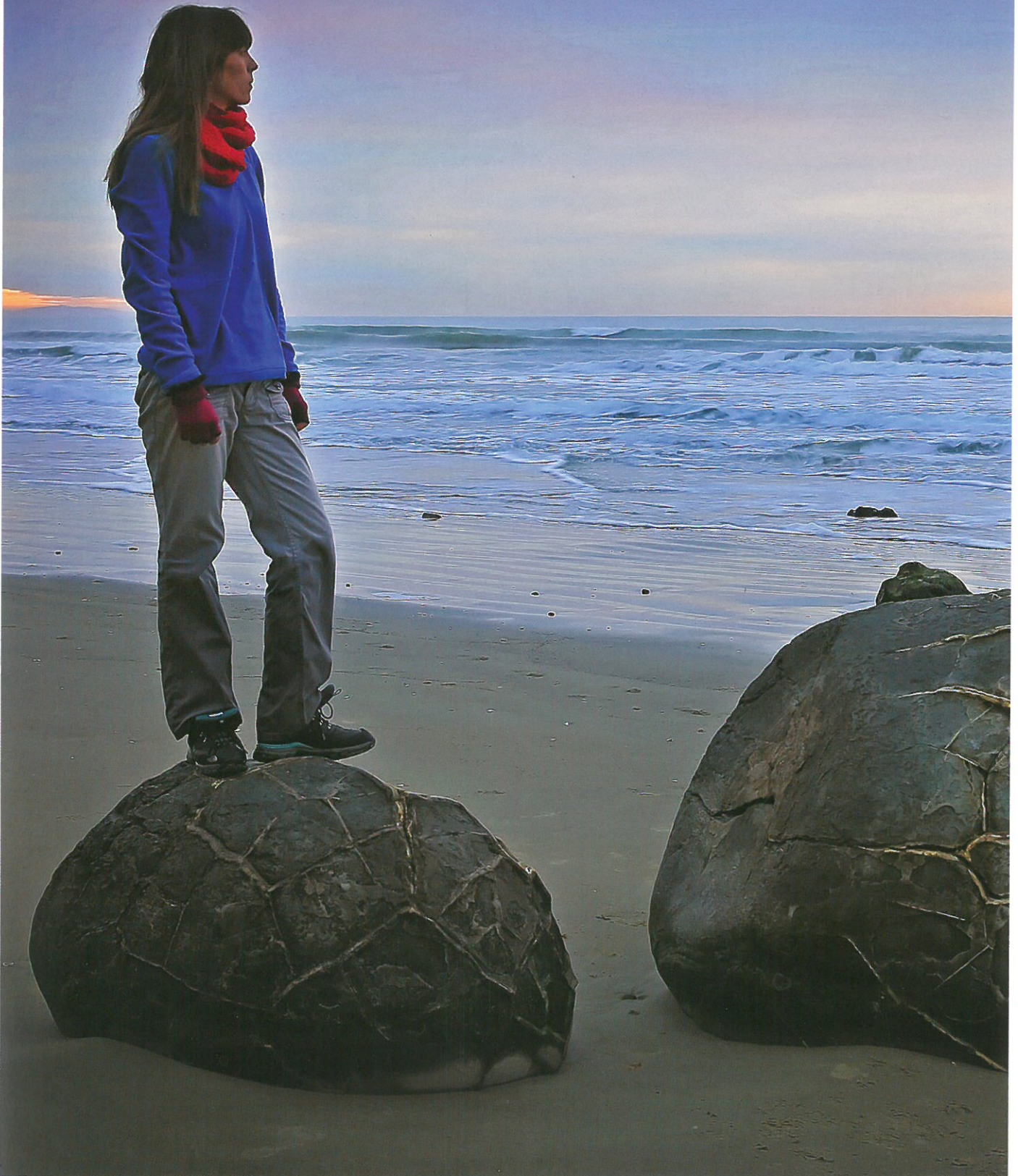


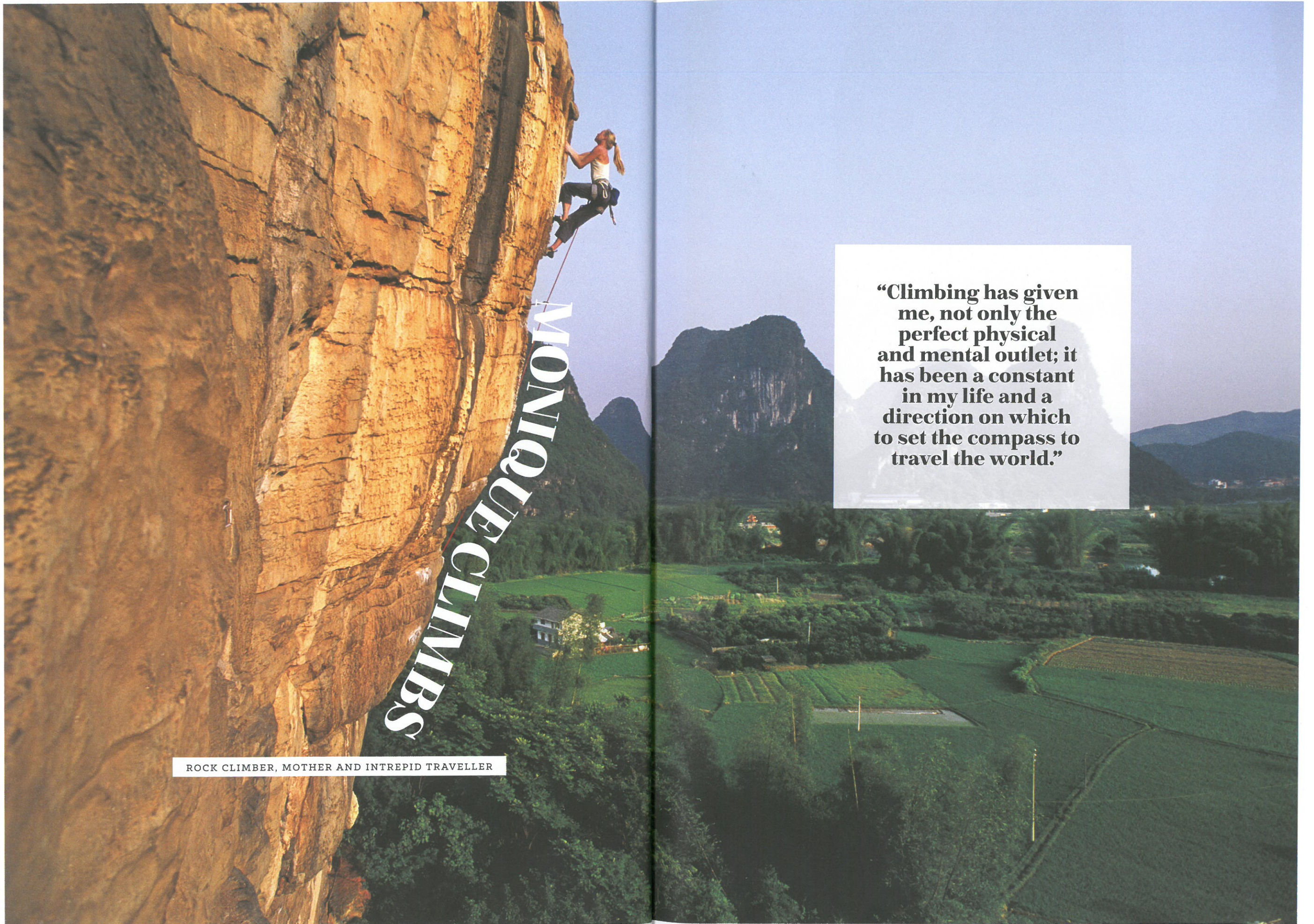
TRAVEL PLAY LIVE

The Women's Adventure Lifestyle Magazine



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