

# City takes a frozen vacation

A region known for its love for Canada, Australia and the hackneyed likes, is now exploring travel on ice with destinations like Antarctica and Iceland gaining interest.

A panoramic view of an ice shelf in Antarctica, as taken by Mitul's camera



Anurag Chopra skiing at the Hintertux Glacier in Austria

**H**itherto uncharted, for the city, frozen destinations like Antarctica, North Pole, Iceland are slowly creeping into the bucket lists of travellers from Tricity. Perhaps it comes at an opportune time that a national travel company is launching a first time expedition to Antarctica too. "No traveller's diary is complete until all of the seven continents are covered," says Vasim Shaikh, founder, on his recent Chandigarh visit. "The response to Antarctica has been amazing. Not only youngsters but older generations, families and married couples have shown keen interest." Having culled personal experiences from his travel to the continent last year, Vasim says the journey is worth the troubles of adverse weather. "Such experiences become a part of you, something you will never forget. The 24 hour daylight, water and snow scattered terrain, watching penguins, seals and whales live has a lasting effect."

Among Chandigarh's travel enthusiasts, lawyer and golfer, Anurag Chopra developed love for cold countries two years ago when he travelled to Serbia, and has since been there thrice. Just back from Iceland and cold parts of Europe in a trip that started with the India-Pak match in London, Anurag says, "I was always interested in colder regions but got to travel there only two years ago with Serbia. The topography of these regions is alluring." As for Iceland, Anurag adds "There is a mystery to Iceland, with black sand, hills changing colours, floating icebergs, and a remote population." Though Anurag says travel to these countries is "very expensive", for the avid trav-

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eller, fascinations like "The 40 minute sunset in summer, the Northern lights, changing skyline, among other things," outweighs the deterring factors.

Another traveller, Mitul Dikshit, educationist, photography enthusiast, and now film producer (his maiden short film *Aaba* won an award at the 64th National Film Awards), has explored Antarctica this year. Having travelled solo, Mitul says the terrain is too tough to travel with small kids or vulnerable family members. "I was inspired by my Geography teacher, late MP Mukherjee at The Scindia School," says Mitul who is now compiling a coffee table book on Antarctica. "I often used to dream of being at Antarctica some day from the way he used to describe it." Next on Mitul's wish list is North Pole. "But I guess I would be going with a team as the photographer, because otherwise travel to these countries is very steep," he adds.

City's travel companies vie enquiries for cold destinations have been negligible except for Alaska. Says Abhishekh Sharma who handled one query for such a destination last year. "Interest in Alaskan cruise we have been running since a decade now has increased only in the last five years. Now, queries for Scandinavian countries have started too." Adds Vishal Sharma, branch head of another company, "The farthest people want is Russia in terms of a cold country besides a lot of interest now in New Zealand and Australia."

—Jaspreet Nijher  
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Mitul Dikshit exploring various places in Antarctica



A picture with the floating ice at Iceland

