


## LIFESTYLE

# 'It comes down to choice': Couple's dream lifestyle



 Boyd Jackson and Andi Fabian enjoying a relaxing sunset walk along a secluded beach at Lady Musgrave Island, Great Barrier Reef.



**JANESSA EKERT**, [janessa.ekert@dailymercury.com.au](mailto:janessa.ekert@dailymercury.com.au)

16th May 2020 5:00 AM | Updated: 6:44 AM

 Subscriber only



IT'S 8.10am and Boyd Jackson is standing in the cockpit of his 48ft yacht, coffee in hand, breathing in fresh, salty sea air gazing out over the horizon.


As Morningside gently rocks in the water, the 60 year old and his partner Andrea Fabian casually plan their next adventure.

Boyd and Andi are in that lucky category of people who have turned their passion into a career that resonates with their chosen lifestyle.

"We've made this decision ... it comes down to choice," he said.

But this wasn't always the case.



 Boyd and Andi's home, Morningside, at beautiful Black Island (aka Bali Hai), Whitsundays, with Langford Reef in the background.

About five years ago Boyd was a highly successful property executive on the Gold Coast working 10 plus hours a day before a close brush with death gave him a "wake up call" and he hasn't looked back.


"I didn't want to die in an office ... I wanted to go and live," he said.

Andi was born and grew up on the Slovakian side of socialist Czechoslovakia.

"We weren't allowed to watch television, we weren't allowed to travel or even listen to West-oriented music," she said.

Now the couple spend their days living on a boat, and will travel the coast for about six months of the year - their cameras and drone not only capturing every moment, but also the tools of their trade.



 Boyd and Andi enjoying a relaxing sunset walk along a secluded beach at Lady Musgrave Island, Great Barrier Reef.

The Whitsundays is a must stop.

Boyd fell in love with the location in his early 20s.

"It was like a one-night stand that lasted 20 years," he laughed.

As a 23-year-old advertising agent, he moved to the region to open and run a North Queensland branch of his company - which he bought a year later and turned into one of the state's largest regional design and creative hubs, Jackson Studios.

That's when he discovered a love of the ocean and sailing, which would later become a driving force behind his way of life.

"I just loved the freedom of it," he said.

"Everything that I've ever done in my life is always about freedom."





One of Whitsunday Island's most striking, small, private beaches found just inside Hill Inlet.

Like obtaining his pilot's licence in the 80s or buying a Harley Davidson 12 years ago, he said

"All these things are somewhat scary endeavours," he said.

"But when you're doing these things - flying aeroplanes, belting down the highway on a Harley or out at sea sailing - you can't really think about much other than what you're doing.

"You have to just let all the noise and all the bullshit go ... nothing else matters."



Sailing back from Hardy Reef to the Whitsunday Islands in August 2019. autopilot on, sails set, hammock up – what else is there to do other than to put your feet up and take in the view?

Boyd describes himself as a "bit of a wanderer".

He left home at 15 and by age 19 had held 25 different jobs ranging from driving tractors in western New South Wales to working on prawn boats off the Gold Coast.

Both his father and grandfather had worked for advertising agencies, so he followed in their footsteps and was a general manager by age 21.

"Because there was so much variety, I loved it and I did really well at it," he said.

"I used to work 18 hours a day, seven days a week and I loved what I was doing."



Stairway to Heaven, Border Island, Whitsundays. A beautiful walk to stunning vistas made easy thanks to the excellent, rocky stairway created by National Parks.

Fast forward to his 30s and Boyd is back living in Brisbane with his then-wife and the pair "just really wanted something different".

"And then we happened to go looking for boats," he said.

An opportunity arose to buy a 45ft sloop named High Seas, which he said was "an old clunker" that "sailed like a pig but it was big and comfortable".

"We made them a ridiculous offer and they took it," he said.

It became his first boat which owned for eight years and lived on for six.



Hill inlet, Whitehaven Beach, Whitsundays.



He actually bought his second boat - Morningside, a 48ft ketch - in Mackay while visiting a friend, who'd had a heart attack.

"I happened to look at a boat in the marina ... (it was) this tired, sad looking thing that had clearly been lost and forgotten and left unloved," he said.

Again he made a "silly offer", which was accepted. That was five years ago this month.



Boats at anchor, Hardy Lagoon, Great Barrier Reef. Morningside in the background with several of our cruising friends in the foreground. An extraordinary sunset in a striking location.

After moving the boat to Airlie where he gave her some TLC, Boyd grabbed a few friends and some backpackers to sail her home to the Gold Coast in September that same year.

Four days outside of the Whitsundays he noticed an itchy lump behind his ear.

"I thought 'oh I better get that looked at when I get home'," he said.

Within 24 hours after visiting his GP, Boyd was seated in front of a specialist surgeon at the Gold Coast University Hospital "talking about melanomas and that I may not make it to Christmas".



Another hidden gem at Hill Inlet. This secluded, private beach is just a hundred metres from where hundreds of tourists visit the popular white sandy flats.

