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10 Questions

Morgan Parker, philanthropist, property developer, 38

You're Brisbane-born with a law degree from Bond University but you've made your money in Asia. Where's home now? I've lived in Hong Kong since 2005. It's a fabulous city: efficient, dynamic and multicultural.

You moved to Asia with Macquarie Bank in 1995, but meeting US luxury developers the Taubmans a decade later was a career turning point, wasn't it? I met the Taubman family as head of retail property at Morgan Stanley in Asia and became president of Taubman Asia. I also became more strategic with my own philanthropy once I saw how a wealthy family such as the Taubmans manages its grants so astutely.

Wheel2Wheel, your new TV series, is about a four-month journey through Asia to Australia. What was the purpose of the trip? I'd become frustrated with wealthy people using the rehearsed excuse of organisational inefficiency to explain why they don't give. So I created *Wheel2Wheel*: the expedition is simply the packaging of reality, adventure and travel to facilitate the humanitarian storytelling.

In the series you ride a motorcycle. How tough was that? The motorcycle is the most prevalent mode of transport in Asia, so I had to learn to ride one. Friends in Brisbane got me out in the bush on dirt bikes, which served as a useful but painful initiation. Eventually, I bought a BMW in Hong Kong, and after riding 25,000km in 125 days through some of the toughest terrain and traffic in the world, I'm definitely a better rider!

On the journey, did you ever think: what the hell am I doing? Day 16 was horrific sub-zero temperatures in the mountains of Laos, with horizontal rain hammering me for 15 hours as I fought through 150km of mud, crashing the bike 27 times. By the end I was hypothermic and had to sleep on the floor of a crowded guesthouse.

Any thoughts on the consumer boom in Asia? Asian consumerism is driving the global economy, and in particular Australia's, so to



be critical would be obstinate. Having said that, I do worry about the erosion of cultural values and destruction of ecological systems.

Do you speak an Asian language, or is English enough? Luckily for me, international business is conducted in English. Asian people mostly speak English and those who don't are learning at a rapid rate.

The journey from Hong Kong to Brisbane took you through 10 countries. How many boast healthy democracies? To me, the determinant for progress isn't the prevailing political methodology but how the country manages corruption. Those countries lagging behind are typically the ones crippled by endemic corruption.

You've focused on just one Australian organisation: the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance. Why? NAISMA is a brilliant organisation focused on holistic strategic solutions to land and sea management across northern Australia. I was especially impressed by their work on carbon trading programs.

Was the expedition a kind of homecoming? I fell in love with Australia all over again when travelling throughout the Outback. Having lived in Asia for so long, I forgot what it was like to enjoy that feeling of freedom in the wide open space.

LUKE SLATTERY

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