

THE AUSTRALIAN **wish** magazine

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QUEENSLAND CALLING

The Sunshine State glistens with ambitious development

HEALTH IS WEALTH

Home wellness hubs and gene tests are the latest status symbols

DYNASTY OF THE DEEP

Susan and David Rockefeller Jr's ocean-focused philanthropy

NEW BEGINNINGS

CATHERINE MARTIN

In residence on the Gold Coast



At your service Cookson Adventures
designs bespoke trips with a conservation
and wellness bent.

INTO THE WILD

HENRY COOKSON'S LIFE-ALTERING BESPOKE TRIPS UNITE ADVENTURE WITH CONSERVATION AND WELLNESS. ANY WONDER HE'S BECOME THE BILLIONAIRE'S TRAVEL WHISPERER?

By ALICE B-B

If I was allowed just one last adventure in my life, I'd call Henry Cookson. Because compared with every other travel designer out there, Cookson is unique, magical even, with his capacity for out-of-the-box thinking. He searches for the dark spots on the map, sniffs out a piece of history yet to be unearthed, discovers a conservation story needing a benefactor. Add to this, a boyish sense of fun and a luxurious sensibility (we're not talking gold taps and marble bathrooms) and it's no wonder that Cookson has earned the moniker "the billionaire's travel whisperer".

It all began thanks to a night on the town. It was 2004 and Cookson was in a job he loathed at Goldman Sachs in London. He was adhering to the line-of-sight trajectory for a middle-class, UK public school-educated chap: make money, get married, buy a nice house, have some children (but always love your dog more). Before Cookson was too far down that British cliché, he was saved by another British cliché ... he got hammered on whisky. So much whisky, in fact, that entering a ski race to the magnetic north pole seemed a great idea. *In vino veritas* ... it turned out to be beyond great; the idea that changed his life. Several months later, in temperatures of minus 55°C, the 360-nautical-mile race competition was stiff; among the teams were Norwegian fell runners and Royal Marines Commandos versus a pretty unfit and a little overweight Henry and his team of jolly British jokers (a favourite morale booster was playing laxative Russian roulette in the morning porridge).

Despite the daft shenanigans, Cookson's team not only won the race, but smashed the previous record by 48 hours (it remains unbroken to this day). Cookson had got

the bug. Next up was a Guinness World record for kite-skiing to Antarctica's Pole of Inaccessibility. That scotch-fuelled night had sounded the death knell for his desk job. Like a caged tiger, Cookson had been released into his new office: the world. Friends started asking him to help arrange unusual adventurous holidays. Then it was friends of friends. And in 2007, after completing guide training in Alaska, he founded Cookson Adventures; delivering bespoke trips, in remote places, with a conservation bent, for the kind of thrillseekers who fly private.

I've accompanied Cookson on several escapades: scampering around Norway, scuba-diving in 4°C waters among kelp forests, chasing the Northern Lights and being kissed by socialised wolves (both terrifying and thrilling, you have to let them lick your mouth so they know you're friend, not foe). Another time it was exploring shipwrecks off the Maltese coast in a three-man submersible.

And now we're in British Columbia, where he is adding a new wellness layer to his trips, inspired by his own wellbeing journey.

"Having faced my own mental health challenges and witnessed that of others' around me," says Cookson, "I've delved into the wellness space for more than a decade, discovering a variety of medical and holistic life hacks to aid me navigate this sometimes difficult journey we call life! This modern era sees many of us exponentially faced with increasing pressures and stress, and while there is rarely a magic pill, I find it's about consistently working on myself to help preempt or even just mitigate the 'black dog' that can so suddenly creep up on me." >



Original idea Cruising the fjords of British Columbia on former World War II supply ship, *Pacific Yellowfin*.



Local residents Canadian fur seals on the BC coast.



Outward bound Travel entrepreneur Henry Cookson.



