

**PERILOUS
RIDES!**

**HUNGRY
HIPPOS!**

**TREACHEROUS
CLIMBS!**

**GIANT
WOLVES!**

The Wild Bunch

9
**THRILLING
TALES OF
ADVENTURE**



+ **EXPERT TIPS
AND SOMETHING EXTRA
FOR THE BOOKISH AND
THE LUXURY-MINDED**

**ILLUSTRATIONS BY
WESLEY ALLSBROOK**

DRY RUN

Tobogganing down China's biggest sand dune

At China's Resonant Sand Gorge, where the Yellow River has carved 300-foot slopes into a great plateau of sand, I bought an elaborate-looking ticket and crept to the edge with a tea tray-size wooden sled tucked under my arm. I put it on the ground, lowered myself and took off instantly, hurtling toward the sparkling river below. Sand roared and crunched under the tin-bottomed sled, and a hot wind hit my face. I had no idea how to stop, but I didn't have to. At the end of the exhilarating plunge, a large flat apron along the shore slowed me down and I ground, hatless, to a halt. I sat for a moment, and then, like a kid after the first snowfall of the season, went back up for another go. —**Adrian Mourby**



MANE DRAG

Galloping full tilt across the Argentine pampas is no time to pull back on the reins. (They wouldn't do you much good anyway.)

The first thing I thought when the shy gaucho Lalo led me to my horse, a brown majestic piece of living equine art practically shining in the sun, was that Argentines must not be very litigious. Why else, upon my arriving at Estancia La Margarita, a ranch run by an eccentric Englishman in the pampas, would someone grant me access to this creature?

The concern grew as I clambered up and realized I didn't have the foggiest notion how to operate it. Lalo spoke no English—and even if he did, it wouldn't have mattered, he was so bashful. (He did gesture that I should hold on to the mane, which didn't make a whole lot of sense, but OK.) Even the equipment was foreign to me: simple stirrups, reins and a rug to sit on. And a mane to cling to in terror.

My first ride was a graceless and upsetting affair, with the horse trying to run as fast as it could, me trying to stop it and both of us succeeding only in maintaining an excruciatingly uncomfortable trot. Lalo trotted alongside, performing gratuitous feats of horsemanship. At one point his horse actually started running sideways. He grinned and danced as I held grimly to my horse's mane in an effort to keep from falling off and being trampled.

At lunch (steak), I asked the owner what I was doing wrong. His answer: Stop trying. The beast wants to run. Let it run. The perpetual trot, which had nearly crumpled my pelvis, was akin to the jerk a car makes when switching gears. Let it go to high gear. Plus, he explained, unlike the English style, gauchos lean back and let the angle

formed between their back and their horse absorb the blows.

Leaning back on a horse in a foreign land is an act of great faith, but I decided to give it a shot. I climbed back on and, holding fast to the mane, walked the horse out toward the open fields. *All right, horse*, I said, leaning back. *Go to it*. And go he did. We passed the unpleasant trotting stage without further incident, and after that I could feel him lock in and take off, storming across the pampas, fluid as can be (save for when he stepped in a hole and we nearly wound up in what I imagine would have been a broken heap).

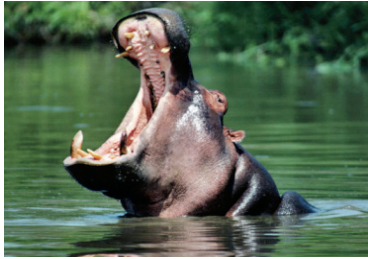
We ran around like that for a while, I don't know how long. I started trusting him. He started trusting me. He decided he wanted to chase some cows. So we chased some cows, rounding them up, picking one off from the herd, then folding her back in, all at precarious speeds, with the cows—nature's fussy aunts—groaning and complaining to the delight of horse and rider alike.

Afterward, I walked him back to the stable and tied him up. The light was fading and I stood there for a moment, just watching him, with both of us worn out and winded. What a spectacular thing. When the sun rose the next day, we were at it again. —Joe Keohane

WORDS FROM THE WILD

"EXPERIENCES THAT REQUIRE THAT MUCH STRUGGLE, AND INVOLVE THAT MUCH RAW HUMAN EMOTION, REALLY EXPOSE US. WHEN YOU'RE THAT EXPOSED, YOU CAN'T HELP BUT EITHER LOVE OR HATE THE PEOPLE YOU'RE WITH. IT JUST HAPPENS THAT WAY. WHEN YOU'RE RUBBED RAW, YOUR PARTNERS ARE GOING TO BE SALT IN YOUR WOUND, OR THEY'RE GOING TO BE A BAND-AID. THANKFULLY, ON THAT TRIP, WE WERE ALL BAND-AIDS."

