

FLYING HIGH: ANGELINA JOLIE

In an exclusive interview, globe-trotting Angelina Jolie takes *Signature* behind the scenes of her latest movie and reveals what we can expect next from a woman driven by what really matters in life. One thing's for sure – she and her family aren't going to stop their jet-setting ways anytime soon.



Although Angelina Jolie enjoys the finer things in life – the private jets, the mansions, the exclusive holidays – she is a woman who knows herself and what she was born to do. Languishing in opulence is not high on her agenda. What does top her priority list is clear: to offer her children a secure and happy home, and to do all she can to ease the suffering she's witnessed around the world.

So committed is Jolie to worthwhile causes that she now uses the millions she earns to finance her goals. She saves a third of her money, spends a third of it on living, and uses the rest to support the causes she cares about.

With both Jolie and husband Brad Pitt so often traversing the globe for their various projects, they have to make a

concerted effort not just to keep the magic alive between the two of them (they write romantic notes and post them to each other during times apart), but also to keep things as stable as possible for their six children.

The kids are homeschooled, and have no shortage of helpers to look after them. They are used to making a home wherever their parents happen to be working. They might spend months abroad with their mother while she's working on a film, for example, followed by time at home in LA (complete with professional-grade skate park and multiple swimming pools) or at one of their other homes – Jolie and Pitt married last year at their sprawling villa in the south of France. When *Signature* asks where home is for her, Jolie says:

“We don't actually know! We have a lot of our stuff in Los Angeles but we're looking for a home outside of that. We just went back to Cambodia, which I consider home.”

Jolie and Pitt also make sure they have plenty of downtime together as a family. So, whether it's enjoying a holiday together in a lavish 16th-century mansion in the countryside of Scotland, living it up at the theme parks of Malta, or playing in the aquamarine waters of the Whitsundays, this well-travelled family manages to combine business and pleasure with apparent ease.

01 With the late Louis Zamperini
02 Directing Jack O'Connell as Zamperini in 'Unbroken'
03 A woman of substance

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“With my family, I’m trying to raise them to have respect for all people and to make friends around the world and to feel at home around the world,” Jolie tells *Signature*. “It’s what’s forming them. Of course, I make sure they do their math and their science, but the world perspective is the most important thing.”

Travel has become almost an addiction for globetrotting Jolie. “Anytime I feel lost, I pull out a map and stare; I stare until I have reminded myself that life is a giant adventure, so much to do, to see,” she says. “If you don’t get out of the box you’ve been raised in, you won’t understand how much bigger the world is. Wherever I am I always find myself looking out the window wishing I was somewhere else.”

Jolie prepares for a trip somewhat differently from her husband.

“When we travel, Brad packs at the last minute while I pack three days

“IF YOU DON’T GET OUT OF THE BOX YOU WON’T UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH BIGGER THE WORLD IS”

ahead with all the kids’ stuff ... I like to organise each moment of our travel but he likes to be more spontaneous. But we appreciate each other. We need it. I need to be not so crazy about things.”

She says Pitt is very good at making sure none of the kids feel stressed when the family is moving around, quite a feat given that the paparazzi seems to accompany them wherever they go.

Boarding a yacht is one of the family’s favourite things to do. “I think there’s a perception that having yachts is a way of celebrities putting distance between themselves and the press,” Jolie says. “It’s not, it’s just a nice way to spend time; a place where you can chill out and enjoy unique surroundings, and I love that.”



Jolie is as comfortable up in the air as she is on water – she learned how to fly her own plane a few years ago. “It certainly gives me a freedom that I don’t have on the ground ... it’s the only place I’m completely alone – up in the air, detached from everything.”

A road less travelled

Having studied acting from the age of 11, and eventually enjoying the considerable success that this career choice can bring, Jolie is well aware of her privileged position in the world, something that came into focus after filming ‘Lara Croft: Tomb Raider’ in Cambodia in 2001. When filming ended, she approached the United Nations to find out more about humanitarian action for refugees, and has since made more than 50 field missions to the likes of Sierra Leone, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tanzania and, of course, Cambodia.

