

# WHAT A MODEL MISS!

SA-born supermodel Nicola Breytenbach takes a break in Cape Town with cute daughter Evangeline



**T**HE mansion looks like something out of *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*.

These streets high with sweeping sea views, it's just the kind of place where a world-famous supermodel who often mingles with the likes of Charlize Theron, Brito and Gisele Bündchen would feel at home.

But there are no airs and graces about Nicola Breytenbach as she welcomes us into the luxurious residence she and her businessman husband, Ben Steiner, have rented for the holiday season in the suburb of Fynsney, Cape Town.

"When we walk in we find her sitting at the dining-room table having her hair and make-up done in preparation for our shoot. She greets us warmly in an American accent but then switches effortlessly to Afrikaans when talking to a member of our crew about how much she has enjoyed being back in her hometown where she spent Christmas with her family.

"Just look at her," stylist Melissa van Zyl exclaims. "I've never seen anything like it – she has enough hair for five people and the most perfect skin."

But Nicola doesn't seem to hear the compliment. Her attention has shifted to her adorable baby daughter who has just toddled into the room.

"This is Evangeline," she says proudly.

The 18-month-old gurgles excitedly. "Mimi, Mimi, Mimi."

"That's her name for me," Nicola explains, lifting Evangeline onto her lap.

She runs her fingers through the little girl's hair. "She's definitely got Ben's curls and his eyes. She's a real little clone of her dad. When I look at her the only thing I can see of me is my nose."

Does she have the temperament to be a model like her mother? That's what we're about to find out.

Nicola (38) started modelling when she was 17, strutting the catwalks of London, Paris and New York and being photo-



**LEFT and ABOVE:** Nicola Breytenbach with Evangeline on the toddler's first official photoshoot. Like her supermodel mom she proved to be a natural.

## 'She's so fantastic – such a happy child'

graphed for some of the world's glossiest magazines. But today will be the first time she has posed with Evangeline and the little beauty is visibly nervous.

"While we prepare for the first shot Evangeline pouts and rubs her eyes. She has just woken up from a nap and it seems her mood could swing either way.

As photographer Jacques Stander takes aim the little girl looks up from the couch where she's playing with a pile of toys, frowns for a moment, then breaks into a big grin. She's a natural.

With her mom sitting next to her offering words of encouragement she's happy to pose for the camera. It takes only a few minutes to get the shot we need but Evangeline doesn't waste the fun a step. "More, more, more," she chortles, clapping her hands excitedly.

**LATER** over a lunch of beautiful and salad – prepared by the family's personal chef who accompanied them to South Africa – Nicola explains what a seasoned traveller Evangeline is.

She received a passport soon after she was born and has clocked up 80 000 frequent flyer miles on trips to Istanbul, London, Paris and Cape Town.

Seven weeks after her birth her parents whisked her off for a three-week holiday in the French town of Saint-Tropez where they own a home.

Even when the family are in America they're constantly on the move, dividing their time between their home in Florida, their farm in Virginia and their newly renovated apartment in New York which has floor-to-ceiling windows and boasts stunning views of the Hudson River.

"Luckily she's a great traveller," Nicola says. "There was just one scintilla three-hour flight from Miami to New York where I forgot to pack the dummy she always has when she goes to sleep. She kept screaming and couldn't understand why she couldn't get her dummy. I felt so bad."

Nicola reckons the reason Evangeline is so relaxed is be-

cause she had a clear-cut routine from the day she was born. For the first few months she employed a South African maternity nurse to help her adjust to motherhood.

"She basically taught me everything I know."

Nicola looked after Evangeline on her own from the time she was six months old until she was one. She now has a nanny who comes in three or four days a week.

"When Ben isn't working he helps out a lot," she adds. "He's a great dad. Evangeline's first word was 'Daddy' – she's a real daddy's girl."

Almost on cue Ben (35) strolls in. The millionaire investment manager was reluctant to be in any of our pics but his eyes light up when he hears what a star his daughter has been during our shoot.

"She's so fantastic – such a happy child – and Nicola is a wonderful mother," he tells us.