—CORY RICHARDS, whose climbing team nearly perished in an avalanche during the 2011 expedition in which he became the first American to summit an 8,000-meter peak in winter



SIZE MATTERS Facing Africa's most lethal animal

"The most dangerous place in Africa is between a hippopotamus and water," said Arno, my safari ranger, but I was too busy taking pictures of said hippos to listen. The next day, with a herd in the water behind me and the rump of a lone hippo straight ahead, I suddenly felt those words come back to me. The hippo began to turn. I looked to Arno; his usual smirk was gone. My knees vibrated against the petrified horse beneath me, the hippo continuing its slow revolution. Then, miraculously, my horse unfroze. Stealthily it sidestepped, assessing our peril with each sidle, until the hippo rejoined its herd. I didn't take a picture. —SARAH H. TURCOTTE

CLIFFHANGERS More of a sofa-surfer? Here are four new books that promise first-class vicarious thrills



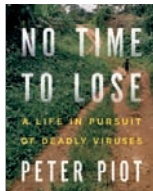
MUD, SWEAT AND TEARS: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY // BEAR GRYLLS

Even among the most vaunted seekers of peril, there are some—like "Man vs. Wild" star Bear Grylls—who are fascinating simply for their striking lack of interest in insulating themselves from harm. This great outdoorsman's long-awaited autobiography sheds a bit of light on the mania of the extremophile. **May 1**



ATLANTIC FEVER: LINDBERGH, HIS COMPETITORS AND THE RACE TO CROSS THE ATLANTIC // JOE JACKSON

Everyone knows the story of aviator Charles Lindbergh and his inaugural flight across the Atlantic Ocean, but what most don't know is that, after seven years of sitting unclaimed, a \$25,000 prize had inspired Lindbergh and 15 other aviators to give the task a shot within just five weeks. Six of them didn't come back. **May 8**



NO TIME TO LOSE: LIFE IN PURSUIT OF DEADLY VIRUSES // PETER PIOT

Microbiologist Peter Piot has lived a life more adventure-filled than an epidemic movie: He headed into the quarantine zone in Central Africa soon after the Ebola virus broke out, and then found himself traveling around the world to debate some of the first AIDS initiatives with the likes of Fidel Castro and South African president Thabo Mbeki. **May 28**



SWELL: A YEAR OF WAVES // EVAN SLATER AND PETER TARAS

This book of photographs and related essays put together by *Surfing* magazine duo Slater and Taras uses as its subject four giant ocean swells that start from different corners of the globe and drive gorgeous, translucent, rideable waves to the world's great surf beaches. **May 9**
—JACQUELINE DETWILER

WORDS FROM THE WILD

"THESE INDONESIAN VILLAGERS HAD NEVER SEEN GIRLS—OR ANYONE, REALLY—SURFING BEFORE, SO THEY ALL CAME OUT IN THEIR CANOES AND WERE TRYING TO CATCH WAVES WITH US. IT WAS SUCH A SPECIAL THING NOT ONLY TO HAVE EXPERIENCED, BUT TO HAVE SHARED WITH FRIENDS. IT WAS LIKE, 'WHAT? THIS IS MY LIFE? ARE YOU KIDDING ME?'"

—KASSIA MEADOR,
pro longboard surfer

RISE AND SHINE

Greeting the dawn from the top of Egypt's Mount Sinai

At 3 a.m., the camel path that wound up Mount Sinai was in total darkness. Seven hundred very steep feet from the top, we dismounted and stumbled upward, sensing the sheer drop below. At the summit: bitter cold and a little wooden hut, where we sprawled on benches for a brief nap. Before long, we were roused by a man in a *djellaba*, who beckoned with his lantern to a small plateau facing east. The morning star rose first, quickly, a pink ball against the black sky. Then came the sun, which lifted up over the Sinai Peninsula, light and heat flooding across the mountains toward our plateau. The day did not so much break, as erupt in front of us. —ADRIAN MOURBY





FANGS FOR THE MEMORIES

Deep in the Alaskan wilderness, the big dogs don't always do what they're told

WORDS FROM THE WILD

"I THINK WE JUST TOOK A LITTLE MORE TIME IN THE PLANNING. TWO OTHER GROUPS HAD TRIED, AND WE BASICALLY BUILT ON THE WORK THEY HAD DONE. BUT WE WENT IN FASTER, WITH MORE SUPPLIES, AND WE GOT IN THERE WITH THE RIGHT RIVER FLOW, WHEN IT WAS LOW. THE PLANNING PART IS GREAT; IT GETS YOU REALLY INVOLVED. YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE GIVING THE RIVER THE RESPECT IT DESERVES."

