

Adrenaline Rush in Pristine Powder - for Weeks on End



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Freeskier Patrick Fux hails from Gasenried (just next to Grächen, a ski resort located in the Swiss canton of Valais) and lives in Zurich, where he works as Senior Engineer, Network Optimization for Alcatel-Lucent and from where, for years, he has been traveling the world (of snow) on skis. The result is not only some 600 days in the snow, but also – quite incidentally – a collection of countless amazing pictures from all over the world of winter sports.

[Deutsche Version](#)

What draws you to the snow for days on end, year after year?

Patrick: Actually, I'm just a working person like anyone else in Switzerland; the only difference is that everything I do is "for the sake of the snow". In the summer, I work lots of overtime so I can get as much snow in the winter as I possibly can. I'm just sort of addicted to powder, even though I really don't even like the cold that much...



How many years have you been traveling the world with your skis?

It all started nine years ago, when I went heli-skiing for the first time in Canada. After the first descent, I knew that I would rekindle my old hobby – skiing – but this time off the slopes. Every year since then, I have headed to ski resorts in Europe, North and South America, and Japan.

You call your trips snow safaris...

The word "safari" hints at the notion of adventure. And that's exactly why I started my snow safaris. About six years ago, I basically stopped making any plans. Usually just the flight, the first night in a hotel, and a car. In my bags, lots of equipment and a notebook. In December, I start watching the snow reports in the countries I will travel to. Then, on the day of arrival and every day afterward, I spend at least half an hour studying the weather maps and planning the trip for the coming days with friends. To plan the right route, I usually end up spending about two hours a day on the notebook. The goal is to be one day ahead of every low-pressure system, so we can really enjoy the powder.

Quite often, this results in long car trips, around 500 to 1000 kilometers; but it's worth it, and the highways in the U.S. are super well developed and easy to drive. In Japan, the whole thing requires less time and effort; low-pressure systems are an extremely regular occurrence and cover nearly the entire country. As a result, it's possible to stay in the same location for several weeks and get 12 meters of snow in seven weeks, as was the case last winter.

Do you always set out all by yourself?

Nine years ago, no one knew who I was, and I didn't have a very big Web presence with my snow safari reports. But since then, reports on American and Australian ski forums have brought the snow safaris to the attention of a lot of interested people, who have offered to scout out the areas with me. In the last five years, I have hardly skied a single day alone. Quite the contrary, entire groups of us now travel around together.



How many of these snow safaris have you already done?

Nine in total; the first two years were "mini-vacations" lasting three to four weeks, with heli-skiing in Canada and then a few

ski resorts before and after. Starting the third year, each one was six to 12 weeks; that was the start of the real snow safaris.

How many powder days per year does that make in all?

After I had 20 power days in a row in 2006 and experienced 32 days of new snow during the entire safari (35 days), I thought that couldn't be beat. But boy was I wrong. This year, we had 61 days in the snow, 45 of which were in powder, and 31 of these in a row. Life is great!

Do you always encounter the new snow you were expecting?

Taking a look at the weather forecasts does not always work out as planned – sort of like in 2008: From Salt Lake City, Utah, in two days to Banff, Alberta, Canada and no snow; from there to Vancouver after just one day. It was supposed to snow either in Whistler or on Mt. Baker. But all we got was rain. After a two-day wait, then two long days in the car back to the starting point in Salt Lake City, we finally got some snow. That amounted to 4,500 kilometers in the car for zilch!

Are you afraid of avalanches?

Sure – that's probably the greatest risk I have to live with for the sake of my passion. Of course, with the right knowledge and the right route selection, the risk can be kept small. But there are always factors that are unknown or are not obvious. In Japan, in particular, avalanche reports are extremely inaccurate and sporadic. To date, I have experienced an avalanche – actually, a snow slab – only one time, but I lucked out entirely and was able to escape the avalanche. In addition, my ski partner was not very far away and could have helped in an emergency. I would never undertake anything without avalanche rescue equipment.

