternoon, hungry and tired. At the gate, a trumpet blast from the guard signalled the opening of the gate by his colleague.

A short wooden ramp secured by thick ropes led to the main foyer. Here, two rows of "seamen" – all



glancebox

- The Voyager is a ship-themed resort 'moored' ten kilometres north of Mombasa city centre in Nyali.
- The resort is part of the Heritage Hotels group that includes Mara Explorer, Mara Intrepids, Samburu Intrepids, Great Rift Valley Lodge and Kipungani Explorer in Lamu.
- Voyager's location gives guests access to various attractions.

dressed in white – played some melody as we walked in between. It was our 30 seconds of fame as we inspected the "guard of honour".

By the way, have you ever wondered why seamen in many parts of the world are dressed in white? According to research, seafarers travelled to unknown lands for exploration purposes. During these trips, they used to wear white as a sign of peace.

For practical purposes, though,

white colour is a great reflector of heat and helps to keep away the heat for people who spend much of their time out in the open sea. I thought you should know.

Back to the Voyager, the front of the hotel is shaped like the bow of the ship, while the sea-facing rear is wider and akin to a ship's stern. The mariners' theme is carried throughout the hotel's courtyard through the style of old forts that once guarded the sea-front.

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It is complete with white-washed lookout turrets and cannons, hemmed in by the coral reef. All the cabins – as rooms are called here – give each passenger (the guest) a splendid view of the ocean.

On-board dining is provided courtesy of ship-themed restaurants, namely Mashua, Smuggler's Cove and Minestrone, with sea foods being on the regular menu. And just like on a regular luxury ship where some independence is allowed, a passenger on Voyager will be allowed in the eating areas in any form of casual wear apart from swimsuits during the day.

For dinner, however, all the "passengers" are requested to leave their sandals, sleeveless shirts and "hot pants" in their respective cabins and "dress like ladies and gentlemen."

Like everything else here, family



entertainments and animation programmes consist of uniquely themed journeys across the seven seas, with special music, fashion, comedy and acrobatic shows derived from various parts of the world where Voyager "docks".

Voyager's chief captain, Mohanmed Hersi, sums up the idea behind the hotel this way: "To many people, a hotel is just that, a hotel. By infusing the cruise theme, we want the people who cannot afford a cruise in the sea to experience the same on dry land. Talk of buying a holiday on land but feel like you are taking a cruise."