

THE VIEW FROM MY SOFA

'I can see flamingos flying by'

Richard Branson chills out to sport and David Attenborough

What's the view from your sofa?

I live on Necker in the Virgin Islands with my wife Joan. Two minutes from our house is a Balinese-style pagoda called the Temple and that is basically our living room. There's a sofa there with rows of wooden shelves with lots of books and family photos and a fairly new widescreen TV nestled in the middle. To my right I can see the island spreading out below me – to my left is the ocean, and up above I can see flamingos flying by.

Basically a high-end chill-out room, then?

Well, sort of, but I also spend most of my time here working with my assistant Helen. I'm usually up by 5am and go to the Temple to check my emails and social media and watch the news. I mix and match between the BBC, CNN and Sky. The Temple is on the other side of

the island from where most guests stay, but everyone is welcome to wander up and hang out.

How does your day in paradise generally pan out?

After some work in the morning, I play tennis, do yoga, go kite surfing, or go for a walk. I try to keep things as unscheduled as possible. The mobile phone has done great things for the business world and I've been known to take a call with my kite or tennis racket in hand. I also travel a lot and I'm always working with Helen on long flights.

You like to keep fit. Do you watch much sport on television?

I don't like to miss any big tennis or rugby match and I enjoy watching kite surfing, but above all I like to keep active. I really don't spend too much time in front of the box and if I ever watch TV

during downtime, I prefer wildlife documentaries by David Attenborough or programmes about space by Brian Cox.

Do you and Joan always agree on what to watch?

She often chooses, because she is usually more up to date on the best shows than me. We both loved *The Night Manager*, which was spot on for quiet evenings in.

We see your life as one long episode of *Dragons' Den*, with people pitching ideas to you. Have you ever been approached to do the show?

Not that I recall. I've helped out Alan Sugar with appearances on *The Apprentice*, and had my own entrepreneurial adventure show, *The Rebel Billionaire*, in the 2000s. I love anything that encourages people to follow their dreams.

Why don't you just kick back, pour a cocktail and relax?

I owe my success to continuously challenging myself and seeking adventure. Growth happens when you put yourself outside your comfort zone. I wouldn't have an island to chill out on if I never pushed the boundaries.

Is living on your own island all it's cracked up to be?

Joan and I moved here permanently in 2006 to seek a healthier work-life balance. Freed from the stresses of city life, we find inspiration and fresh insight on a daily basis. It's great and we love it. As the writer Charles Bukowski said: "Only the boring get bored." **ROB MCGIBBON**

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NOTHING ON TV?

MY BOOK *Peter Pan* by JM Barrie. Whether it was being able to fly or never having to grow up, I've always wanted to be Peter Pan.

MY FILM 1984. I love the way it brought George Orwell's novel to life.

MY BOX SET *House of Cards*. I'll watch an episode in the gym as a reward for training.

MARK GREENBERG; GETTY

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