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ISSN 1834-5247 Issue 19

9 330194 003329 01

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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✦ **A YOUNG MAN FROM CAIRNS** has become the first young explorer from Australia to join legendary adventurer Mike Horn's four-year Pangaea expedition. Following a rigorous selection and training process in Switzerland, 16-year-old Mark Thompson joined Mike Horn on the *Pangaea* in early February, for a three-week adventure from the Andaman Islands to Calcutta. Joining 15 other successful young applicants from around the world, Mark sailed into Indian island territories to explore the biodiversity both above and below the seaboard before heading to the mainland to study the effects of humanity on the Ganges River.

"The expedition opened my eyes to the world outside my own shell, and showed me how diverse this planet is," Mark told *Outer Edge* after his return. "I've developed a respect for other cultures and have a newfound interest in learning about them. The

experience has also solidified my passion for preserving and enjoying the natural world around us."

Sailing, diving, trekking and conducting scientific surveys were all part of the experience. "The most powerful moment was when the active volcano (left) came into view and erupted before our eyes. For me it symbolised the raw power and wonder of nature. Tiger spotting in the Sundarbans was also an adrenaline pumping experience. We were forever anticipating catching a glimpse of a tiger in the dense jungle," recounted the young explorer.

Mark hopes to join the Pangaea team again on future expeditions. "I know there will be projects in China, South Africa, and Antarctica, and I would love to have the opportunity to explore those parts of the world. However, before I do that, I'd like to further explore the amazing mountain ranges near my hometown of Cairns. mikehorn.com

