



UP AGAINST THE WALL

A rookie tries Canada's classic big-wall climb

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expeditions

Dances with dragons

Erupting volcanoes, deadly bacteria, political unrest? Just another day on the job for two of Canada's top adventurers

"I was just amazed when I looked at 3D maps of the place," says Frank Wolf about the island of Java. "I was totally struck by the topography and felt irresistibly drawn to do this journey." With partner Kevin Vallely, Wolf will sample all dimensions of 13 volcanoes along the spiky 1,000-kilometre-long backbone of the Indonesian island on what they've dubbed the "Chasing the Dragon" expedition. Starting in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, the pair will cycle to the base of each volcano, run to the top, scramble down, hop on their bikes, then pedal to the next fire-breathing peak. Their goal: to complete this west-to-east, lava-dodging line dance in about 20 days.

Standing between them and that goal are potential eruptions, infection and insurrection. Many of the 10,000-foot-plus volcanoes on the Canadian duo's "to do" list are still active. But even without the threat of molten lava lapping at their heels, gashes from a fall on the gravity-assisted scrambles could bring the epic to an abrupt end. "The bacteria there are the size of whales," says Wolf. He and Vallely will wear gloves and kneepads to ward off wounds from the sharp lava rocks, immediately clean any cuts they do incur and pack plenty of high-test, broad-spectrum antibiotics. A freelance correspondent based in Jakarta has also warned them they will be arriving, in early September, just

as the island is expected to impeach its first democratically elected leader in 32 years.

The way 36-year-old Vallely sees it, this latest trip is simply the next gig in their respective adventure resumés. A freelance architect in Vancouver, Vallely spent 33 days last year becoming the first person (along with two partners) to ski the entire 1,800-kilometre length of Alaska's Iditarod dogsled trail. "Adventure travel isn't about killing yourself," says Vallely, who competes internationally with Canada's Team Subaru Outback adventure racing team. "It's not like climbing, or extreme skiing, or first descents in paddling. It's more about exploring, doing new things each time, in new environments."

Wolf, too, bristles at the suggestion that aspiring adventurers must ratchet up the risk quotient with every subsequent outing. "Upping the ante each time is not the right reason for doing it," says the 30-year-old, whose day job is selling skis and paddling gear at the Mountain Equipment Co-op in Vancouver. "It's all about mixing things up for a completely different kind of experience. This time it's cycling and running. Other trips have been canoeing, or kayaking." In 1995, Wolf made the first coast-to-coast crossing of Canada in a single paddling season. Last year he spent three months sea-kayaking and whitewater kayaking in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The "sheer mass of humanity" that awaits them in Indonesia holds a strange fascination for Vallely. "We're going to a place with 110 million people—about four times the population of Canada—living on an island that's 1,000 kilometres long, or roughly twice the length of Vancouver Island. It will almost be a relaxing break to go up the volcanoes and get away from all those people." —Greg Basky



Flame Wars

An irreverent guide to the hot topics in the Canadian outdoors



GREEN: fires put out
AMBER: smouldering discontent
RED: blazing controversy

PARKS CANADA BUDGETS

\$2.8 MILLION FOR NEW WARDEN UNIFORMS. DISNEY MAY BID TO DESIGN THE ACTION FIGURES.

PARKS CANADA REJECTS

WARDENS' REQUEST TO BE ISSUED HANDGUNS FOR PROTECTION. HOPEFULLY THEIR NEW UNIFORMS WILL BE SEWN FROM KEVLAR.

JET-SKIS TO BE BANNED FROM LAST NATIONAL PARK. THE REST IS SILENCE (AT LAST).

CANMORE DEVELOPER MARKETS GOLF COURSE AS A "WILDLIFE CORRIDOR." BUT ELK MUST PAY GREEN FEES IF THEY WANT TO PLAY THROUGH.

IMPRINT OF BIGFOOT'S BUTTOCKS FOUND IN WASHINGTON FOREST, CAST MADE AS EVIDENCE, HAS B.C.'S SASQUATCH JOINED THE BRAWN DRAIN, OR IS THE LATEST FIND JUST A BUM WRAP?

MYSTERIOUS FOOTPRINTS LATER DISCOVERED IN ONTARIO'S POLAR BEAR PROVINCIAL PARK. THE BEARS FOUND SASQUATCH WENT BEST WITH A ROBUST AUSTRALIAN CABERNET

BANFF PARK RADIO GOES ON-LINE AT WWW.FRIENDS OF BANFF.COM. BROADCASTS INCLUDE TRAIL REPORTS, BEAR WARNINGS AND SHEILA COPPS SPINNING "HOOKED ON YODELS."

COMBINED WILDLIFE-PEDESTRIAN UNDERPASS TO BE BUILT IN SOUTH EDMONTON. MR. GRIZZLY ALWAYS HAS THE RIGHT OF WAY.

STEPHEN MACCACHERIN/GAVE WEAVER/D

Photography: Steve Hutton on Spalling/Photo 3/6; Frank Schuyler