





Sir Richard Branson IS NOT ONE TO LET A LITTLE THING LIKE GRAVITY GET IN THE WAY OF HIS AMBITIONS. AS HIS VIRGIN GALACTIC ENTERPRISE ACCELERATES TOWARDS THE FIRST COMMERCIAL SPACE FLIGHTS, WE ASKED THIS YACHT AND ISLAND OWNING THRILL-SEEKER ABOUT HIS PASSION FOR ADVENTURE ON, OFF AND UNDER THE PLANET'S SURFACE.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Q From extreme ballooning, to space flight... Do you consider yourself a risk-taker?

SRB I think the answer to that has to be yes! You only get one shot at life and I've always thought you need to make the most of it. Part of that is taking risks, whether it's in your personal life, in business or both. Pushing yourself outside your comfort zone is something I think everyone should try every now and again and it makes life a whole lot more interesting. I love a challenge, I love creating things and I can't resist saying yes!

Q How has that adventurous streak influenced your life and businesses?

SRB In so many ways that I couldn't possibly list them all. My spontaneous and adventurous streak certainly pushed me to purchase Necker Island in 1978 when I was trying to woo my now wife Joan. Not only did I get the girl but I got the island too and it was one of the best impulsive decisions of my life. It's a beautiful little spot in the British Virgin Islands that I feel very lucky to call home. I'm fortunate that over the years I have surrounded myself with wonderful teams of people in all areas of the Virgin businesses and together with their skills and knowledge we try to ensure we remain at the forefront of change and innovation. We do that with a can-do attitude and a sense of adventure.

Q Necker Island has been your retreat for quite a while now, and Necker Belle now complements the island experience. When did you first experience sailing, and can you describe your relationship with the sea?

SRB I've been an enthusiastic sailor from a very young age and fell in love with the sea immediately, so you could say the relationship has been a successful one! Today, Necker Belle provides me with quality time to spend away from it all plus a chance to visit new destinations. In March last year I went whale watching in the Silver Bank, which is now famous as a breeding and calving zone for the humpback whales, and with it being their mating season, I got to swim with the whales and watch them perform elaborate courtship rituals. It was incredible, a unique experience that I'll never forget.

Q You are notoriously busy. How do you relax?

SRB Spending time with my family and friends is always a great way to relax. I'm quite sporty so I swim, kite-surf and play tennis regularly which always helps me to unwind.

Q The ocean is clearly not the 'final frontier' for you - now you are developing space flights with Virgin Galactic. Can you say something about what that means to you, personally?

SRB Space has always held a fascination for me since I watched the moon landings back in 1969. I just wanted to experience it for myself and in the end became convinced that it would never happen for me or the millions of others who felt the same, unless we at Virgin did something about it. Galactic is without doubt the most exciting but challenging project we have ever taken on. What we are doing is not easy and we need to get it right from day one, transforming the economics, the safety and the environmental impact of space access in one fell swoop. We are starting a new industry, not just a new business - and it's an industry that is actually incredibly important to helping us overcome some of our greatest future challenges. Universal internet access, space based solar power, asteroid mining, London to Australia in two hours, feeding a growing population and many more incredible benefits could come from Virgin Galactic's pioneering first few steps. The best thing is that we are now so close to commercial flight. It looks

like I will finally fulfill my ambition of floating in zero gravity looking down from the blackness of space to the beautiful Earth below in the next few months - albeit 45 years after I first decided I was going to do it!!

Q If you were trying to persuade a friend to take a space flight, what would you say?

SRB I'd say get in quickly as demand is soaring as we get closer to commercial flights! The really great thing about joining now is that you get to become one of the world's first commercial astronauts and part of a fabulous global community of adventuring pioneers who are sharing with us all the excitement of the project as it reaches fruition... and of course you will have the ultimate experience, stories and memories to last a lifetime.

Q Where in the world (or off it!) would you most like to explore next? Do you have your own favourite destinations?

SRB I think the depth of the world's oceans with Virgin Oceanic is where I want to explore next. I'm a huge fan of Africa and we're fortunate to have three African properties in the Virgin Limited Edition portfolio - Kasbah Tamadot in Morocco, Ulusaba in South Africa and our latest addition Mahali Mzuri in Kenya - so Africa is definitely one of my favourite destinations in the world. There are still so many places to see and not enough time to see them! I've been so lucky to be in a position to have visited some amazing countries around the world and experienced different cultures, but if I had to choose, then it will always be Necker Island as it's my home and where I'm happiest.

NECKER BELLE

SRB Necker Belle can reach speeds of over 20 knots so it certainly caters for the adventurous and adrenaline types, whether it's cutting up the sea on a pair of waterskis, trying game fishing or marvelling at the marine life with scuba tanks strapped to your back. But I also love that Necker Belle provides a very relaxed and comfortable environment. The crew are on hand 24/7 to ensure everyone on board has the holiday of a lifetime.."

Necker Belle offers comfortable cruising for 8 guests in 4 suites, and is designed for the indoor/outdoor Caribbean lifestyle, with an array of water toys and a spectacular crow's nest 25m above the waves. Necker Belle can be chartered in combination with Necker Island, one of the world's most exclusive private islands, and there is an on board dive instructor for those wishing to explore underwater. Please contact your Burgess broker for further details.



LOA 32m (105ft)

BUILT CMN France, 2003 (rebuilt 2009)

GUESTS 8/10 in 4 cabins

CREW 6

WINTER 2013/2014 Caribbean

SUMMER 2014 Caribbean

CHARTER RATE from US\$110,000

See page 230 for further information on NECKER BELLE.

NECKER BELLE is offered for charter by Burgess as Central Agents.