“We cannot close ourselves off to information and ignore the fact that millions of people are out there suffering,” she says. “I honestly want to help. I don’t believe I feel differently from other people. I think we all want justice and equality, a chance for a life with meaning. All of us would like to believe that if we were in a bad situation someone would help us.”

According to the UNHCR, Jolie shares the same rudimentary working and living conditions as UNHCR staff, people she calls her heroes. She is now Special Envoy of the UNHCR, engaging in high-level mediation in emergency situations.

“You go to these places and you realise what life’s really about and what people are really going through,” Jolie says.

Jolie may seem like a saint now, but it took the adoption of her son Maddox from Cambodia to turn her troubled life around. Her history of depression,

suicide attempts and drug abuse became a thing of the past the minute she took charge of her adopted son, and before long she had a brood of six – an Ethiopian refugee, Zahara, and Vietnamese boy, Pax, among them.

“You learn that the only things which are meaningful is how much love you can bring to your world and what you can do to build a happy life for your children,” she tells *Signature*. “It makes you forget about all the selfish concerns you might have had and which I had when I was younger and not at all at ease with who I was and what I wanted from life.”

Jolie says her children give her a sense of peace and fulfilment when she sees how happy and healthy they are. “I feel truly at ease when I know I’ve helped give them a safe and hopeful life. A big family can generate a lot of chaos, but it’s also a source of inner peace.”

Her troubled past and contact with so many people enduring hardship is probably the reason she feels so drawn to those with a past, and to film scripts focused on overcoming hardship. Her most recent project, her second as director, had her celebrating the bravery of a man who endured unspeakable obstacles and used his determination to survive. ‘Unbroken’ tells the story of Olympic athlete Louis Zamperini who survived a near-fatal plane crash in World War II, only to spend 47 days in a raft before being rescued and sent to a Japanese prisoner of war camp.

“I’m drawn to people who are able to surmount a lot of obstacles and go on to achieve many things,” Jolie says. “Louis was a remarkable and heroic man in so many respects ... he taught me so much about hope and being grateful for so much in life and simply being able to take time to enjoy every day of your life.”

Zamperini died at age 97 before the release of the film, but not before watching it on Jolie’s laptop in hospital.

“Even though it was very hard for me to watch Louis slowly lose his strength in the hospital, his face lit up when he was able to see scenes from his life re-enacted in the film,” Jolie says.

She acknowledges that some scenes in the film are emotionally trying, but was happy for sons Maddox (13), Pax (11) and Knox (6) to see it. Jolie says what children can handle and what they’re interested in is much deeper than people assume. “They want to understand things that frighten them. They want to see dark things that happen, and they want to see how to rise above them ... they don’t want to be hidden from all things and have everything sweetened.”

She and Pitt have always been “very open and straightforward” about the problems of the world. Her children have been to post-conflict situations and to refugee camps, and spend time in the house the family has in Cambodia. “It’s not really a house, but a room on stilts, surrounded by 100 Cambodian people who work with us to secure the area – it’s a project in the middle of the jungle.”

“We found 48 land mines on our property. Our neighbours are land mine victims. My kids play with the local kids and they swim in the pond and it’s part of what they know – part of their lives.”

04 Taking in Sydney Harbour during the world premiere of ‘Unbroken’

05 On set in Queensland

Next steps

Jolie’s next movie, ‘By the Sea’, a project she directed and starred in with Pitt, is in post-production for release this year. She has also signed up to direct ‘Africa’, a film about conservationist Richard Leakey’s battles with ivory poachers.

“Zahara and Shiloh were born in Africa and we feel a strong connection to that world,” Jolie tells *Signature*. “I’ve loved meeting the people in different regions there and it will mean a lot to me to be able to go and work there.”

Does that mean we’re nearing the end of seeing Jolie on the big screen?

“I find myself becoming more and more comfortable directing and it’s much easier for me to worry about telling a story than being part of the story while I’m acting,” she says. “I enjoy getting to work with so many people and getting to construct a film from beginning to end. This is what I’m happiest doing.” ♦