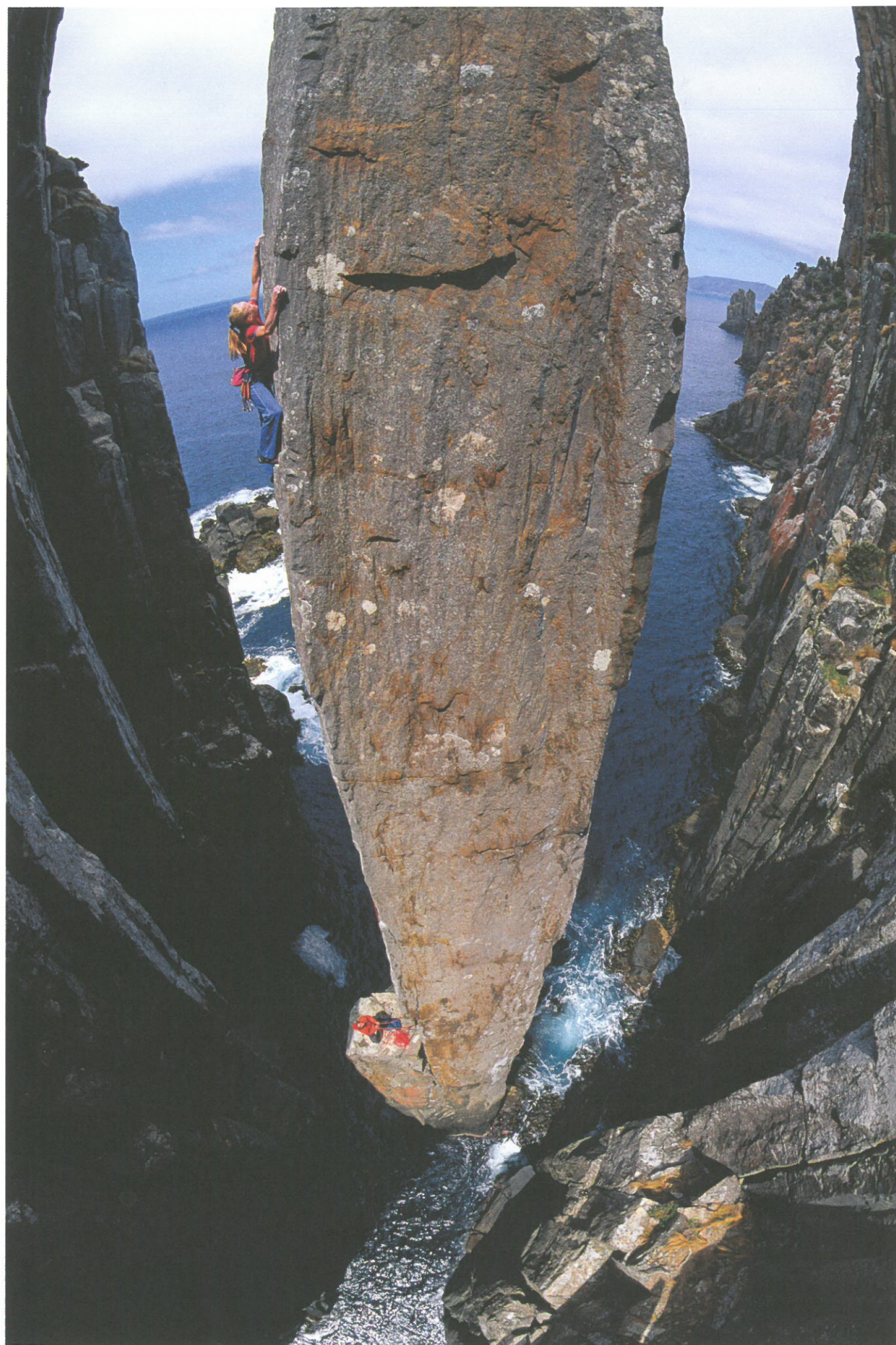
ADVENTURE x EMPOWER x INSPIRE x DREAM x CHANGE



MONIQUE CLIMBS

ROCK CLIMBER, MOTHER AND INTREPID TRAVELLER

“Climbing has given me, not only the perfect physical and mental outlet; it has been a constant in my life and a direction on which to set the compass to travel the world.”