—MATT WILSON, owner of Colorado-based 4 Corners Whitewater, on leading the team that recently made the first descent of Peru's Huallaga River

EASY GOING Six luxury shortcuts that tame the great wild world



A long-distance mountain biking trip can put the fear of God into even the most practiced tire changer—but not on a journey through the Kathmandu and Kali Gandaki valleys in Nepal led by **Sacred Rides**. In addition to full ride support, the trip includes bottled water, all meals at restaurants and overnights in hotels, lodges and teahouses.



The contemporary minimalist **Mashpi Lodge** is located in a 2,600-acre private reserve in an Ecuadorian cloud forest that contains dozens of plants and animals found nowhere else. You won't even have to hike to enjoy them, as you can zip around via private tram system or simply view them through your floor-to-ceiling windows.



What with their pipes and desks and porters, even the great turn-of-the-century safarists didn't exactly *rough* it. You can do them one better on **Micato's Grand Safari**. It features stays at some of the most luxurious hotels in Africa, including the Mount Kenya Safari Club, which has hosted Sir Winston Churchill and Clark Gable.

GAURAV MAN SHERCHAN (SACRED RIDES, RIDER, MANDIL PRADHAN)

Days before, we had wandered past our intended campsite into the aptly named Bear Draw, where, right on cue, three grizzlies appeared. At the sound of my voice, though, they made for the opposite side of the valley—clearly choosing to avoid us.

This beast was different. He sniffed the air. Checked the angles. I hefted our can of bear spray. I had never used anything like it, save for a childhood incident in which I “accidentally” maced a buddy in the face.

I knew I should check the breeze—spraying upwind would blind us too—but when I tried to spit, my mouth was dry. This was bad. My girlfriend’s father already thought she would die in Alaska. I couldn’t let him be right.

“OK, babe. Let’s back away,” I said. “Slowly.”

We took a few clumsy steps backward. The wolf cocked his head, but did not follow.

“C’m on, babe. Take the shot.”

“I hate you,” she said, but she snapped a picture from so close it could have been taken in a zoo.

We continued our slow retreat (to where, we didn’t know). The wolf stalked us from the tall spruces that bordered the riverbed. Finally, after 30 sweaty minutes, he vanished for the last time, probably as bored as we were terrified.

“You know, I think I could have taken him,” I said. “He wasn’t that big.”

She gave me that patented Park Avenue eye-roll. Both blades were still up and ready. —**Joshua Saul**

SINGLE-TRACK MIND

Bombing down an ancient trail on Taiwan

The Neng Gao, a centuries-old trail transecting a 12,000-foot-high rocky spine on Taiwan, is full of surprises: massive landslides that occasionally wipe out entire sections of trail; the native Taiya, who still hunt boar in the forest. Also: Overcooking a corner on a mountain bike could

mean a fatal fall. That would be surprising—though the views should be enough warning. But at a post-ride dinner in a small village restaurant high in the mountains, the risks fade quickly from memory. It’s the summit I’ll remember, a green, grassy saddle caressed by wind and radiant sunshine, and the sensation of whipping down a ribbon of trail past waterfalls, hemlock spruce and fog. —**JOE LINDSEY**



FIGHT TO THE FINISH

In these four famously grueling races, the competition will be the least of your problems

MONGOL DERBY

You’ll need to channel your inner barbarian (or at least a bit of madness) to complete this insane horse race covering 621 miles of the stark Mongolian steppe. You’ll stop only to change steeds—just as the warriors and messengers of Khan’s empire did. Aug. 7–20

MOLOKA’I HOE

The hula dancers and crowds cheering you to the finish will seem a delirious mirage after the merciless waters of the Kaiwi Channel, which separates Oahu from Molokai, do their best to force your team’s vessel aground in the world’s premier outrigger canoe race. Oct. 7

CYCLE MESSENGER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

No spandex here. Encumbered with mail tubes and boxes shoved into nylon bags—preferably coated in a layer of bike grease for authenticity—you’ll careen through a complicated closed course in this international bike messenger competition, held this year in Chicago. Aug. 3–5

2013 POLAR CHALLENGE

Hiking, climbing and skiing across the North Pole’s seas of ice and frozen tundra while staving off fellow competitors and polar bears sound like fun (see above)? If so, now’s the time to put in an application for this extreme test of endurance—and start stocking up on the Chap-Stick.

April 12, 2013

—FELICIA CAMPBELL
AND HANNAH GOLDSTEIN



One of the appeals of Patagonia is the immensity of its pristine, uncaring wilderness, which can make planning a trip there plenty intimidating. The new **Singular Patagonia** hotel aims to ease the anxiety with excursions to the region’s farthest corners arranged by skill level, as well as a spa for when you return satisfied, but sore.



