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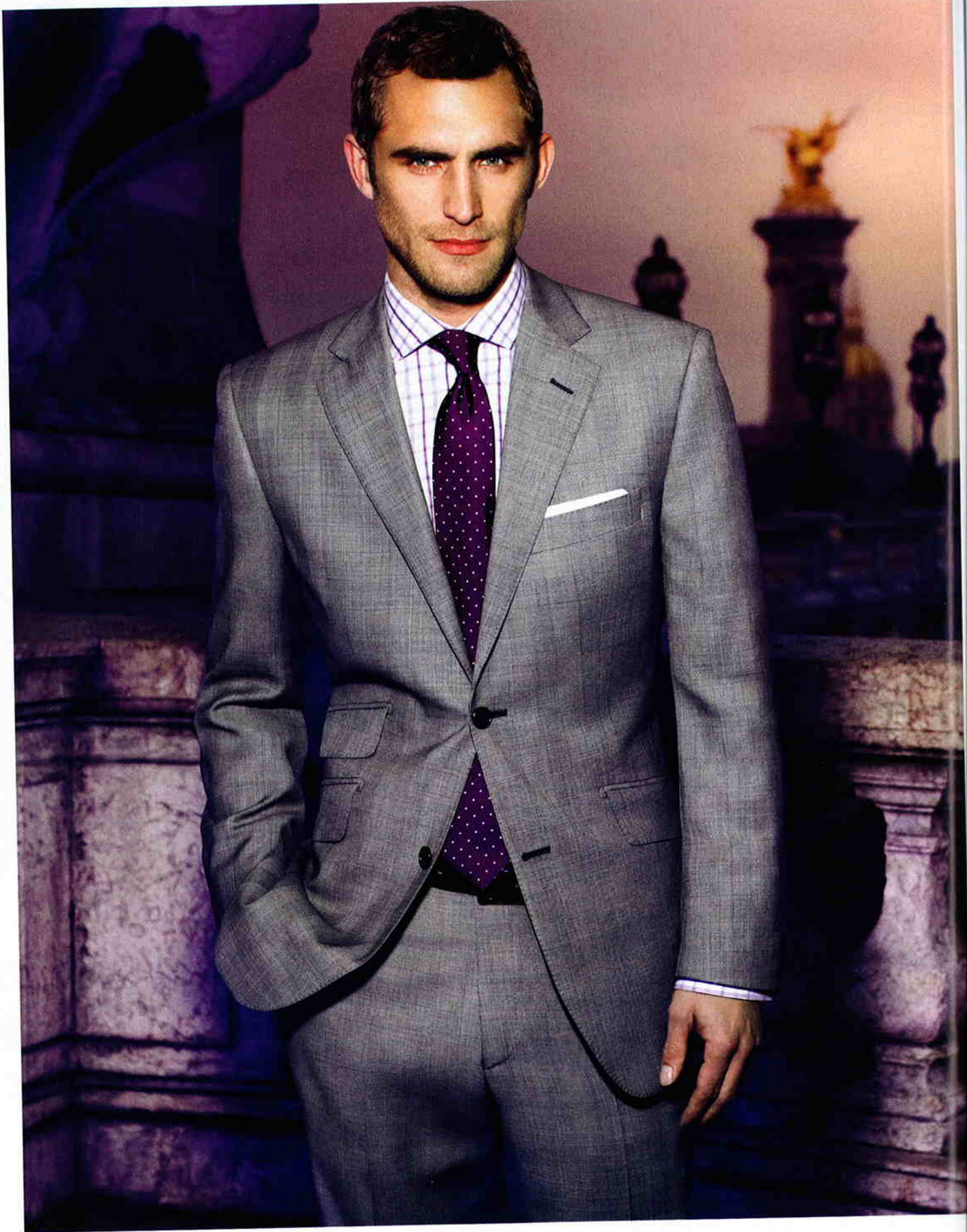
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# Horn of plenty

The Pangaea Expedition is a four-year odyssey designed to groom a generation of young eco-warriors who will influence the environmental decisions of the future. **Paul Robinson** meets the gung-ho adventurer behind it.