INTERVIEW WITH MONIQUE FORESTIER PHOTOGRAPHY: SIMON CARTER - ONSIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

For some climbing the world's most beautiful and precarious rock faces is only a dream and not necessarily a good one. But for one woman it allows her to push her limits, physical and mental. Monique Forestier one of Australia's top female climbers, gives us a peek into her world.

Monique, when and where did your passion for climbing begin? When I was a kid I trained for many years in elite gymnastics and acrobatics but that had petered out by the time I finished school. Years later when I was twenty-three and living in Sydney, I was desperate to find a physical outlet other than swimming. As luck would have it, I was given a free pass to try indoor climbing in a gym. From the moment I tried it I was hooked. I had finally found what I was searching for; climbing filled the gap that my earlier gymnastics training had left. After that I went to the climbing gym every week, then twice a week and then my friends took me outdoors. At first I was fascinated with pushing myself to my physical and mental limit on rock. Later, I realised that climbing provided fantastic opportunities for visiting some of the most spectacular places on the planet. I have travelled extensively and made some wonderful friends along the way.

What has been one of your climbing highlights so far? My favourite route is one that I climbed in 2011 in the magnificent Verdon Gorge in France. The route is called Tom et je Ris. It is a very aesthetic line and the route is 60 meters long, but it gives you a massive feeling of exposure because it's situated on a cliff sitting 400 meters above the turquoise river below. The route is renowned because the protection bolts are widely spaced which means you face the potential for some very big falls, and I took plenty of those. It is grade 32 so it was really hard for me and it took eight days of attempts before I finally succeeded. It took all my mental capacity to convince my sane mind to go for it. That was a really awesome climb and a very satisfying thing to have achieved. At the time it was the hardest route that I had climbed overseas and it opened my eyes to what I could possibly do in the future. (You can check out the video of this climb – 'Verdon Dreaming' on YouTube channel).

What and where have some of the more technically challenging climbs been?

One of the most difficult climbs that I've done is called Fish Eye (grade 33), which is located in Oliana, Spain. It is a long (55m) technical and sustained climb, which doesn't relent until you clip the anchors. Tiger Cat is another grade 33 that I climbed located near my home in the Blue Mountains. This climb is 35m long but it is steep and powerful and has a killer last move, from which I've fallen over 20 times.

But perhaps the most technically challenging climb that I have done is Whistling Kite at Frog Buttress near Brisbane. Its grade 32 so overall it's not the hardest route that I've climbed but the sequence of movements required was ridiculous, it took days to figure out. I had to use micro sized hand and foot holds (some as thin as a credit card edges) in order to execute the climb.