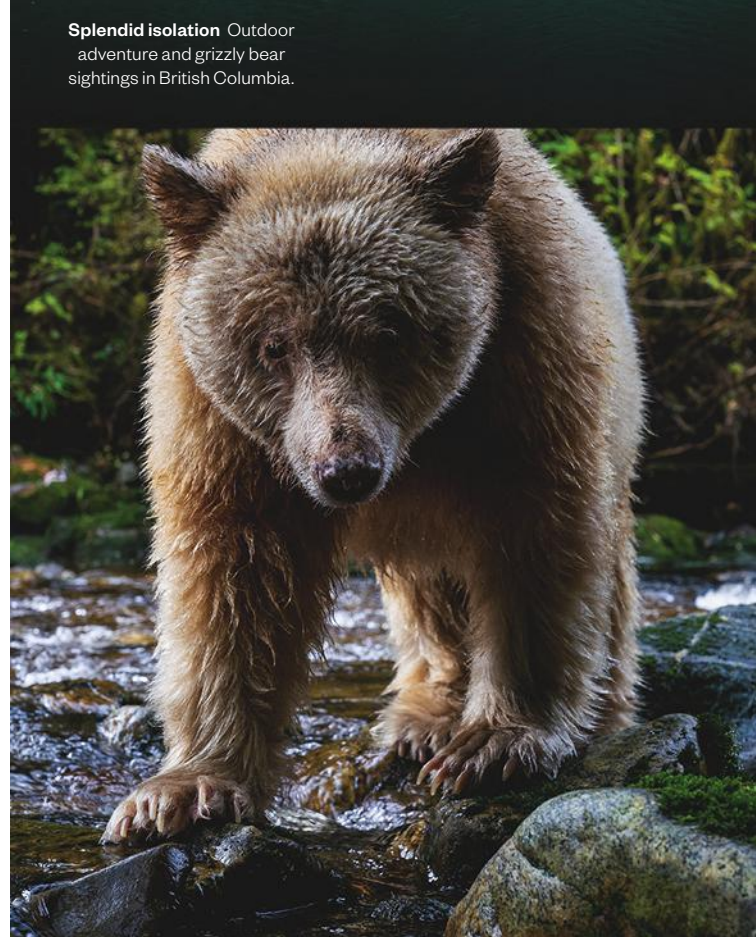
Wet and wild The Great Bear Rainforest is the largest temperate rainforest in the world.



Sight to behold Bald eagles nest by the water.



Splendid isolation Outdoor adventure and grizzly bear sightings in British Columbia.



We're sailing the fjords of this dramatic First Nations territory on the *Pacific Yellowfin*; a teak-lined 35-metre vessel that began life as a US military supply ship in World War II, had a spy career with the CIA and is now filled with all the toys (tenders, kayaks, paddle boards, dive equipment), a charming crew and an excellent chef required for a luxurious exploration of the largest coastal temperate forest on the planet.