Do you have a favorite country or top spot?

I can't answer that question with one name only. Jackson Hole, Wyoming (USA) is one of the best resorts, but only when there is fresh snow; it's really awful when the weather has been too warm for a couple of days. That turns the south-facing slopes into an icy inferno! I really like Revelstoke, British Columbia: An area with an infinite number of challenging tree runs and endless elevation gains, which is rare for Canada and the U.S. Snowbird, Utah, known as the "best snow on earth", is a great place, as are Verbier and St. Anton. This list is almost endless, and just this year, I discovered Crystal Mountain, Washington (USA) and added it right away to the top-ten list.

What's your next goal?

Provided my work and Röbi, my boss, allow it, I will spend a large part of my 2011 trip once again in Japan and will scout out some new spots there. Of course, I'll also hit the U.S. and Canada, as I do every year. I may even head off to India. Over the coming years, thanks to an ever increasing number of ski tourists, I will probably discover more and more unknown or not so touristy places. There are lots of examples of these, including Iran, China, and Russia – even Romania.

[More pictures](#)

About Patrick

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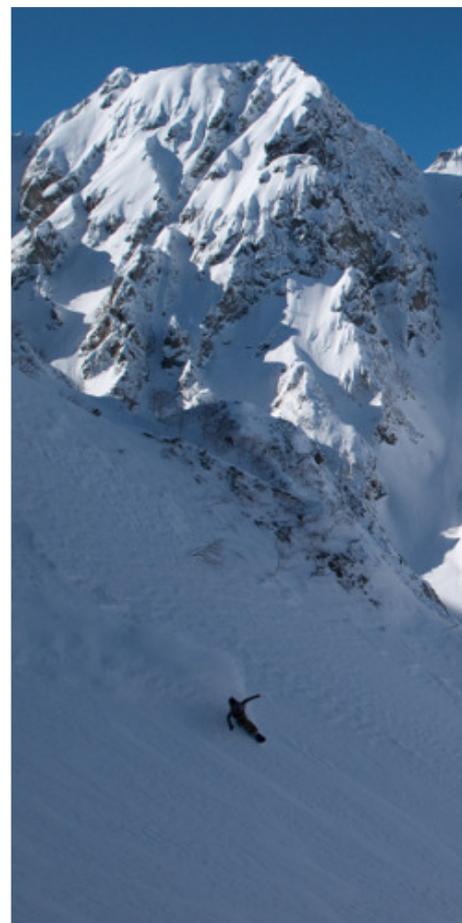


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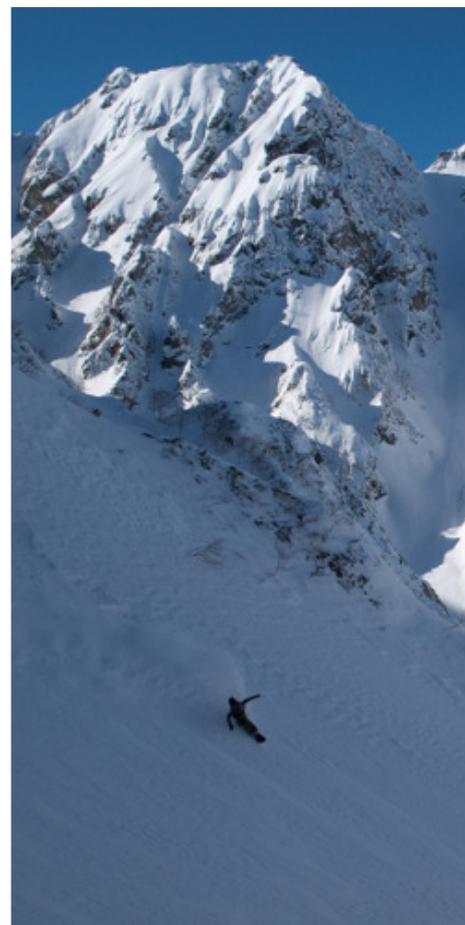


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