

BEST GEAR OF THE YEAR

Dec 2009 - Jan 2010 | Volume 18 | Number 11

Men's Journal

Powder for Everyone!

Backcountry Skiing for All Skill Levels

Killing Secrets of a Navy SEAL Sniper

My Father, the Con Man

Steve Nash's New MJ Column

Great Holiday Gifts for Men

60 Original & Affordable Ideas

How Alec Baldwin Finally Got It Right

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A suspension bridge links the granite spires of the Mount Nimbus via ferrata route in BC's Purcell Mountains. p. 110



THE BEST of 2009

Despite the economy, this year produced scores of great new ways to invest your leisure time. Our annual list covers the very best places to hike, bike, and paddle; where to stay; and what to drink afterward.
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A former Navy SEAL explains how a trained marksman operates — and why he'll never be the same.
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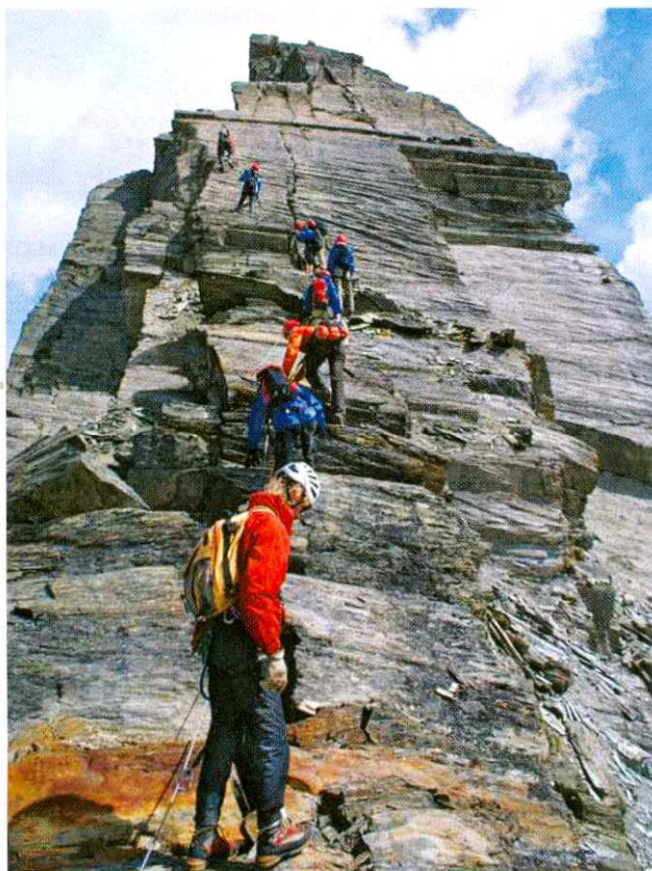
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A lifetime of lessons on money from a con man.
by **PAT JORDAN**

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An astrophysicist dies under strange circumstances, cut off from the world, at the most isolated base on Earth. Months pass before an autopsy, or investigation, begins. **WILL COCKRELL** takes on the unsolved case.

ON THE COVER

Alec Baldwin, photographed exclusively for *Men's Journal* by **JAKE CHESSUM** on August 20, 2009, in Wainscott, New York. Styled by **PATTI O'BRIEN**. Grooming by **SARAH POTEMPA** for Aussie at The Wall Group. Prop styling by **ZAC MITCHELL**. Baldwin wears a suit and shirt by **POLO RALPH LAUREN**.

photograph by **Mark Sissons**



BEST CLIMBING TRIP FOR MORTALS

MOUNT NIMBUS, BC

FINALLY, NORTH AMERICA HAS A VIA FERRATA TO RIVAL THE IRON WAYS OF THE ALPS.

The new cable- and ladder-assisted climb to Nimbus's needle-like summit is North America's first world-class via ferrata, with hundreds of feet of hand-and-foot scrambling and panoramic views of glacier-draped peaks. During the three-day Canadian Mountain Holidays trip, you'll access the remote Bobbie Burns lodge from Banff via van shuttle and jet helicopter, followed the next morning by another quick heli-lift to the base of the peak. Tethered to safety cables, clamber past overhangs and tiptoe across tiny ledges along Nimbus's sawtooth western ridge. Just below the summit is the route's climax: a spindly 200-foot-long suspension bridge with butt-clenching half-mile views to the valley floor. \$2,300; canadianmountainholidays.com

➔ THREE MORE VIA FERRATAS CLOSE TO HOME

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Whistler Blackcomb ski resort, just north of Vancouver, provides a summertime scrambling route with European élan. Don crampons to cross the Whistler Glacier, and then scramble 800 feet to a breathtaking summit. \$120; whistlerblackcomb.com

QUEBEC

The Via Ferrata du Diable in Quebec's Mont-Tremblant National Park, a 1.5-hour drive north of Montreal, traverses granite cliffs for up to five hours via steel rungs, swinging plank footways, and a spine-tingling tightrope walk. *from* \$32; sepaq.com

KENTUCKY

The via ferrata in Campton, Kentucky, about 50 miles southeast of Lexington, spiders half a mile across sandstone cliffs. If you're feeling brave, check out the optional black-diamond passage called Lost in Space. \$32 per day; torrentfalls.com

BEST LITERARY DEBUT

WELLS TOWER

CASE IN POINT: THE LAST LINES OF HIS STORY "EVERYTHING RAVAGED, EVERYTHING BURNED"

It didn't make much sense to me then, what Gnut was going through, but after Pila and me had our little twins, and we put a family together, I got an understanding of how terrible love can be. You wish you hated those people, your wife and children, because you know the things the world will do to them, because you have done some of those things yourself. It's crazy-making, yet you cling to them with everything and close your eyes against the rest of it. But still you wake up late at night and lie there listening for the creak and splash of oars, the clank of steel, the sounds of men rowing toward your home.

BEST NEW BOOZE

Sombra



Sombra is the perfect meeting of mind and matter. The mind: Richard Betts, master sommelier, formerly of The Little Nell in Aspen. The matter: the purest organic Oaxacan agave, wild yeast, and a centuries-old technique for a fast light on funk and long on rich, smoky flavor. \$50; sombraoaxaca.com

BEST RECORD BREAKER

ZAC SUNDERLAND

AT 17, HE BECAME THE YOUNGEST TO SAIL AROUND THE WORLD SOLO. HE RECOUNTS HIS SCARIEST MOMENTS.

Unfortunately, just a month after Sunderland returned from his 400-day trip, his record was broken by a British teenager. But having achieved what he did virtually sponsorless, he gets our vote for adventurer of the year. He talked to us from his home in Southern California, where he's finishing up high school.



DAY 112
"I had a scare off of Indonesia. This boat came up to me and started circling in a red zone for piracy. It was only 50 feet away, and that's

not really done in the ocean — usually, you stay two miles away. I altered course, but they would alter course back on mine, essentially to check out my boat. I ended up calling the Australian Coastwatch, and they flew over with their fighter jets. The boat turned around and sped off in the opposite direction."

DAY 148
"The ocean doesn't scare me as long as I'm in control of the situation. What scares me is when stuff breaks. The forestay broke when I was out there, and I spent four days trying to lash it down during a storm in the Indian Ocean. I had this massive sail flogging around and I almost got washed over the side. I was awake for all four days, and I started to hallucinate and get really weak. Then the storm finally died, and I pulled onto an island to get it taken care of."