## CHILLED OUT

*Pangaea* at anchor in the Antarctic ice; adventurer Mike Horn (below)



PHOTOGRAPHY: OFFICINE PANERAI

**S**OUTH AFRICAN ADVENTURER MIKE HORN has a bonecrusher of a handshake and attracts such adjectives as “can-do”, “down-to-earth” and “larger-than-life” like a magnet. The ebullient 43-year-old has done it all—from swimming down the Amazon to walking to the North Pole to climbing 8000m-plus Himalayan peaks without oxygen. You could say he understands the minutiae of risk management.

When it comes to save-the-planet plans, Horn thinks big. Several years ago, having accomplished most of his personal adventure goals, he decided to pass on his experience of the natural world to young people—the planet’s future. And what better way to do it than by taking them exploring?

It was while trudging on the polar icecap that he decided to build a boat. It was some walk. Horn’s 2002-2004 Arktos Expedition was a 40,000km trek around the Arctic Circle, unaided by motorised or dog-drawn transport. He headed to Norway, sailed to Greenland and then started walking >

## ECO ADVENTURE

across the ice – Greenland, Canada, Alaska and Siberia. “It took me two years and three months, and I was building this boat down to the smallest detail in my mind every day.”

The plan of what to do with the boat was breathtakingly simple. “*Pangaea* was built to go out and show the beauty of the planet to the younger generation; not to save the world, but to teach the youth how to take care of the world. Our biggest source of untapped energy is youth. If we teach them how to take care of the planet, they’ll teach *their* kids. Let’s show them the beauty, show them how to conserve it and how to clean it up. These kids come on board not too sure what they are going to live through, but we give them the tools and we know they can do it. We are taking a bit of a risk, but at the end of the day who doesn’t take risks?”

**T**HE FRUIT OF that risk is the Pangaea Expedition (named after the hypothetical pre-Triassic “supercontinent” and also an acronym of Pan Global Adventure for Environmental Action) for which 12 groups of 12 young explorers (aged 13-20) are selected to participate in 12 projects, from exploring the source of the over-irrigated Yellow River in the Gobi Desert, to studying biodiversity in the Siberian Arctic, to aiding developing communities in East Africa. Visiting all seven continents and navigating the world’s oceans, the young adventurers will gain invaluable knowledge and awareness under the guidance of scientific and environmental specialists.

Youth from all over the world will become environmental ambassadors, Horn says. “I want kids who can make a difference, who will be the next-generation CEOs of big business, because that’s where it has to start,” he says. “We have to do something about the environment now.”

Candidates apply through the Pangaea website for selection as potential adventurers. An international panel has the final word. Once chosen, the young adults attend a selection camp at Chateau-d’Oex in Switzerland where they participate in outdoor survival and team-building courses before the final choice on who will join Horn on the expeditions is made. “We’re not just looking for the physically strong,” Horn says, “we also want those who can express the beauty of the planet through music, art or science.”

Substantial corporate sponsorship was essential in getting Horn’s 35m sailing boat, *Pangaea*, in the water and the Pangaea Expedition off the ground. Watchmaker Officine Panerai had been on board since Richemont Group chairman Johann Rupert saw Horn awarded the Laureus World Alternative Sportsman of the Year in 2001. Horn had circumnavigated the world via the equator without motorised transport – by sail, canoe, bicycle and on foot.

An impressive vessel, *Pangaea* is constructed of recyclable aluminium. It has solar power, high-tech navigation and communications equipment, and trawling nets to harvest plastic pollutants from the ocean. Built in Sao Paulo, Brazil, using local labour and materials, the boat is largely self-sufficient and all waste is recycled. Primarily reliant on its 600sq m of sail, *Pangaea* also has low-emission engines to force its way through sea ice. This was Mercedes-Benz’ major contribution to Horn’s eco-friendly vessel.

“Mercedes said, ‘We will produce CO<sub>2</sub> emission-free engines for your boat, so we can teach the kids we can get to places without polluting.’ Hopefully, in about four years’ time we’ll have the first hydrogen engine.”

