

INSPIRATION FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS

TNT

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THE PETER JACKSON

INTERVIEW

"King Kong is my dream come true"

PLUS NAOMI WATTS AND ANDY SERKIS

Plus

The Socceros' World Cup draw
Getting serious about Christmas gifts
Matthew Hayden on Australia v South Africa
Travel: Island escapes

win a ski holiday for two

LIFESTYLE ENTERTAINMENT TRAVEL NEWS
SPORT JOBS ACCOMMODATION FREIGHT

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A clean getaway

NAMES • Shane Braddock

CAREER • Adventure tourism and laundrette operator

AGE • 34

LIVE • Split, Croatia

FROM • Perth

"My partner Julie Morgan and I opened our adventure tourism agency, Lifejacket Adventures, three years ago, and the laundrette 18 months ago. After living in New York for seven years, it was time for a change of pace and we'd been to Croatia in 1997 to visit relatives, so knew it was a great spot.

I first kayaked the Dalmatian Islands in 2000 and, with that in mind, we started the sea-kayaking company. The laundrette started as an office for the business, but we had so many people coming in to ask where to wash clothes, we bought some machines and it grew from there.

One of the main inspirations was really from the Dalmatian coast. It had such potential —

people who have been able to turn their hobbies into successful businesses.

We are looking at setting up a second laundrette and buying an apartment here. The most enjoyable part of the job is meeting people from all over the world. If we're not on the islands on a tour, either hiking, kayaking or rock-climbing, we are in the laundrette. We have to prevent our 17-month-old son Alkie being overfed by locals, too. They are very friendly with young children and he has them wrapped around his little finger.

Croatia is a very difficult place to do business. There is still a convoluted bureaucracy here and very little in the sense of business culture. The quality of work from tradespeople is

"The Split girls exist on a diet of coffee and smokes."

the history, sun and sea — plus the developing food and wine industry, and all in Europe's backyard. We guessed the country was only going to move forward. I also admire

relatively poor and good service is also hard to find. Croatia never learnt about value-added tourism. Before the war, it only provided facilities for mass tourism. It now has to



Julie Morgan, Shane Braddock and their son Alkie

be careful to protect its assets, stop over-development and keep the beaches clean. It also has to provide for travellers, who are more discerning than before.

These are the major downfalls/worries, but on the upside Croats speak fantastic English, and also Italian and German for that matter. Since we are still struggling to master their language, it helps a lot.

Adventure tourism is a new thing here. The old fishermen relaxing in the shade with a beer are always shocked when we kayak or walk into town, they don't understand why

we would want to put in such an effort. When we explain to them that people even pay to do activities, they nearly fall off their benches, they think we're nuts. The old men are funny and the Split girls are amazing, they exist on a diet of coffee and smokes and spend the little money they have on latest fashions. But they don't speak to foreigners and, yes, some friends have gone down in flames.

There is no separation between the beaches, so you can go naked anywhere. It's a shock when you kayak around a point and cop an eyeful."

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NEED TO KNOW

■ See www.lifejacketadventures.com.

■ The couple received plenty of help from friends and family in Split and in Oz to get the company started.

■ To get involved in a similar business venture, Braddock says you need to be passionate and patient and have a good knowledge about the area you want to work in.

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