

exclusive

Ghost on the Mountain

Inside John Harlin's Quest to Climb the
Deadly Peak that Killed His Father

+ THE MAKING OF THE IMAX MOVIE

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"BRING IT ON"
Tyler Hamilton
Answers His Critics



the Park Service, but those with strong river-running skills can arrange a private outing. Good news on that front: As of 2006, noncommercial launch permits are being awarded by lottery (800-959-9164, www.nps.gov/grca), replacing the laughable 25-year waiting list. Motorized or oar-powered rafts are the most common way to go, but purists say nothing beats the grace and responsiveness of a wooden dory. Veteran outfitter OARS offers 15- to 19-day full-canyon dory trips (from \$4,535; 800-346-6277, oars.com).

NEPAL

The Annapurna Circuit

After years of violent unrest, a 2006 peace agreement between the government and Maoist rebels promises to return the tourism spotlight to this Himalayan wonder—one of the original adventure travel meccas. No trekking route is more spectacular, or more accessible to reasonably fit hikers, than the three-week, roughly 200-mile inn-to-inn Annapurna Circuit. With a constant backdrop of 20,000-foot



Skiing the Argentiere Glacier, France

peaks, the trail loops from the semitropical city of Pokhara, over 17,769-foot Thorong La pass, on the edge of the arid Tibetan Plateau, and back to the terraced lowlands. Thanks to the détente, U.S.-based outfitters have noticed a surge in interest in Nepal. Wilderness Travel will return to Annapurna this fall after a four-year absence (from \$2,795 per person; 800-368-2794, wildernesstravel.com).

FRANCE & SWITZERLAND

The Haute Route

Linking the two most iconic peaks in the western Alps—Mont Blanc, in Chamonix, France, and the Matterhorn, in Zermatt, Switzerland—this famed seven- to ten-day, 70-mile high-country journey is best suited for advanced skiers who feel confident in dicey conditions. (If kick turns on icy steeps aren't in your repertoire, consider waiting for summer and hike the route instead.) Nights are spent in small hotels and dorm-style alpine huts, where you'll find goulash, beer, and the kind of conviviality that generally ends in off-key

Eastern Europe & the Middle East → 2007 WINNER JOURNEY THROUGH ANCIENT OMAN

Just east of Saudi Arabia, on the Arabian Sea, centuries-old shepherd trails crisscross the rocky ridges and deep wadis of the Al Hajar range, which rises 10,000 feet above Oman's placid northern coastline. It's the Middle East that doesn't make the nightly news, and it's virgin territory for most American travelers. On this ten-day trip, you'll trek and camp in lush valleys filled with date palms, in ancient sand-colored villages that blend seamlessly with the surrounding hills, and on a sugary beach where you can snorkel in a sapphire bay. **OUTFITTER//**KE Adventure Travel, 800-497-9675, keadventure.com **PRICE//**\$1,995 **DIFFICULTY//**Moderate **WHEN TO GO//**March–April, November–January



—K.L.

→ 2007 AWARDS EIGHT INDISPENSABLE TRAVEL INNOVATIONS

Singapore's Changi Airport

With some 160 stores, 80 eateries (including a cigar lounge and live jazz bar), a Balinese-style swimming pool, leather "snooze chairs," and massages offered 24/7 at the Rainforest Lounge, there's no rush to claim your bags. changiairport.com

The MLC

Short for "maximum legal carry-on," this handy bag holds up to a week's worth of gear—just enough for hitchhiking through Belize. Tuck away the ergonomic shoulder strap for a presto backpack. Two large compartments separate the clean stuff from the sweaty climbing gear; the coated reflective fabric repels rain. \$148; patagonia.com

GreenGlobe.org

Want your trip to be socially sound and eco-friendly? The Green Globe program, launched by the World Travel & Tourism Council, certifies hotels and tour companies that meet top

standards for everything from water management to noise control.

FlyerTalk.com

Founded by a frustrated frequent flier, this time-tested site allows users to share info on how to get the most out of their bonus miles, with discussion forums for every major airline, a live chat for last-minute queries, and an option that helps you create a mileage-maximizing itinerary.

Ex Officio Give-N-Go Skivvies

Breathable, lightweight, moisture-wicking, and bacteria-resistant, these boxers and women's bikinis won't let you down. Super comfortable (made of nylon and spandex), they air-dry in a snap. Boxers, \$25; bikini briefs, \$16; exofficio.com

Solio Universal Hybrid Charger

This groovy solar-power station—the size of a deck of cards, with interchangeable connector tips—offers a one-

stop charge for your camera, cell phone, PDA, GPS, and digital audio player. (One hour of sun equals one hour of iPod use.) \$100; solio.com

HotelChatter.com

A juicy source of inside information and tips about the good, the bad, and the disgusting. Check out the Hotel Hell stories about not-so-hot spots (like Room 15 at Nevada's Caliente Hot Springs Motel, home to polygamist ceremonies), or skip to the Hotel Heaven tales (which for one woman included sunglasses-cleaning pool boys at the Grand Rotana Resort & Spa in Egypt).

Canon CP730 Selphy Compact Photo Printer

Create personal postcards in 58 seconds with this paperback-size portable printer. It hooks up to any laptop or Canon camera (and some cell phones), churning out 300-dpi, four-by-six color photos on address-ready cards. \$150; estore.usa.canon.com

—AMY MARR

singing. Even if you're an accomplished ski mountaineer who can *parlais français* (quick, what does "Danger de mort!" mean?), it's wise to hire a guide (consult chamonix.net) or hook up with an outfitter like Selkirk Mountain Experience (\$3,225; 250-837-2381, selkirkexperience.com). Prime ski-touring season is mid-April to mid-May.

ECUADOR

The Galápagos Islands

Straddling the equator 600 miles off the west coast of Ecuador, these far-flung volcanic islands have been the focus of scientists and wildlife lovers since Charles Darwin first scratched his head here in 1835. Now that the Galápagos have

become one of the most popular destinations on the planet—120,000 yearly visitors come to spy on the islands' famous giant tortoises, fur seals, and blue-footed boobies—the Galápagos National Park Service keeps tight control on where boat passengers disembark and how long they spend at designated land and underwater visitor sites. The best way to avoid crowds? Charter a private yacht that's stocked with dive gear and sea kayaks. Mountain Travel Sobek can arrange private one- to two-week yacht charters (from \$3,795; 888-687-6235, mtsobek.com). Or join Adventure Life's new nine-day hiking trip, with overnights in small inns (from \$2,095; 800-344-6118, adventure-life.com).

—MEG LUKENS NOONAN