Hiking, biking and rafting are great, but if you expect to arrive at your five-star hotel on the back of an elephant, you would do best to contact **Butterfield and Robinson**. Its Indochina Bespoke Grand Journey can include long-distance biking, cruising Vietnam’s Perfume River and, yes, riding an elephant. To your hotel.



Indiana Jones had to hike far and endure poison dart attacks when exploring ancient temples, but that’s only because he couldn’t stay right next door at a luxury resort. **Mayaland Hotel**, located on the grounds of Mexico’s Chichen Itza, was built by the head of the expedition that reconstructed the temple. —**JACQUELINE DETWILER**



ONWARD AND UPWARD

Yosemite's Half Dome offers the perfect challenge for a less seasoned adventurer

Here's the thing with climbing Half Dome as an amateur: You leave your campsite on the valley floor before dawn, queasily preoccupied with images of those steep rock faces lined with cables. Will you be able to do it? Will it be dangerous? But what you don't consider is how long it will take to actually get to those cables.

And the answer to that question, at least for our group, was six hours—climbing rock staircase after rock staircase, over and over, hour after hour.

Essentially, there are two ways to get to the top of Half Dome, the majestic granite

centerpiece of California's Yosemite National Park. Option one, to simply go straight up its 4,800-foot face, is available only to world-class climbers. Option two involves an incredibly strenuous 8.2-mile uphill hike, culminating with a steep 400-foot ascent up the rounded east side of the dome, with two steel cables to hold on to and deadly slides looming on either side.

Taking the cables route remains one of the grandest backcountry adventures available to the average hiker. While the dangers are very real, Half Dome sits in that middle ground between the adventures

one can buy and those earned with years of experience.

Comfortably ensconced in marriage, fatherhood and job, I had been having nightmares about the cables. Most accidents, I'd learned, came from gambling with bad weather or walking on the outside of the cables to avoid congestion (the park service now issues just 400 daily permits to curb that problem). Once we arrived at the cable section, the hikers dragging themselves up the slope ahead of us were reminiscent of vintage Batman and Robin crawling up the side of a building, only with more grimacing. I swallowed hard, tugged on a pair of gardening gloves that a previous hiker had discarded in a pile at the base, and grabbed hold of the cable.

I went slowly, pausing at some of the wooden footholds to catch my breath, settle my nerves and, of course, take a look around. The views behind and to the side, while terrifying, were out of this world, but nothing like what we experienced at the apex, from where we stared, overwhelmed by the embarrassment of marvelous nature below us. No car could have carried us there; no gift shop-bound tram either. Enhancing the view was the feeling of achievement: It required the

kind of sweat and danger that rarely makes an appearance in my adult life.

We spent an hour there, in a large, flat, open area where a hundred or so people were spread out, many of them sitting alone in silence. All had earned the moment. This was the land of Ansel Adams, the land of big adventure, of epic tales on epic peaks in the great Sierras. But for me, it was something else: the answer to the question of whether I still had a big one in me. Half Dome had posed that question in stark black and white. It felt good to have an answer. —**Billy Baker**

TAKING A POWDER

Gypsy ski touring in the Carpathians

We reached the chalet at Bâlea Lac, Romania, in a blizzard by way of a Communist-era cable car. The summer road, built in the '70s to provide escape over the Fagaras Mountains in case of Soviet invasion, was buried. Near the top, the operator had leaped out to help dig passage to the wheelhouse. Inside we played hearts and drank beer served by women in Jägermeister uniforms. There were pelts on the walls, an old photo of the place when it was crushed by an avalanche, a soccer game on satellite TV. In the morning, we awoke to an ice-blue sky and our own private Alpine cirque to carve up as we pleased. —**DAVID PAGE**

WORDS FROM THE WILD

"PENNSYLVANIA HAS TAUGHT ME PERSEVERANCE. IT'S IN THE DEAD MIDDLE OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL. TO ADD TO THAT, IT'S LIKE ALL THE OTHER STATES TOOK THEIR ROCKS AND DUMPED THEM THERE. NOT ONLY DO YOUR FEET HURT FROM THOSE JAGGED EDGES, YOUR NECK HURTS FROM HAVING TO LOOK STRAIGHT DOWN ALL DAY. BUT IT'S ALSO TAUGHT ME TO LOOK FOR BEAUTY IN UNLIKELY PLACES: A COLORFUL LIZARD, A SMALL SPRING OR AN INTERESTING ROCK FORMATION. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE GREAT VIEWS, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE SCENIC WATERFALLS—BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S NOT BEAUTIFUL."

—**JENNIFER PHARR DAVIS**, author of *Becoming Odyssea* and record holder for fastest Appalachian Trail completion