

The **OUTDOOR** Journal

THE WORLD IS YOUR PLAYGROUND

www.outdoorjournal.in

VOL.1 ISSUE 4
Rs. 200 / NPR500 / CHF10
EUR07.99 / GBP7.99 / \$7.99

SPRING
2014

On the cover, the Teahupoo circus, in Tahiti. Every year at the end of August, the best surfers in the world line up on the biggest waves. They are eagerly applauded by all the pro tour followers, from surfing agents and international judges, to world-class photographers and bikini beauties. The surf-warriors battle no longer for kingship, but fame and money and also their lives, at risk, with razor-sharp coral barely centimetres below the water's surface. Michel Bourez, one such surf champ, is a Tahitian kid who became a pro wave rider. All these stories are packed in our foldout and following feature. (Pg 39)

PHOTO: BEN THOUARD

PRO TOUR EXOTIC **HAWAIIANS vs TAHITIANS**

The story of surfing's modern Polynesian wars

P 39

RUN THE RANN: ULTRA TRAIL INDIA

P 76 Salt flats, poisonous snakes and the ruins of a 5000-year old city.

HIMALAYAN RESCUE

P 56 Men battle against white death in the world's biggest mountains.

CYCLING NEW YORK CITY

P 50 This challenging road route is one cyclist's best kept secret.

THE TURBANED EXPLORER

P 72 Inside Ibex Expeditions, the most innovative adventure travel company.

IRONMAN WORLD CHAMPION

P 112 A TOJ exclusive with the endurance powerhouse Frederik Van Lierde.

GEAR REVIEW RUN FOREVER

P 105 The armoury that makes you faster, better, harder, stronger.



NEW DELHI, INDIA

thinking beyond

On the descent from Kun (7077m) in 1982. Seen behind is Z1 (6400m) where Mandip made the first ascent in the 1980's.

Mandip Singh Soin, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, read palms, bartered labour for climbing lessons, and traveled the world on \$500. Today, he runs the most innovative, dynamic, adventure travel company. He's also an established Earth warrior, environmental pundit, and a modest badass.

by AMÁLIA

Lately, he has been thinking. About the meaning and the reason for why he does what he does. Why he did what he did. Previously, the secret of the wild eluded him. Now, it continues to do so, but the map of his mind sometimes reveals its paths. There was a desire to empathize with nature, know why a mountain stands stoic, how a desert withstands monotony. He repeats Hillary's lines: It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves. In this dialogue with all that is outside of ourselves, we build a symbiotic bond that drives the call to conservation.

Mandip Singh Soin established Ibex Expeditions in 1979, at the age of 22, after having been on a host of Himalayan climbs in school, hitch hiked through Europe, bar-

tered building a mountain hut in exchange for climbing lessons, read palms in exchange for good will and scaled cliffs and dubious surfaces alike. A geography teacher, in school, held a classmate upside down by his feet, and said, "Now tell me, young man, which is North and which is South?" This symbolic anecdote can be flipped unto itself: it seems that it was upon witnessing this very moment that Mandip chose an unconventional direction in life, a road less traveled, if you will.

At a time when career choices spanned army personnel, IAS, lawyers and doctors, here was an explorer in a photo jacket and cargo pants, sunning tents and untangling ropes as he waited for a letter of enquiry, a fax, a tel-

egram: "Can you lead an expedition in the Himalaya for us?" And then one came. An Italian priest arrived in India with a team, was told via post to meet Mandip at the foot of Z3¹ in Zaskar. And so it began. Their woollen sweaters made the cold real; the letters founded their friendships in trust. All this to enable him to continue a life of adventure. A life in which knowledge and understanding permeated your feet as you walked.

After four decades of first ascents (Z1² in 1980, several Alpine peaks and the first Indian ascent of Mt Meru in 1986), new routes (The Ice Trek in 1994 or the first Camel-back crossing of the Indian Thar Desert), daring territory and psychological terrain, Mandip's motivations are no longer simply for the sake of the thrill of the outdoors. In witnessing species becoming endangered, communities turning concrete, and inherent systems of belief being forsaken, he uses Ibex to nurture connections between people and their natural environments; nurturing tourism as a protector, a giver, a mode that allows for time to pass even as the clock ticks on.