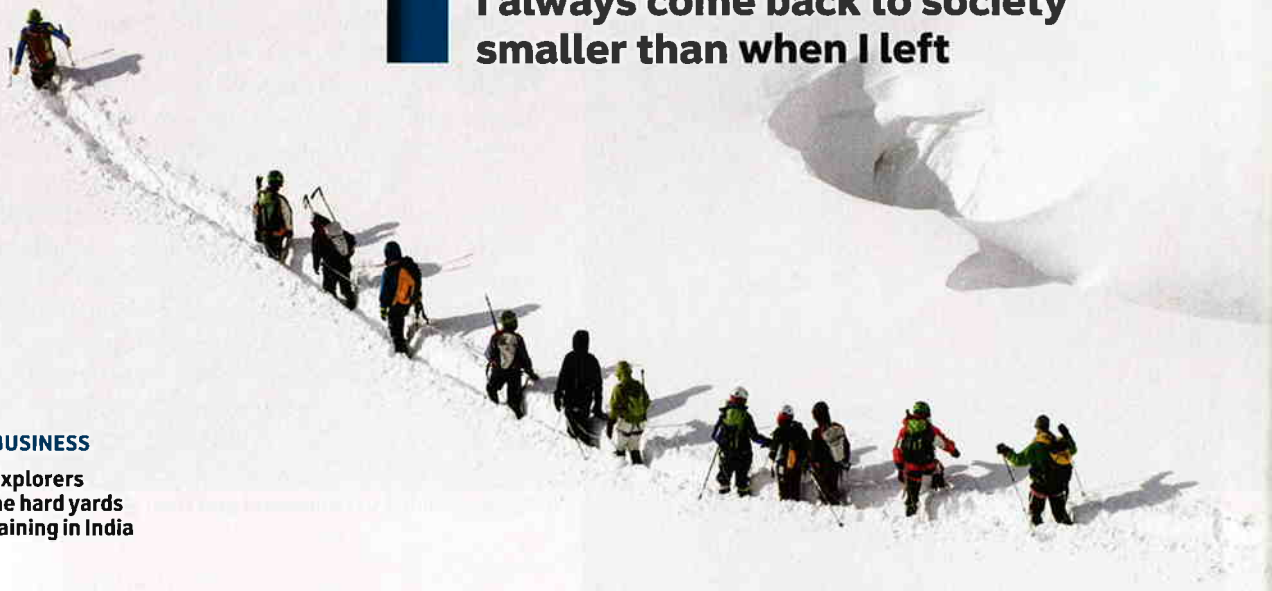
Horn, however, doesn’t see himself as a brand ambassador. “I’m just an explorer. What I do a lot of people can do, they

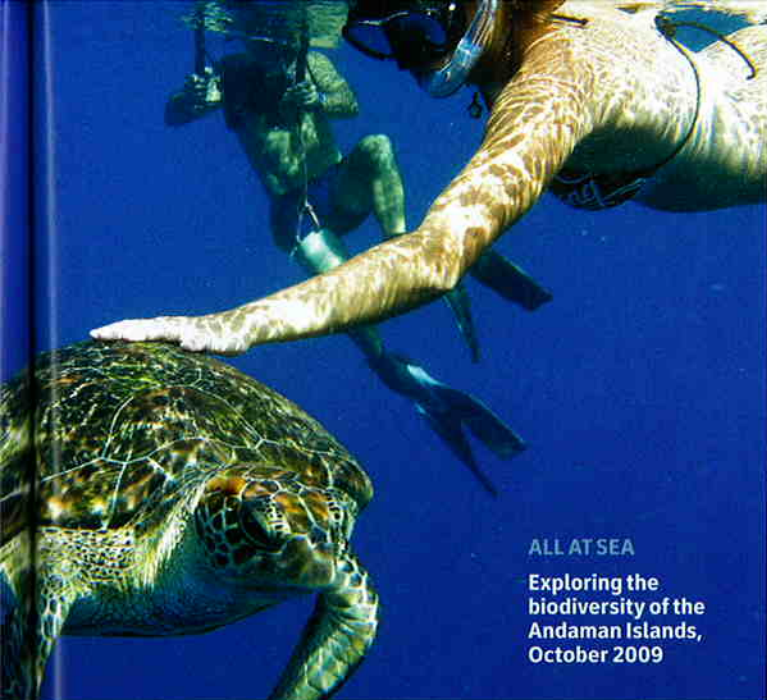


**I’ve been humbled by nature...  
I always come back to society  
smaller than when I left**

### SNOW BUSINESS

**Young Explorers  
doing the hard yards  
while training in India**





ALL AT SEA  
Exploring the biodiversity of the Andaman Islands, October 2009



TAKING/ANDAMAN PHOTOGRAPHY; OFFICINE PANEFAI; FISH: GETTY IMAGES

just don't know it. I've been humbled so many times by nature – a competitor that is always stronger than me – I always come back to society feeling smaller than when I left.”