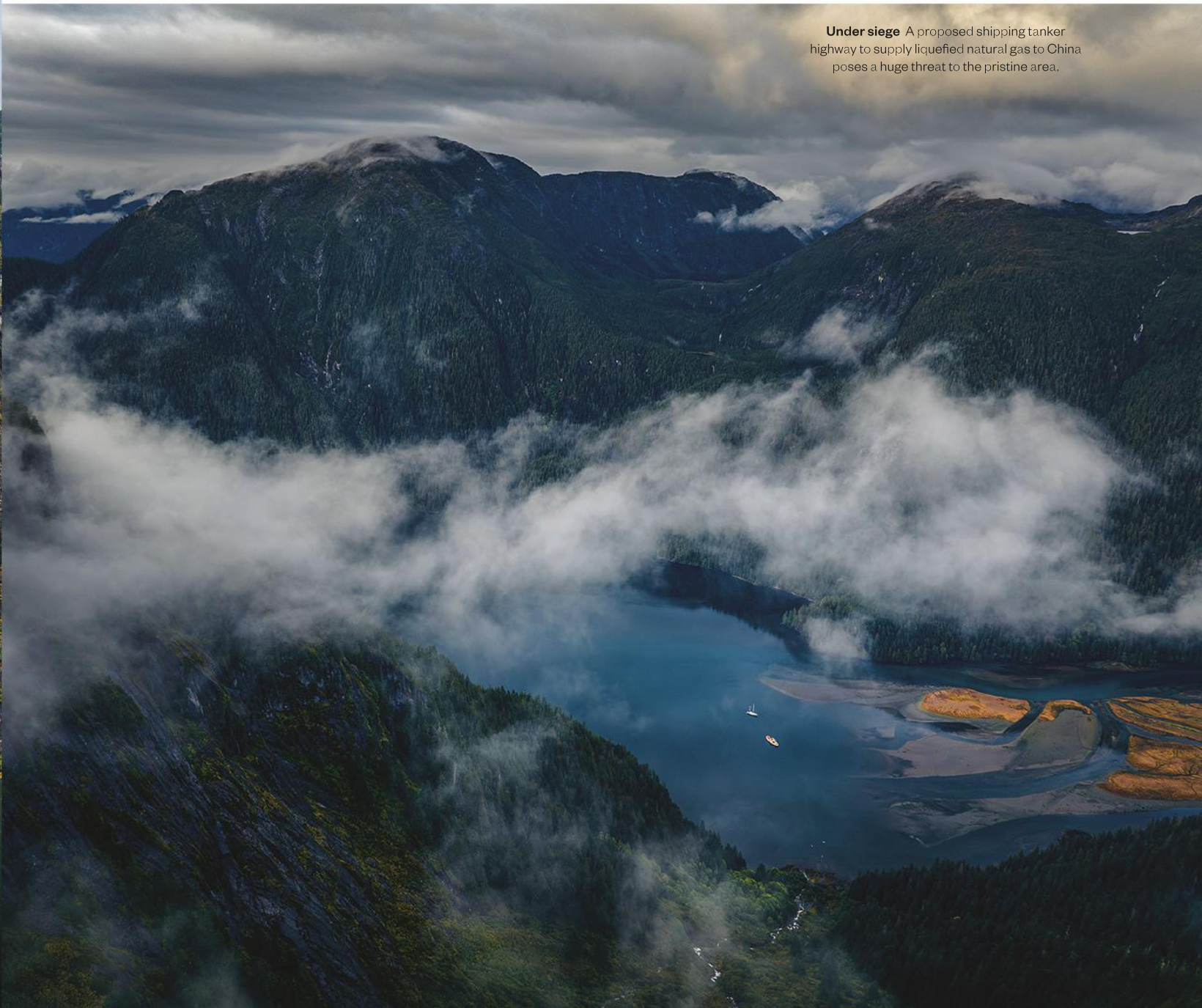
"I'm repeatedly drawn to the Great Bear Rainforest," says Cookson. "There's a palpable energy here. I don't think there's anywhere else on Earth with such a concentrated mass of raw, wild untouched nature; you're sitting in a natural hot spring, there are whales in the bay, spirit bears fishing for salmon, and wolves howling in the background. There couldn't be a better place for a wellness adventure."

Cookson Adventures is known for unearthing some of the world's best specialists in their fields, so Cookson has chosen Tyler Huston, founder of Breath Control Therapy, to accompany us. Huston is a paramedic who teaches functional nasal breathwork techniques to US Navy SEALs, Denmark's Frogman Corps, the Canadian Invictus Games team and indigenous Canadian tribespeople. "Dysfunctional breathing, which includes mouth, upper chest and anxious breathing, can decrease the cerebral blood flow and oxygen supply by up to 50 per cent," explains Huston. "Whereas functional breathing increases oxygen saturation and has a positive effect on sleep, mood, brain function and general health."

Wherever possible, Huston takes his coaching sessions outside. So after an extraordinary morning hiking into a lichen-filled forest to watch a grizzly bear scoff leaping salmon while her fuzzy cubs lark about at the water's edge, Huston gathers us in a circle to practise functional nasal breathing. As we inhale some of the cleanest air in the world, he tells us how humming on exhalation can increase nitric oxide, which is both antibacterial and antiviral (and the chemical produced by Viagra!).