He has just returned from a lunch appointment and couldn't resist bringing a gift for Evangeline he'd spotted in a shop – a toy bear with lots of buttons she can push to hear various animal noises.

Clearly he loves spoiling the women in his life. On their (then over)

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wedding anniversary he presented Nicola with a diamond eternity ring and for her birthday on 4 January, which she celebrated in Cape Town, he surprised her with diamond-studded earrings.

"He's such a romantic soul," she says. "He loves giving me jewellery — classic pieces I'll be able to pass on to Evangeline some day."

There's no missing the eye-catching bracelet she's wearing. Crafted from malachite, it has a gold charm housing a rough diamond.

It's a Green Bracelet, symbol of the Diamond Empowerment Fund (DEF), a charity that's the brainchild of American entrepreneur and hip-hop pioneer Russell Simmons. It aims to help disadvantaged communities in diamond-mining African countries by offering them access to quality higher education.

As the fund's First African Angel, Nicola has been passionately committed to promoting its projects.

At a charity auction in London last year she helped to raise more than \$1 million (£1 million) for CIDA City Campus and the African Leadership



**ABOVE:** Nicola relaxes in the luxurious home in Cape Town the family rented for the holiday season. **RIGHT:** Her dad, Richard Brytenbach, is a doting grandfather.



Academy in Johannesburg.

"I wanted to do something that would benefit South Africa and children, and so the education seemed to be the key," she says.

She also hopes she'll be able to visit South Africa more often — and there's a good chance she'll get her wish because Ben is looking into doing more business here.

"I've been away for 20 years now (she was not yet five in Amsterdam when she was 14) and I still miss it. Even though I love New York they are not my people. I feel most comfortable in my own skin when I'm in South Africa and would like to spend more time here."

Things have been rather quiet on the modelling front over the past year.

"I still do some things here and there but now I'm a mom I don't want to spend too much time away from Evangeline," she explains.

She doesn't think she'll be like Naomi Campbell and Cindy Crawford who are still modelling in their forties.

"I don't think I'm passionate enough to carry on — I'd much rather branch out into charity. It's nice to be known for something other than modelling."

What if Evangeline decides one day she'd like to follow in

her mom's footsteps?

Nicola grimaces. "Look, modelling wouldn't be my first choice for her as a career but if it's what she really wants I'll support her. I want her to follow her dreams."

And you can bet she's going to have plenty of them as a result of all the glitz, glamour and foreign travel she's exposed to. Not many kids can boast about having someone as magical as *Blissville* David Blaine as their godfather.

"David has been best friends with Ben since they were 15. He was one of the first people to visit us in hospital after Evangeline was born," Nicola says.

David and his fiancée, French model Alizee Guinocchen, are expecting their first child and Nicola is looking forward to organising play dates and being able to indulge in hours of baby talk.

When the awarded Texas billionaire Preston Haskell's gitty New Year's bash in Cape Town she spent most of the evening with celebrity pals Vanessa Carnes and Lee-Ann Liebenberg swooping notes on motherhood.

Do she and Ben plan to have more kids?

"Definitely," Nicola says. "We would love to give Evangeline siblings. I always wanted

to have three but we'll see — we could end up having five, who knows?"

But at the moment there's one very special little girl next to her demanding her attention.

Nicola bends down and sweeps Evangeline into her arms.

"It's so funny, once you become a mom your focus changes completely," she says.

"My daughter is the highlight of my life and I don't think that will ever change."

And Evangeline seems perfectly content with this arrangement.

As Nicola stares at her adoringly the toddler claps her hands.

"Mimi, Mimi, Mimi," she chatters, then leans forward and plants a big kiss on her mother's lips. Mwah! ☺

Get the app and snap this tag with your phone to see a clip of Nicola Brytenbach with her adorable daughter, Evangeline.



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 For details on how to download the app go to [www.fox.com.au](http://www.fox.com.au)



**ABOVE:** Nicola and husband Ben Steiner at the L'Oreal Paris Queen's Plate at Killarwin Racecourse in Cape Town.