The first successful candidates set sail last year. They have made play parks and planted trees in South Africa and taken samples of snow from the Rocky Mountains to test the amount of CO<sub>2</sub>. The first Australian Young Explorer, 16-year-old Mark Thompson from Cairns, is currently participating in the India leg of the expedition, exploring the Ganges River Delta and observing endangered wildlife.

Horn's credo is “explore, learn, act” and some of the action to come will take place in the North Pacific Ocean, home to possibly the world's largest garbage dump.

“Part of the expedition is underwater. Today, some 20,000 plastic bottles per square kilometre are floating in the ocean. The biggest of these floating garbage dumps is near Hawaii in the North Pacific Gyre. It's the size of Mexico [and comprises] decomposing bottles, toothbrushes, footballs, shoes – everything that floats. It's a slush that all the currents keep in >

# HOW A BROWN PAPER BOX INSPIRED A NATION OF AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS.



The idea was simple - fill a box with 5 basic items, and invite photographers to take creative photos of them. What began as the Canon 'EOS Photo5' box has since taken on a life of its own, growing into the most creative annual amateur photography competition in Australia and New Zealand.



Each year, thousands of amateur photographers receive their EOS Photo5 box filled with 5 items, which each represent a photographic brief.

This year the challenge was stepped up with 5 new briefs and creative techniques: Paint, hundreds & thousands, cardboard spectacles, bokeh hoods, and an open brief called 'practically black'. The response has been the biggest yet, with the 5 briefs inspiring close to 7000 images.

CONTINUED >

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#### THE ICEMAN GOETH

Mike Horn takes time out after the first stage of Pangaea Expedition in January 2009 to trek to the South Pole



**“ We have to work together. Everybody has to respect each other, because once we move out on the ocean, we are our own world**

#### PLASTIC FANTASTIC


ANOTHER EXPEDITION in a very different boat will soon (at time of publication a departure date had not been set) follow the course of Thor Heyerdahl's legendary *Kon-Tiki* expedition. In 1947, Heyerdahl constructed and sailed a balsa-wood raft nearly 7000km across the Pacific in an attempt to prove that the inhabitants of Polynesia could have come from South America. Adventure Ecology's 60-foot catamaran, *Plastiki*, is constructed mainly from 12,500 recycled plastic bottles, partly glued together by an epoxy made from cashew nuts and sugar.

Led by environmentalist banking heir David de Rothschild, with a crew including several scientists, the expedition hopes to highlight the degradation of the Pacific from indiscriminate waste disposal by sailing through the Eastern Pacific Garbage Patch in the North Pacific Gyre. Known to ancient mariners as the Doldrums, this area of converging currents and minimal wind is home to more than 100 million tonnes of floating plastic garbage.

By visiting islands endangered by rising sea levels, such as Tuvalu, de Rothschild also seeks to draw attention to the climate change reality faced by many in the Pacific. And *Plastiki* will call in at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, as well, to investigate the damage caused by long-term nuclear testing. For information and expedition updates visit [www.theplastiki.com](http://www.theplastiki.com)

place, but it's going to compact and nobody wants to take responsibility. Hopefully we can eventually get up there. We've been in discussions recently. A lot of bulk carriers are idle due to the GFC. We're trying to get about 20 of these 800,000-tonne carriers to join us and start eating away at this mess."

If Horn has his way, the Pangaea Expedition Young Explorers Program will more than make a difference. "We are supported by big organisations – Panerai, Mercedes, Geberit – but we stay neutral. We provide a platform that supports and sustains these young explorers once they've been aboard the boat and when they go home, by maintaining contact and following their individual progress."

Sitting around the *Pangaea's* giant conference table, it's obvious that this is as much a social experiment as an environmental one. "We have kids from all the continents. The slogan is 'one world' – everybody has to respect each other just as in the same way we have to respect the little bit of electricity, food and water we have on this boat because once we move out on the ocean, we are our own world. We have to work together, otherwise the boat is going to fall apart. So that's the concept of the expedition: to bring people together so we can all live together in one world." 

**i** For more information, to follow the progress of the expedition and for Young Explorer application details, see [www.pangaea-mikehorn.com](http://www.pangaea-mikehorn.com)