

# The **OUTDOOR** Journal

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WINTER  
2013

*Into The Mind* is a psychological journey into the consciousness of a skier pursuing his ultimate goal. Just released, the dreamscape of this unconventional documentary is an incredibly creative way of involving different athletes into the single narrative of one heroic, nameless, character. Directors Dave Mossop and Eric Crosland sat down with The Outdoor Journal to tell us about their journey at Sherpas Cinema in compiling this cinematographic sensation. Imagine yourself at the door of that helicopter. Imagine defying death, daily risks, the rush of wind and blood, the extreme locations and emotions of shooting, directing and 'acting' in the most futuristic action sport film of the year. Read this exclusive story inside the pages of this issue of The Outdoor Journal and... action!

PHOTO: RENAN ÖZTÜRK

SHERPAS CINEMA

## INTO THE MIND

On board the year's greatest action sports documentary

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ULTRARUNNER  
RORY BOSIO

P 10 She dances over mountains with a skip, in a skirt.

AMERICA'S  
CUP

P 44 The greatest sailing competition ever known. And the strangest.

SURFING NORTH SHORE  
WITH MIKALA JONES

P 52 Here's wishing you were Polynesian, born in Hawaii

IRONMAN  
♥WOMAN

P 62 What they never tell you about a marriage on the road

BLACK  
DIAMOND

P 76 A day in the climb of Peter Metcalf, CEO.

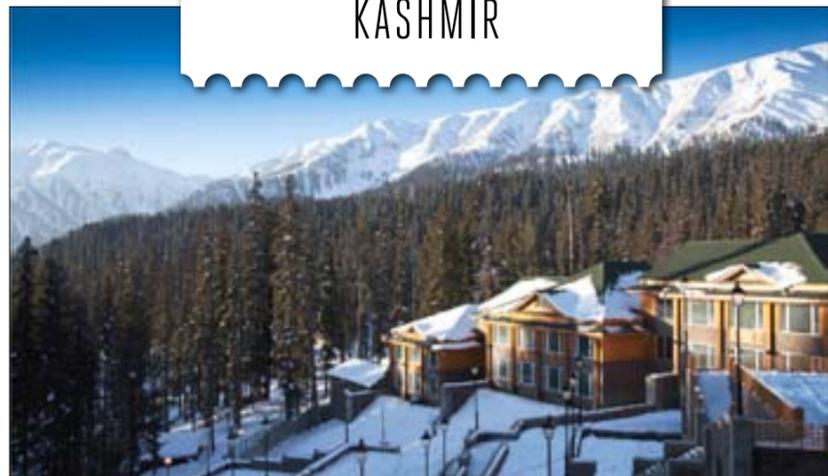
THE COLDEST NEW GEAR  
SKI & SNOWBOARD

P 102 The slickest, warmest, best winter gear. International in India.



Eva Walkner lays a fresh track on Mt. Apherwat (4200 m, 13,750 feet) after a fresh snowfall. The Gulmarg Gondola bills itself as the world's highest cable car, going up an aerial distance of 5 km from the town of Gulmarg, near Kashmir's capital Srinagar. Read about India's premier ski destination and one of the world's more interesting ski terrains inside this issue of The Outdoor Journal, and watch the video of India's only Ski Patrol and Avalanche Safety team in action at [www.outdoorjournal.in](http://www.outdoorjournal.in). PHOTO: YVES GARNEAU

## KASHMIR



The warm cafe-lobby of the Khyber has a widescreen view of wintery Apherwat. It's probably one of the most scenic 5-star hotel views in the country. PHOTO: THE KHYBER HIMALAYAN RESORT & SPA, GULMARG

Boarding in Indian-controlled Kashmir, mere miles from the Pakistani border, is an adventure any serious skier or boarder will want to take on. The snow is fresh and untouched, the altitude is killer, and the Indian Army's mountain snipers are on guard. What else would you ask for?

# BACKCOUNTRY BONANZA

by GAËL COUTURIER

The first feeling I got when arriving in Srinagar, Kashmir was that the airport looked like a war zone, not to the extent of what I'd witnessed in Baghdad or Kabul when reporting there on these past few years, but it sure didn't look like New York's JFK airport either. Camouflaged soldiers with fully automatic weapons slung over their shoulders were all around the terminal, from the tarmac to the gates inside the airport to the parking lot outside. The last time I was in Kashmir, the previous winter, we crossed a few patrols on the way to Gulmarg, and at one point had to talk our way through a heavily armed checkpoint manned by anti-riot soldiers.

## STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

As soon as your car starts heading up the real mountains, this unfriendly circus tends to disappear. Most of the unrest in Kashmir is confined to the more populated valleys. Meanwhile, the ski town of Gulmarg is like any ski resort in Europe or North America. One can guess the amount of snow they'll meet on the slopes by looking at the tree trunks. The road is quiet, and furry mountain monkeys are the only ones that share it with you.

Gulmarg is like many places in India: it badly lacks infrastructure. Badly. The town is quiet, empty, cold, and wild. A few hotels are spread sparsely around the lone 70's-feel



"You look lovely when you smile," says the rock. Eva Walkner and Katharina Schuler have some walking to do to get to the good stuff in Gulmarg. PHOTO: YVES GARNEAU

gondola that takes you to the top of Apherwat, the mountain that looms over the little town. Service at the hotels is average, and their rooms not so welcoming, especially if you're applying a Western standard. Yet, unexpectedly, in the middle of this third-world ski-town, there's an enchanting palace that houses a magnificent hotel, The Khyber. It is a five-star resort that deserves a bit of our attention. The décor is traditional Kashmiri, with incredible woodwork and beautifully crafted carpets. It's the only high mountain five-star hotel in India, and after almost six years of intense work through the past springs and summers (the only time of year construction can take place in Gulmarg's climate) - its luxury services fully opened last year. The Khyber is also a member of the elite Small Luxury Hotels of the World group ([www.slh.com](http://www.slh.com)) and it clearly honors its selection. They retain their authenticity at all levels - 85% of its staff is Kashmiri. "That's also how we give back to the local community," says Alex Koshy, the general manager.

## SKIING IN THE HIMALAYAS

When you get to the top of the only Gondola hitting high altitude, you must be prepared for a challenging ski down. There are no regular trails. Not one. Not only will you be welcomed up there by young, friendly Indian soldiers, guns on the shoulder and camouflage from head to toe, but you will also only encounter steep couloirs, edged by rocks

and cliffs. These couloirs, like any in the world, will always open to a wider and softer terrain. But the first few hundred meters require a "no fear" attitude.

Occasionally, the Gulmarg Avalanche Center, under the supervision of Brian Newman, an American originally from Colorado who lives here during the ski season, has to clean up a few of these couloirs so as to heavily reduce the avalanche risk. Other than that, if you're comfortable with backcountry skiing and possess the right gear, you may want to either trek a bit after reaching the summit to find your own clean line of snow. You can also get airborne for about Rs 75,000 a day, per person (around \$1200). It's not cheap but it's worth it, provided that you go with a proper guide and wear the right avalanche rescue gear.

## LOVE. HATE.

While skiing or boarding at Gulmarg certainly adds an unusual element of adventure to the usual experience, it cannot be compared to the quality of basically everything you'd get in some of the best ski resorts in the Western world. And unless you go heli-skiing everyday, there's not that much choice in term of slopes. Then again, it is the





☉ The sundeck is the favourite lounge area of the on-board guests. It provides a viewing gallery during the day and a place for solitude in the evening. PHOTO: THE KHYBER HIMALAYAN RESORT & SPA, GULMARG

☉ Eva and Katharina greeted by monkeys with their winter coats on. The forests surrounding the town are a protected area filled with furry wildlife, including bears, leopards and wolves. PHOTO: YVES GARNEAU



Himalayas, and with the world's highest peaks right in front of your eyes every time you look up, there is something to be said for spending four or five days here in the winter. Some might hate it, but I loved it.

I was raised skiing in Courchevel, France, and went there twice every winter, for more than 20 years in a row. You can understand that I have high expectations when it comes to skiing. But Gulmarg is unforgettable because it is wild, because there's always a lot of snow, and there are only a few privileged people skiing here. Just like in Courchevel. And like any surfer would want to hunt down the best and uncrowned tropical waves of the planet, deal with exotic food and inquisitive locals, it's my opinion that you haven't really traveled for skiing if you haven't been to Gulmarg.

**Once at the top of the only Gondola hitting high altitude, you must be prepared for a challenging ski down. There are no regular trails and the first few hundred meters require a "no fear" attitude.**

One last piece of advice: bring your own gear. Even though the local shop rent the skis and boards West-erners leave behind, nothing here is

preferable to bringing your own gear, boots, helmets and boards, even if it's a hassle.

After a week at the Khyber, shredding the mountain, we headed back to civilization. Before reaching the airport in Srinagar again, we heard there was some unrest on the route, with mobs throwing stones and blocking all movement between the resort and the city, with a mob potentially throwing stones at cars. The local security officers in Gulmarg made us leave the Khyber Hotel at 5 am. They drove us full speed in SUVs "Baghdad contractor style" (our vehicle already had a broken window an earlier incident), and we thankfully reached Srinagar in time for our flight back to Delhi. What a ride! It was far from the average skiing experience. We're all planning going back this January. ☒

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