Ibex matches all its clients' donations to the World Wildlife Fund towards conservation practices through its "Give Back to Nature Fund". It has initiated two responsible volunteering programs; one in which volunteers live in India for sustained periods of time, transferring skills to local schools and hospitals and another entitled Pack for a Purpose, in which guests from around the world bring stationary, spectacles, sewing materials or even medical supplies, depending on carefully assessed needs, to local communities. Ibex Expeditions also physically brings back garbage from anywhere it is not biodegradable, and makes sure to serve local and organic food. It was the first of its kind to use Solar Lanterns & Solar Cookers during Himalayan treks.

Ibex Expeditions has been crucial to the core teams that created the Konhoma Green Village in Nagaland and trained pheasant bird hunters to become bird watcher guides. This was based on a model he experienced on the Periyar Tiger Trail in which poachers have been converted into naturalists. After having researched, first hand, the depleting Ozone hole and the presence of pollutants in the Arctic North Pole on a month long UNEP³ -supported en-

vironmental expedition with Polar explorer, Robert Swan in 1989, his resolve to be an Earth Warrior manifested in everything. This spirit seeps through his ongoing attempts in the dreaded but beautiful area of Chambal, where he is currently working on transforming dacoits into tourism guides, and to declare the area as a World Heritage site. He takes these lead initiatives through his band of Believers, or members of The Ecotourism Society of India, a National body created for the cause of responsible tourism and of which he is founding president.

The writer and man of nature, Bill Aitken, says about Mandip: "From an elephant ride in Kerala to the killing glacier of Siachen, from tramping up India's sole smoking volcano to riding a camel across the Thar desert (Ouch!), - Mandip has sampled the field. But is adventure tourism escapist or does it have a useful societal purpose? The answer is Yes - if you believe freedom is something worth sticking your neck out for. If you are blessed to have mountains as part of your being, exposure to them opens you to unforgettable moments when something beyond mortal reckoning is crystallized within us. One of my most memorable moments did involve Ibex but of the four footed variety. At

sundown after an emergency descent from the crest of the Great Himalaya, our party lay exhausted in a defile above the first village in Zaskar. Looking up, we were astounded to behold a whole herd of Ibex, ricocheting back and forth effortlessly between the canyon walls, snorting with delight at their defiance of gravity. They were demonstrating that nothing is impossible if you are open to life's adventurous potential."

Mandip's variety of methods--from sitting on national environmental committees or traversing through physical and the metaphysical narratives of nature--reflect the multiplicity of his being. From a fashion sense that includes an array of safari gear, trousers of every hue and turbans and ties to match, to an interest in the Aristocracy of the west and the Maharajas of the east, alongside an ease of travel in tent or tower, Mandip is many people with one wife and two children. His family is part of his duffle of wacky ideas, sometimes keeping his dreams in check, at others, willing him to keep on truckin'. ■

**Traversing through physical
and the metaphysical narratives
of nature--reflect the multiplicity
of his being.**

●A peak in the Zaskar range in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.
●6400 m peak in the Zaskar range.
●United Nations Environmental Programme.

A Brief History of MANDIP SINGH SOIN & IBEX EXPEDITIONS

Satisfied, after a year of climbing the European Alps 1979-80

1974 Starts taking on Himalayan expeditions as a Liaison Officer. Captain of the Delhi University Rifle shooting team, he receives a gold medal for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

1984

Leads an all India Rock Climbing expedition and makes several first ascents.

1981-83

Cycles 1500 kms from Delhi to Kathmandu, ascends Kun⁹ (7077m), and rafts the River Zanskar. Rock climbs around Delhi and champions the cause of saving the Aravalli⁷ rocks from the mining industry. Soin launches Ibx Equipment with the help of legendary Denny Morehouse⁸ of the UK, manufacturing hardware and rucksacks. Good idea, bad timing- it has low demand in the early days. Ibx Expeditions thrives as a pioneering adventure travel company organizing treks and expeditions from across the world to the Indian Himalaya.