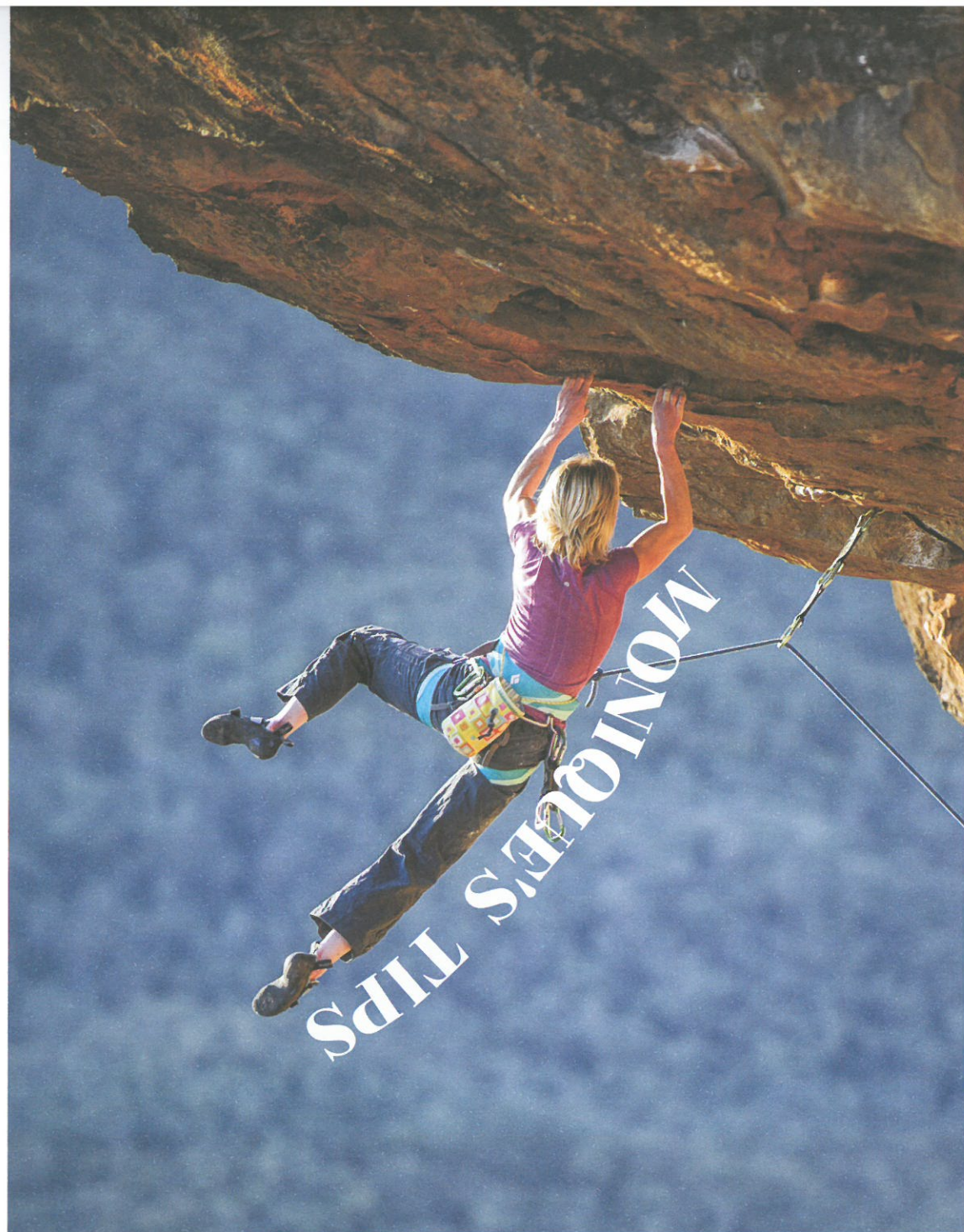
How do you overcome fear when staring down a new cliff face? Generally I try to break down a climb into segments and I'll try climbing from one protection point (bolt) to the next until I become more familiar with the hand and foot holds. By exposing myself to the fear factor in smaller bite sized increments I can better get my head around it. I'll take some falls to see how I land to make sure that I'm not going to swing in and hit the rock face hard. This helps take some unknowns out of the equation; it puts my mind at ease. Gradually I'll link more sections together and when I feel that I would be able to climb the route I go into attack mode. I am able to shut out the fear and concentrate on pushing myself to my limit.

What is your favourite location for climbing? Cataluña in Spain is my favourite climbing region to visit. It always motivates me to push myself harder than ever. I've spent weeks or even months at various cliffs which are the gathering grounds for the top international climbers. I've forged great friendships there, been humbled and inspired, and had my eyes opened to what is possible. Cataluña's rhythm beats in tune to my own.

