

Shopping as an adventure

For mountaineers, trekkers, cyclists and everyone else who enjoys battling against themselves and against nature, the name Globetrotter already is almost legendary. Officially called Globetrotter Ausrüstung Denart & Lechhart GmbH, this German-based outdoor retailer runs a chain of shops, an e-commerce business and a mail order company selling a complete range of clothes, shoes and equipment to cater for every adventure traveller's needs. "We have a 25% share of the German outdoor market and keep on growing," comments Ms. Elsa Freese, responsible for press and public relations at Globetrotter. "The aim now is to grow domestically and possibly expand into other European countries, but much more important to us is to stay true to the Globetrotter philosophy, making shopping with us a unique experience that every trekker can relate to."

Globetrotter was founded in 1979 by survival experts Klaus Denart and Peter Lechhart. The two already were seasoned trekkers by then: Klaus Denart notably spent six years travelling across Africa. Three of those were spent driving across the continent in an adventure vehicle with his wife and two small children. But he also explored the hottest desert on earth, the Danakil in Ethiopia/Eritrea, on foot together with fellow survival expert Rüdiger Nehberg.

The expedition ended when the two were taken captive by Eritrean rebels. That didn't scare Denart off though: he went on to cross the tropical rain forests of Panama and Colombia on foot. His co-founder Peter Lechhart had a similarly adventurous nature. He was a certified mountain guide and in 1970 led a German expedition to Greenland, re-enacting legendary explorer Fridtjof Nansens' journey on skis. Lechhart also took part in the first climb of the Chang

Tse Mountain in Tibet, and crossed the Atlantic on a sailboat. Also on Lechhart's adventure resume, a cycling trip took him from the Karakorum Highway in Pakistan up to the mountains at the Chinese border.

In short, the two founders knew what they were getting into when they decided to start an outdoor retail business. Their premise was that the outdoor equipment they needed to be reasonably comfortable in extreme climates wasn't available on the market. And if they felt that way, other trekkers were bound to be of the same opinion. So they decided to start their own outdoor retail business, which with a store in Hamburg catering for every trekker's needs, initially focused on northern Germany. From this store soon grew a fully-fledged business that became the leading retailer of outdoor equipment in Germany and beyond. The two company founders didn't achieve this on their own, of course. Current co-managing directors Andreas Bartmann and Thomas Lipke, experienced adventure travellers and mountaineers themselves, have been involved in the company since the 1980s when they were still students. They took over the management of Globetrotter in March of this year when the two company founders decided they no longer wanted to be active in daily operations.

Plenty had happened in the meanwhile though. The Globetrotter management team had taken a major step towards the company's further development in 1984, when they published their first mail order catalogue. The catalogue business was continuously professionalised in subsequent years,



helped by the opening of a state-of-the-art administrative and logistics centre in Hamburg-Rahlstedt in 1994. The new facility was built to accommodate the company's further expansion. New Globetrotter stores were indeed opened across Germany, notably in Dresden and Berlin, and in Switzerland. In 1998, the company took its first order from customers North of the German border. The Globetrotter business didn't uniquely grow organically, however. Key acquisitions included the Alles fuer Trampler (Everything for Trekkers) mail order company, and the outdoor business of Zelte Weber. Meanwhile the success of the Globetrotter mail order business attracted the attention of other retailers. German leisure brand Jack Wolfskin outsourced its mail order activities to Globetrotter, and their partnership was

taken one step further when the decision was made to create shop-in-shop space for Jack Wolfskin in Globetrotter stores. Globetrotter subsequently also took over the Greenpeace mail order business. Another key milestone in the company history was the launch of Globetrotter's re-vamped website in April 2002, which in an Amazon-like set-up allowed e-shoppers to rate the wealth of outdoor and trekking items on sale in the true Globetrotter philosophy of letting trekkers share their experiences with others. The e-commerce business was recently expanded to also allow mobile and PDA-users to order their Globetrotter gear even while they're on the move – which again seems fitting considering the nature of the business.

So that's how Globetrotter came to be a fully-fledged outdoor retail company,

Globetrotter at a glance

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, Globetrotter Ausrüstung has developed into Europe's largest outdoor retail business. The company name today is synonymous to quality in clothing and equipment for adventure travel. Globetrotter operates its own retail chain with outlets in Hamburg, Berlin, Dresden, Frankfurt and Bonn, but also runs a thriving e-commerce business as well as a conventional mail order company. Globetrotter prides itself on having high ethical standards whether in quality control, service, respect for the environment and its staff. Generating a € 100 million turnover in 2004, the company employs 580 people.

today employing 600 people who together represent an amazing 35 nationalities. Products are sourced internationally from manufacturers in Norway, China, Korea, Turkey, and the UK. The focus has always been and still is on quality, with shoes and outdoor clothes forming the key product groups. Trekkers and adventure travellers also still represent the company's main target group, but as outdoor clothing has become mainstream, the Globetrotter shops and e-commerce operation attract an increasing number of customers who don't necessarily wear outdoor clothing to protect themselves against extreme climates. The founders are convinced that their success is based on the enthusiasm and knowledge of their staff, however, who typically build on their own experience in adventure travel and trekking to give customers advice in the Globetrotter stores and in their e-commerce business. Interesting to note in that regard is that the company does not like the word 'store'. They call their retail outlets 'Erlebnishäuser', or Adventure Houses, instead, to underscore that shopping at Globetrotter is a unique experience. Customers can test sleeping bags in a cold room, try kayaks before they buy them, and try on clothes that offer protection against the



rain under the shower. They can indeed even get their vaccinations against some classes of tropical disease at Globetrotter. The decor underscores the uniqueness of the shopping experience with dark wood and ant colonies in glass boxes gracing the walls. It is an award-winning retail concept, and Globetrotter is often praised for its ability to 'emotionalise' its products. "The decor in Globetrotter stores is unique but at the end of the

day anyone could reproduce it," says Ms. Freese. "What truly distinguishes us from other outdoor retailers and what has been the determining factor in our success is our staff, who typically have years of experience in adventure travel, whether in cycling, mountaineering, trekking or boating. They don't just play a part in selling, but also decide which boots and shoes we include in our portfolio." Ms. Freese adds that

it is impossible for Globetrotter to get involved in price wars with discount stores. But the company doesn't mind the competition from these stores: a first time buyer of a Nordic walking kit, for example, may have initially been attracted to the sport by the low-priced kit, but he'll see it as a starting kit and will eventually end up at Globetrotter anyway to upgrade his gear.

Globetrotter is a retail concept that obviously works. Recording a Euro 100 million turnover in 2004, the company expects to increase sales by at least 7% this year. It is estimated that Globetrotter currently owns 25% of the German outdoor market, which is currently valued at Euro one and a half billion. That means there's still plenty of room to expand domestically, and with the sixth German Globetrotter store to open in March 2006 in Cologne, that is clearly what the management team intend to do. International expansion is also high on the agenda, however, as Ms. Freese comments that there also is a huge potential market for Globetrotter products in the Netherlands, France and Italy. But for now, the opening of every new store remains an adventure for Globetrotter. ■



www.Globetrotter.de
Ausrüstung

Globetrotter Ausrüstung Denart
& Lechhart GmbH
Bargkoppelstieg 12
22145 Hamburg
Germany
Phone: +49 40 67966 179
Website: www.globetrotter.de