1992

Nominated "Man of the Year" & "India's Most Versatile Adventurer" by the Limca book of Records. Becomes the only Indian recipient of the Ness Award by the Royal Geographical Society, UK, for expeditions and encouragement of youth exploration in the name of science.

Manager for the Indian Sport Climbing team to the World Cup in Japan

Rappelling down, after climbing the Flatirons in Boulder, Colorado. PHOTO: JONNY COPP

2000 Ibx Expeditions' ecological practices are recognized through various accolades including the Green Globe Distinction Award, the PATA Gold Award, World Travel Market Environmental Company Award, and the Government of India's Award of Excellence.

2005

Serves the UIAA Access Commission for seven years as well as the Mountain Protection Commission. Soin is asked by the Government of India to launch the Ecotourism Society of India as the National body for Responsible Tourism.

2003

Leads an International Ecotourism mapping expedition to the Andaman & Nicobar Islands to prevent Tourism in fragile locations.

2002 On the India-Pakistan friendship expedition in the Swiss Alps.

2002

Invited by the UIAA (World Mountaineering Federation) & IUCN (World Conservation Union) and participates in a peace expedition between Indian and Pakistani climbers in the Swiss Alps in order to create a trans-boundary peace park in the disputed Siachen Glacier in the Himalaya.

1970

Climbs to 19,000 ft on Black Peak at the age of 15

1973

1979-1980

At the crossroads of career decisions, Soin forgoes the Indian Foreign Service. Conceives the idea of an adventure company over a beer with three friends. Ibx Expeditions is established ('79). After several first Indian ascents in the French, Swiss and Italian Alps and the Dolomites, he becomes an Instructor at the National Institute in Wales- Plas y Brenin - and at the Outward Bound at Loch Eil in Scotland.

10 Photo: On the summit of Mt. Meru North. PHOTO: AKE NILSSON

1980 Attempts an alpine style ascent of Mulkila¹⁰ as a trio but tragically loses a friend in a crevasse. Despondent, he joins another expedition, making the first ascent of Z1 (6400m) in Zanskar¹¹.

1980

1986

First Indian ascent of Mt. Meru North, in a quick four-day lightweight, semi-alpine style. Gains the Inlaks grant to train in Mountain Rescue in the UK and European Alps and returns with the team to start Mountain Rescue systems in the Himalaya under the Himalayan Evacuation & Lifesaving Project [HELP] (Sir Edmund Hillary is the Patron). Leads the first crossing of the Indian desert - The Thar - on camelback.

1989

Participates in an international environmental expedition, Ice Walk, supported by the UNEP, in the Arctic, to study depleting ozone levels and increasing pollutants in the Ice cap. Takes an Earth Pledge to become an Earth Warrior.

1990

1994

Pioneers Ice Trek, an Indo-British winter expedition in Ladakh to walk the frozen river Zanskar and attempts a ski ascent of Stok Kangri, in conjunction with the Ministry of Tourism and Government of Jammu & Kashmir. This opens winter tourism in Ladakh. Ibx Expeditions receives recognition - PATA Asia Discovery Award.

2000

The Chameleons of Madagascar need shoulders to cry on too.

1998 Completes 15 years of handling the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for Northern India as Chairman on an honorary basis- a scheme to instill the spirit of enterprise among youth.

2010

2009

Ibx Expeditions ranked amongst the world's top outfitters by National Geographic as one of the 'Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth'.

Appointed Chair of the Explorers Club, USA, South Asia Chapter.

2014

Ibx Expeditions awarded Best Mountain Trip by Outside magazine, USA. Past expeditions outfitted by Ibx include the likes of Jimmy Chin, Conrad Anker, Mark Richey, Mark Synott, Mick Fowler, Roger Payne, David Lim, Jean Claude Marmier, Don Arturo Bergamaschi, Kei Taniguchi, amongst many.

● A 6,520 m peak in Himachal Pradesh
 ● A subdistrict in the state of Jammu and Kashmir
 ● Located in the eastern Himalayan range, in Jammu and Kashmir
 ● Aravalli or "line of peaks" is a range of mountains in Western India, 800 kms in length.
 ● The Founding Director of "DMM"- a climbing equipment manufacturing enterprise