Also onboard is Dr Tamsin Lewis, famed for her work in integrative medicine and longevity at Wellgevity, a medical concierge specialising in regenerative treatment. "The nature of my practice is to encourage personal health evolution through the identification of damaging behaviours and their impact on the individual's physiology," says Dr Tam, as she is known. "While diagnostic tests can reveal dysfunctions, plucking out the root cause can be more complex. So increasingly I choose to spend time with my clients in a retreat setting to really understand their psychological drivers, physical limitations, dietary choices and responses."

Prior to this trip, Dr Tam has sent me for blood tests, urine samples and I've worn a Veri continuous glucose monitor to track my blood sugar levels. I've also shared the data from my Oura Ring, showing sleep, activity, stress and heart-rate variability metrics. Dr Tam makes wellbeing fun; there's somatic movement and yoga on deck before breakfast to get the liver, diaphragm and lymphatic system working. And after watching a group of humpback whales bubble-net feeding (the lead whale blows bubbles in a circle to trap and stun the bait ball while the others in the pod push the fish to the surface and gorge), she introduces the latest research from the John Templeton Foundation on the power of awe and wonder, and how the incredible whale show we've just seen can increase feelings of connectedness, critical thinking, positive mood and decrease materialism. During downtime, Dr Tam presents the latest longevity tools and supplements, including deltaG military-designed ketone



Under siege A proposed shipping tanker highway to supply liquefied natural gas to China poses a huge threat to the pristine area.

drinks for brain optimisation (and great for jet lag). The ketone shots taste revolting, but we merrily swig away and enjoy the sharpening effects.

It's clear that the informality and intimacy of this kind of doctor-patient relationship, rather than your regular 30-minute appointment, is hugely beneficial. Dr Tam observes my daily rhythm and lifestyle choices in her quiet, curious, intelligent way and at the end of the trip, produces an analysis of my current health status alongside a detailed program that includes supplements, infusions, training and movement suggestions to optimise my physical and mental health going forward.

For Cookson, wellness doesn't stop with the individual. Ultimately it's for the greater good. "If we're not healthy, then we don't have the bandwidth to take action for our sick planet."

Cookson always plaites an element of conservation into his multilayered trips, advising guests on how they can dig deep to make a difference. Whether that's mobilising helicopters in the Galápagos to transport giant tortoises as part of a conservation mission. Or sending a research vessel two weeks ahead of a trip to Antarctica, so that marine biologists have access to the hardware needed to discover an unidentified species of killer whale – a huge boon at this moment in time, when an alarming 70 per cent of wildlife has been lost in the past 50 years. So in British Columbia we're joined by conservationist Ian McAllister, founder of Pacific Wild, who works to protect the ecosystems that sustain biodiversity in the Great Bear Rainforest.

"I don't think there's anywhere else on Earth with such a concentrated mass of raw, wild nature; you're sitting in a natural hot spring, there are whales in the bay, spirit bears fishing for salmon and wolves howling in the background. There couldn't be a better place for a wellness adventure."

Henry Cookson

McAllister successfully battled the threat of mass logging in the region and is now fighting against a potential shipping highway that would slice through the heart of the rainforest to transport liquified natural gas to China. He takes us to a whale research centre; wooden huts on a remote island beneath icy blue skies, like something out of a Bond movie. The researchers play us the mellifluous sounds of whale songs recently recorded in the bay before us. And then follow up with an ear-splitting recording of shipping tanker engines and how this will sound to the sonar-sensitive whales, which could lead to the cetacean population vanishing from these waters. We are nature, there is no fragmentation; so supporting McAllister's campaign becomes a part of the wellness immersion.

Cookson knows his market. For the modern billionaire, time is short but longevity is key. So incorporating wellbeing against a thrilling backdrop, where awe-inspired guests are potentially open to new ideas, lifestyle changes and conservation efforts, is genius. Back in London, every time I employ Dr Tam's morning movement, or Tyler Huston's functional breathing (to help me fall asleep or to calm anxiety) I'm euphorically transported back to that Great Bear Rainforest and the sensory overwhelm; the rush of the waterfall, the dappled light through the dense canopy, the squish of the mossy floor, the air so clean it tastes delicious. All are sealed in my subconscious thanks to great practitioners and a mind-blowing environment. And if that was the last trip I ever take, I'd be happy. And well. ■