



American

From her name to her spirit, Ariana Rockefeller epitomizes American royalty. But she also is intent on forging her own legacy.

Shot on location at The Brazilian Court, Palm Beach

Alaïa dress, Neiman Marcus, Palm Beach

the PBI profile

Girl

By Mary Murray
Photography by Robert Nelson

Ariana Rockefeller is a gorgeous enigma wrapped in a sophisticated anomaly. She's as comfortable in a T-shirt and flats as she is in a fringed Stella McCartney gown. She feels just as at home astride her horse as she does sitting on the board of her grandfather's charity. She adores the bustle of New York but devours the relaxed vibe of Palm Beach.

"I'm just kind of a simple girl," she says, her signature giant smile beaming. At 32 years old, the great-great granddaughter of oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller at once honors her family's heritage and works to forge her own legacy. "For members of my family, it's very important that we have something to call our own," she says.

"Ariana has actually spent most of her life building a body of experience totally her own," says friend and Palm Beach resident Elisabeth Munder. "She worked at the United Nations, did oceanographic research in Brazil and is generally much more interested in finding challenging experiences than resting on her family's laurels."

A few other items that fit that bill: her

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—Rob Younkers

horse-riding dedication and accomplishments, her burgeoning clothing line and her strong sense of charitable responsibility.

Though a fan of the island, Ariana spends most of her time in Palm Beach County in Wellington. No surprise there—she’s been riding since she was a toddler. “For me, it’s all about learning,” she says. “I put my horse first.” Her current horse, Chogun II—whose name emblazes the bracelet resting on her wrist—accompanied her to Wellington last year for four months to participate in the show-jumping circuit of the Winter Equestrian Festival. “I found my niche in show jumping specifically,” she says. “As I progress, I’ll jump higher and, one day, I would love to do a Grand Prix.”

The first glimpse of Ariana’s innate humility comes when she talks about her horse. A gift from her grandfather, 99-year-old David Rockefeller, Chogun II has become a tried-and-true companion. “You have to have a partner in your horse,” she says. “It’s so incredibly humbling, because they don’t care how expensive your saddle is or where you come from.”

When not in Wellington, Ariana rides at the Old Salem Farm in North Salem, New York five to six times a week. “I am mostly in riding clothes. I usually show up in the garment center still in my gross riding pants,” she shares with a smirk. Beyond her day-to-day garb, her equestrian passion finds its way into her clothing design in the form of prints and the line’s overall sensibility and ease.

Similar to her recent exploration of show jumping, Ariana has found her footing in the fashion world by focusing on her keenly American aesthet-

ic. “There are so many ways you can find your niche in the horse world, just like in the fashion world,” she says.

As a young girl, Ariana was as obsessed with fashion as she was with horses. “I was always interested in aesthetics and details and the way things were presented and put together,” she says. She would pay close attention to the lovely clothing her parents’ friends wore and tediously plan her own themes and looks for different seasons. In 2011, following a graduation from Columbia University, a marriage to Matthew Bucklin and a brief move to Los Angeles, Ariana finally took the leap and established her eponymous clothing line.

“I’d been trying to talk her into it for a long time,” Bucklin confides. “I was happy when she finally decided to do it.”

Inspired by her carefree-chic style, Ariana’s line embodies the classic Americana lifestyle she leads. “The way I design clothing is very much my style,” she says. For her first capsule collection, she focused on pieces she and her friends would want in their own closets. “That’s the amazing part about being a designer—you get to design things that you’ve dreamed of,” she says.

“Ariana’s personal style is effortless Americana,” Munder says. “Classic but never staid, she infuses simple styles with glamour and a dose of high fashion.”

“Ariana knows what she likes; there’s never a question,” adds Rob Younkers, design director of her brand. “So many designers look to this American lifestyle, and they’re influenced by it. But who better to design it than the girl who lived it?”

Every aspect of Ariana’s collection is affected by her

ARIANA’S PALM BEACH

👉 THE YOUNG ROCKEFELLER SHARES A FEW OF HER FAVORITE PLACES IN SOUTH FLORIDA

Island hot spot: Buccan—she loves the baby kale salad and short-rib empanadas.

Stay and play: The Brazilian Court hotel in Palm Beach

Shopping destinations: Leta Austin Foster Boutique, Jennifer Miller Jewelry

After-5 meeting spot: “HMF at The Breakers with my husband [and] Imoto for drinks with a group of friends.”

Lunch in Wellington: Taylor Made Café

Equestrian shop: Beval in Wellington

Beach: Reef Road

Activities: Sunday polo, shooting at the gun range

Spots to relax: The gardens at the Society of the Four Arts in Palm Beach, The Bee in West Palm Beach

Spa: Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach



Hervé Leger gown, Neiman Marcus, Palm Beach



Naeem Khan beaded dress,
Neiman Marcus, Palm Beach
Dior heels, Saks Fifth Avenue,
Palm Beach

upbringing. “She’s got this amazing family heritage—how could it not inspire you?” Younkers asks. Begin with her prints, all of which are custom created and have become the catalyst for her design process. One of her family’s Picasso paintings inspired a chevron print used in her first collection. “It was really about that print but also those primary colors and those rich tones that really always affected me and inspired me,” she says.

Art, after all, is an intricate part of her family’s heritage. Ariana studied visual art in college, and her great-grandmother Abby Aldrich Rockefeller helped establish the Museum of Modern Art in 1929 with her personal collection as the base. Even though she never met Abby, Ariana closely relates to her. “I have a little of my great-grandmother’s adventure in me,” she says. “She definitely walked off the beaten path, and I’m a little bit the same way.” By honoring her family’s love of the arts in her fashion line, Ariana hopes she is carving out her own space in the Rockefeller legacy. “In my own small way, I am pursuing my dream and giving something creative back,” she says. “My clothing line is my version of that.”

When it comes to philanthropic giving, Ariana believes it is part of her familial and civic duty to help those less fortunate. “The motto in my family is, ‘To whom much is given, much is expected,’” she says. “It’s important to never take things for granted and always try and find ways to make things better for everyone. And that’s part of the American heritage that I’m a part of.” She is involved with the ASPCA and



Ariana Rockefeller top, long skirt,
arianarockefeller.com

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the Humane Society, with a special focus on programs that support equine rescue and rehabilitation. In addition, she sits on the board of directors of her grandfather's charity, the David Rockefeller Fund. Established in 1989, the fund focuses on four areas: the arts, criminal justice, the environment and community. “It's all about community service,” Ariana says. “It really helps [me] learn more about philanthropic giving.”

A tradition of philanthropy is just one aspect of the family history with which Ariana is proud to be associated. For her, however, the Rockefeller name is not defined by one person, one endeavor or one field, but by her family's role in perpetuating the American dream.

“My great-great grandfather saw the American dream,” she says. “You see something and you work hard, and you see a place where you can contribute great things and make a lot of money—that literally is the American dream. From that, the rest of my family worked to give back and create these amazing institutions and hospitals, all for the benefit of society. I'm so proud to be a part of that.”

For this American heiress, it's not about separating herself from her name and family legacy but making that legacy her own. A famous last name “can make people have expectations or judgments,” she admits, “but I think that's shaped me in terms of really needing to be confident in who I am. Yes, I have my last name, but I'm also a lot of other things.”

Indeed she is—equestrian, philanthropist, designer, traveler, wife, friend and, yes, Rockefeller. ◀◀



Hair and makeup: Gina Simone, using Giorgio Armani Beauty

Stella McCartney fringe-trimmed gown, Saks Fifth Avenue, Palm Beach

PBI thanks the staff and management of The Brazilian Court for their generous hospitality.