

On Thin Ice: Alpine Climbs in the Americas, Asia and the Himalaya

By Mick Fowler

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On Thin Ice is Mick Fowler's second set of climbing memoirs, following Vertical Pleasure. Here, the celebrated mountaineer records his expeditions since 1990. Despite work and family commitments, he has maintained a regular series of 'big trips' to challenging objectives around the world with a sequence of major successes: Taweche (1995, with Pat Littlejohn), Changabang (1997, with Steve Sustad, Andy Cave and Brendan Murphy), Arwa Tower (1999, with Sustad), Mount Kennedy (2000, with Cave), Siguniang (2002, with Paul Ramsden). Siguniang's hard ice climbing on a fabulous face in deepest China was so admired by the international climbing community that it won the US 'Golden Piton' and the French 'Piolet d'Or', both awards given for the finest alpine achievements in the world during that year. The author describes his travels in the great traditions, with engaging modesty and wit, but the climbs themselves are frequently so dramatic that the anxiety and tension forces its way to the surface to be matched by a corresponding relief and triumph when success and safe descent is achieved. Mick Fowler has thus become Britain's most successful exponent of high-standard lightweight mountaineering in the greater ranges. At 48 he is already something of an elder statesman of a cadre of international activists. They are steadily ticking off the most challenging lines in the world - a 'golden age' of super-alpinism that is now in full swing. How this influences activities on the 8000m peaks where the dangers (rarefied air, weather severity and sheer scale) are greater is an open question. History suggests that as major challenges on the lower peaks are steadily mastered the focus will return to technical challenges offered at the higher altitudes. Whether the results will exceed achievements such as the Kurtyka/Schauer (Gasherbrum 4) and the Bohigas/Lucas (Annapurna 1) remains to be seen. The combination of exotic travel with major climbs provides the ultimate adrenalin-soaked holiday experience that Mick Fowler has mastered to the full. We are transported from the cliffs of Jordan, to remote peaks in deepest Asia, via Taweche and Changabang in the Himalaya, with jaunts to the Andes and Alaska thrown in for good measure. That Fowler has organised this routine for years, while holding down a conventional nine-to-five job with the Inland Revenue, has constantly amazed his peers. In this, his second book, he has also mastered the skills of amusing travel-writing to entertain us as a preliminary to the finale of a titanic

struggle on each of his fiendishly demanding climbs.

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Editorial Review

Review
'The paradox of a highly professional tax man being arrested for climbing has the hint of iconic myth about it, and deliberately taps into the anarchic, anti-establishment impulse seemingly ingrained in all serious climbers.' (Tim Noble, Climbers' Club Journal). 'We are invited to visit places from Jordan to the Himalaya and share in activities of a collection of climbing partners which include some of the biggest names in mountaineering.' (Paul Hudson, Fell and Rock Climbing Club Journal). 'Mick Fowler's name is utterly synonymous with adventure - British style.' (Dave MacLeod, Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal). 'On Thin Ice is inspiring at every turn. Fowler's humility is a nice touch, and while I believe it is genuine, this is no ordinary bloke, this is a truly extraordinary climber.' (David Stevenson, American Alpine Club Journal). 'What shines through the book is the palpable enjoyment and enthusiasm which enables him to keep making tiring and difficult journeys to potentially dangerous mountains.' (Stephen Venables, Climber Magazine).

About the Author
Mick Fowler was introduced to climbing in the Swiss and French Alps by his father when he was 13. During his teenage years he developed an enthusiasm for exploratory climbing which has seen him establish new climbs at or near the top of most fields of climbing over the last 35 years. He has made first ascents and challenging climbs across the world - from frozen drainpipes in London to the chalk cliffs of Dover and on to the Himalaya and China, earning him the title of 'Mountaineer's Mountaineer' in a poll in The Observer. Remarkably, his climbing has taken place alongside a full-time job at the tax office, earning him the another title - 'Britain's hardest-climbing tax collector'.

Users Review

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