

Robb Report

robbreport.com.sg

SINGAPORE

May 2014

RULE THE ROAD,
SAVE THE EARTH:
TOP 3 ECO-FRIENDLY
SUPERCARS

TAILORING
TAKES ON THE
INTERNET

PLUS
TOM DIXON
MAISON&OBJET ASIA
MONOGRAMS 101
UNUSUAL WORKOUTS
SAINT-TROPEZ FEASTS

THE RISE
OF BITCOIN

BRUT FORCE:
SUGAR-FREE
CHAMPAGNE

WATCHES & INNOVATIONS

TIMEPIECES AND TECH THAT UPGRADE YOUR LIFE



REMOTE LUXURY

A peripatetic childhood helped Aqua Expeditions founder and CEO Francesco Galli Zugaro uncover Mother Nature's secrets.

By CYNTHIA ROSENFELD

Half Italian and half American, Aqua Expeditions founder and CEO Francesco Galli Zugaro lived in 14 countries on four continents before moving to Singapore in 2012 with his Anglo-Peruvian wife and their three children. After graduating from college in Boston, he went to the Galapagos Islands to work for a cruise company. Multilingual and a natural salesman, Galli Zugaro quickly ascended to an executive position, then set off around Latin America in search of a remote destination where he could pioneer a luxury experience. In 2008, his company Aqua Expeditions launched the 12-cabin

Above: Galli Zugaro says highlights of the new Aqua Mekong cruise will include a shore excursion to the temples of Angkor Wat.

Aqua Amazon, which plies an unexplored Peruvian stretch of the Amazon River, followed in 2011 by the 16-suite Aria Amazon. Aqua Mekong, Galli Zugaro's third ship, will set sail this September between Vietnam and Cambodia.

Singapore has been a dream for me as a businessman. Two government agencies, International Enterprise Singapore and Singapore Economic Development Board, did everything possible to support me in setting up Aqua Expeditions here, even visiting me in South America. We plan to remain a small niche firm, yet they continually encourage me to grow our talent in Singapore.



Something people don't know about me is that I like to swim in our building's pool every morning. We live near my aunt and uncle's place on Nassim Road. They moved here around the same time as we did, so Singapore feels even more like home when we gather every Sunday for mass followed by *xiao long bao* (steamed dumplings) at Ion Orchard.

As a family, the first thing we do when I come home is eat. If the kids choose, we go for yakitori at Clarke Quay or to Omakase Burger in Turf City, which serves Coca-Cola imported from Mexico. Drinking imported Coke from a bottle in Singapore is just one of the many indulgences that makes us glad we can get around this country without buying a car!

I also make time to explore the gourmet scene with my wife. Luke's at Gemmill Lane takes us back to our Boston days with the Nantucket oysters.

“Responsible tourism is the first lesson I learned in the Galapagos.”



Clockwise from top left: a Vietnamese bird sanctuary; low water season on the Amazon; Aqua Mekong.

I'm really excited for both Aqua Expeditions' chefs, David Thompson of Nahm in Bangkok and Pedro Miguel Schiaffino from Malabar in Lima, who are opening restaurants here later

this year.

Responsible tourism is the first lesson I learned in the Galapagos, long before it became my industry's buzzword. In my first entrepreneurial venture, I co-founded Lonesome George & Co in 2006, a branded apparel line that was named after, and inspired by, the world's last surviving Pinta Island giant tortoise. Today, we operate stores around the world and donate 10 per cent of every purchase to youth programmes that teach wildlife preservation. Similarly at Aqua Expeditions we undertake conservation efforts such as releasing endangered taricaya turtles and rehabilitating manatees. 