He was diagnosed with malignant metastatic melanoma. At this point Boyd was running an investment property business.

"I just walked away from the business so that I could go and fight for my life," he said.

"That's pretty much what set me on the path I'm on.

"I just walked away from everything, got on the boat."

And he hasn't looked back.

Not long after completing cancer treatment, which included extensive operations, radiation and a 12-month clinical trial for an immunotherapy drug, Boyd met Andi.

The Eastern European was on a return visit to Australia when the pair crossed paths and clicked.



Boyd and Andi taking time out on a secluded beach in Moreton Bay, near Brisbane.

For Andi, Australia had always been like a dream.

"When I was a kid I was drawing kangaroos and koalas," she said.

"Growing up in socialism ... we weren't allowed to travel to other countries."

At 14, though, she was granted permission to compete in a world championship for dressage in Austria.

Andi said she was questioned heavily before leaving and warned her parents would go to jail if she tried to immigrate there.



Andi playing with the locals at Chalkey's Beach, Haselwood Island, Whitsundays.

Then in 1989 the Czechoslovakians peacefully deposed their government in the Velvet Revolution and Andi said she "started to travel actively".

One item she always carries everywhere is her camera.

"Photography is something you can do wherever you go," she said.

"I just love it. I see pictures everywhere I go."

Last year Andi submitted a portfolio of photographs from South Africa for Panasonic's Photographer of the Year competition and said she did not win but the judges highly commended her work.





Turtle laying, Lady Musgrave, Great Barrier Reef.

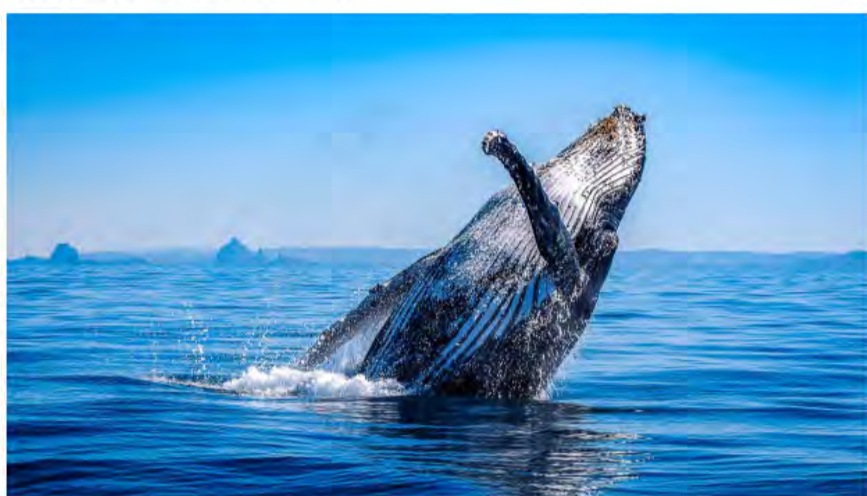
Photography is a common ground she shares with Boyd, who has been around the craft all his life.

While running the ad agency in Airlie, Boyd said he used to take a lot of the photos himself.

After they met, the pair travelled to North Queensland together on Morningside and "just started taking photos for fun".

"That's kind of how we rolled into it," Boyd said.

"It's really built around lifestyle."



A majestic Humpback whale putting on a show for Boyd and Andi. This whale did eight striking breaches right around their boat Morningside before coming right alongside to say hi.

The couple create large canvas or acrylic images, depicting the stunning locations they've visited, which are hung in holiday and private homes and corporate offices.

After living and working on Hamilton Island for two years, they had made connections and knew people who owned holiday homes.

So Boyd said he put a proposal together to display their photography in the holiday homes and all stemmed from there.

Boyd and Andi offer a full styling and installation service where they use an existing photograph of the empty room or wall and then superimpose their recommended images into the space - so the client can see the space in full before buying.



Just another stunning sunset in the Whitsundays. Captured at Dugong Beach, Cid Harbour, Whitsundays.

Life hasn't really changed too much for them under the COVID-19 lockdowns.

"It's not that much different to what we've been doing the past five years," Boyd said.

Although it did push back their plan to head north until later this month.

The couple also own a small cottage on Russell Island, in Moreton Bay, which is where they escape North Queensland's wet season. Boyd said they would rent it out on AirBnB while they were sailing.

"Life is just about choices," he said.

For more information visit:

[www.bandionline.com.au/about/](http://www.bandionline.com.au/about/)

[andreafabian.com/](http://andreafabian.com/)

[www.boydjackson.com.au/](http://www.boydjackson.com.au/)



Morningside at anchor at Hardy Lagoon, on the Great Barrier Reef. A one in a million moments where all the elements come together to create a stunning, almost eerie sunset. The result of no wind, clear skies and just enough haze to bring the moment to life.

airlie beach sailing

airlie beach tourism



boyd jackson

mackay sailing

mackay tourism

whitsunday sailing

Daily Mercury