How has being a mother changed the way you approach your sport (if at all)? Is your daughter interested in following in your footsteps? Our daughter Coco is now seven and having her has certainly created some additional challenges. I have less time now for training and the trips we do and the cliffs we visit tend to be a little less adventurous. Sometimes I even do trips on my own while hubby looks after Coco and keeps her at school. But actually having a child has turned out to be far less of an impediment that I thought it might have been. I really enjoy travelling with Coco; she's a real icebreaker and adds another element to our trips.

I'm not interested in pushing Coco into climbing. It's up to her what she wants to do. Coco loves coming to the climbing gym, sometimes she'll have a few goes at climbing the walls other times she's more interested in doing cartwheels on the mats.

There are some amazing female climbers internationally, but you rarely hear about their achievements in the media, unless they are to adorn the cover of a magazine for looking 'hot'; what is your take on the male dominated arena that is rock climbing? Yes climbing may well be a male dominated sport but not nearly as much as it was in the past. Years ago when females started climbing harder routes quite often their achievements were suddenly down graded by their male counterparts. This was a belittling of their achievements and it wasn't entirely uncommon, it happened the world over. My feeling is that the situation has significantly improved; the percentage of female climbers has increased, many women now have climbed to a very high standard and their achievements are recognised on equal ground much more than what they were previously. I think the culture of climbing has changed and now many females would find it a more welcoming sport.



MONIQUE'S TIPS

For those of us not so familiar with rock climbing can you explain the different types of climbing? Traditional Climbing: Traditional climbing, or trad climbing, refers to the type of gear used to protect the route. For trad climbing the climber places their own protection points (metal wedges or camming devices) in cracks as they ascend the cliff, these are removed afterwards.

Sport Climbing: Sport climbing uses permanent anchor points (bolts), which are permanently fixed to the rock. Because the climber does not have to place their own protection it frees them up to focus more on the gymnastic / athletic side of climbing.

Bouldering: Boulders or smaller cliffs are climbed without the use of ropes. Typically

they are 3-5 meters high and often several crashpads are used to protect the landing. Climbers concentrate on short sections of hard powerful climbing.

Free soloing: Free climbing means climbing a cliff just using your hands and feet to ascend the rock. You have a rope and protection (Trad or Sport) to catch you if you should fall. Free soloing however is a very different beast. This is where you free climb up a cliff, using your hands and feet, but you do not have a rope or protection if you should fall. Unlike in bouldering, free soloists typically climb above safe heights, where a fall would usually result in serious injury or death. Needless to say this is not a commonly practiced form of climbing.



We all have a tendency to train the things that we are good at; better results are achieved by addressing the things that we are neglecting.

For those of our readers out there who want to take their climbing to the next level, what are your top 3 tips? Firstly, identify and address your weaknesses. We all have a tendency to train the things that we are good at; better results are achieved by addressing the things that we are neglecting.

Secondly, improving climbing technique has proven to be very beneficial to my students in my training clinics. Some of the things we look at are; precise and confident footwork, maximising body position according to hand hold orientation, moving economically, climbing dynamically and relaxing the grip.

Thirdly, ensure that your base fitness is at a high level as this will greatly improve your climbing from the get go. Strength to weight ratio is a fairly important factor in climbing so there is no point in worrying about really advanced training techniques when shedding a couple

kilos may provide bigger results.

How do you train and prepare for a big climb? My regular weekly training consists of climbing (in the gym or on the rock) three to four days, weights one to two days and swimming for recovery training one to two days. As I start to get close to doing a hard project I ease off on the training and take more rest days so that I'm fresh.

Keen to find out more or join Monique for a climbing expedition?

For more information about Monique see www.moniqueclimbs.com.au Along with her husband, climbing photographer Simon Carter www.onsight.com.au, Monique will lead a ten day rock climbing adventure tour, "Sicily On the Rocks with Monique Forestier and Simon Carter" this October, to San Vito Lo Capo in Sicily. For more information go to www.worldexpeditions.com or phone 1300 720 000

