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## Trans-Sierra Xtreme: Adventure for the Whole Family

By Sophie Braccini



Chris Cassado at Geppetto's Cafe in Orinda Photo  
Sophie Braccini

daughter, three days before the departure! Aside from blisters caused by brand new shoes, she says, "It was hard but magnificent. You learn so much about the region you cross on the trail." Now 57, she is considering doing it again this summer. "One of the great elements about this adventure is the mix of ages," she adds, "it was a great bonding experience with my kids and I made friends for life."

An Orinda resident, Casado is an energetic young man who quit his financial investment job a few months ago to start his own businesses. He has at least three projects going; one is a telecommunication venture, the second is an iPhone app that helps plan family dinners -he and his wife are the busy parents of a baby and a toddler - the third is TSX.

Mike Murphy, the co-owner of TSX, has been taking groups on the trek every year for the past 30 years. He is an experienced guide and holds a wilderness first responder certificate.

At \$1650 per person, the cost of the trip is not negligible. The price includes the loan of any supplies that participants don't already own themselves, such as utensils, backpacks, sleeping bags or mats. There will be an information session at 7:00 p.m. on April 7, at Bonfire Pizza in Orinda's Theater Square, or go to the website,

[www.tsxchallenge.com/](http://www.tsxchallenge.com/).

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Chris Casado was 14 the first time he climbed Mt. Whitney; he was accompanied by Mike Murphy, who had been his 5th grade teacher. The hike was such a great experience that he went back six times. This month Casado and Murphy started a new business, TSX (Trans-Sierra Xtreme) which will offer Lamorindans from middle-school to retirement age a chance for adventure.

"We take people that have the necessary mental toughness; that's what makes 80% of the strength," says Casado, "and we take them on the ultimate trans-Sierra trek." Casado is scheduling four nine-day, 75-mile mountain trips in July and August.

"This trek takes people over the Sierra to Mt. Whitney on what I believe is the most beautiful trail," says Casado, "it is the best experience for high achieving teens and adults. Two of my siblings and I chose the experience as the subject of our college essays; it was a transformative experience for all of us."

Casado's mother, Valerie, was 40 when she made the trek with her family. "I was totally unprepared when I did it," she remembers.

"One of my sons broke his toe and couldn't go, so I made the decision to replace him to be with my other son and 13-year-old daughter, three days before the departure! Aside from blisters caused by brand new shoes, she says, "It was hard but magnificent. You learn so much about the region you cross on the trail." Now 57, she is considering doing it again this summer. "One of the great elements about this adventure is the mix of ages," she adds, "it was a great bonding experience with my kids and I made friends for life."