

1-Sylvain, could you please introduce yourself and expose to us your project, Swap and surf (S&s) ?

I was born in Pau, and waited until the age of 29, to move to Los Angeles. I had the opportunity to live near Venice beach's break water, and that is precisely where my passion for surfing began. I never forgot my passion for the mountains, but from that day on, the ocean was at the center of my attention.

When my partner and cousin, Philippe Garms, told me about his home exchange experience with a surfer from Jersey, I immediately thought about developing this idea. Surfing trips are part of surf culture. The idea of this site is to help surfers from around the world to get in touch with each other and exchange houses. Our goal is to make your dream surf trip a reality with more affordable prices, all within a community of surfers that share similar traveling and surfing tastes. This experience will not only allow you to swap your house or to host one another, it will also give you the opportunity to be immersed in one surfer's life, culture and environment.



S&s uses the latest network technologies to conserve and protect the genuine spirit of surfing. Open to all, but one rule is required, and that is honesty. You can choose to swap your house, or to host. Everything here is designed to familiarize yourself with the people you may encounter, and soon deal with.

S&s has sprouted a long time before the website was launched in late 2009. Today, S&s gathers members from over 45 countries. Some countries are very well-known and important for the surf community. Whereas others like Sweden, Greece or Taiwan are less expected. We are looking for this diversity and our goal is to attract members from the 140 countries lucky enough to have waves.

2-Why did you decide to link your project to the Surfrider Foundation Europe ?

Philippe Garms was present at the beginning of Surfrider Foundation Europe (SFE) with Tom Curren. I have joined SFE as soon as I could. As the president of a non-profit organization, I organized in 2009 an operation to clean the banks of a river in my home town with support from SFE.

Our commitment to the Surfrider Foundation values are not new. Working together seemed completely obvious to us, and that is why we are interested in a partnership. In a good partnership, the mutual interest comes first. S&s needs a network to expand. But at the same time, we want to stay true to our values, and it is with true honor that we would display the colors of SFE. S&s offers to SFE members some very interesting possibilities, and deals. For example, an SFE member can exchange his home with another SFE member as well as preferential rates and offers.

More broadly, we think that a healthy society needs powerful and unifying groups to influence governments and people's opinion. That's why we want to go beyond a mere exchange of favors. We want to use our networks to help the fighting of the SFE. It's about playing an eco-citizen role, and have a strong voice to remind everyone that it's possible to behave differently, to be full of imagination (like S&s strives to be).

3-What sparked your environmental consciousness, your "eco-citizenship"?

I would say that's a logical series of events and not a coincidence. An eco-citizen behavior is not innate, but a long process of acquiring values. The key word is respect. From a very young age, and thanks to their education, my parents taught me a respectful approach of the environment. With my childhood experiences, I became aware very quickly of the environmental stakes (for example, when I was working at a mountain refuge, it was sometimes very difficult to get water. Since then, I consider it more precious).

Born in 1972, at the end of the world economic boom, I'm part of a generation that has undergone profound structural changes in consumption patterns. In the era of globalization, we have two options. You can reject or accept it. Personally, I prefer to take the best that this globalization has to offer. By thinking global with international humanitarian organizations, these enhancements are possible. On one side, globalisation has a strongly negative environmental impact. But at the same time, it helps knowledge to spread, and people to organize their actions. The education and circulation of this information are keys to the uprising of an eco-citizen consciousness. I think that's why the globalisation can help bring solutions to its own problems.

The historic agreement on October 29th, 2010 in Nagoya for the protection of species gives a perfect, and recent, example.

4-What revolts you the most today?

The environmental problems we face are linked to consumption patterns and behaviours where common sense isn't always present. The awareness of global issues is crucial, and this is why the tasks of the international organisations are to undertake this cause, by spreading lots of information and education. But a change will be possible only if each and every citizen gets involved. This individual level is very important.

Three facts that are very distant and yet related :

- 27 pounds of advertisement in my parents' mail box after a 3 month long vacation.
- Gulf of Niger: leaking oil as big as an Exxon Valdez spills each year, and has been for 50 years.
- All studies prove it: in most cities, biking is the most efficient way to get around during rush hour. Yet in Lyon (second biggest city in France), 50% of motorised trips are for distances less than 1 mile.

Everything is connected. Our individual behaviours, our way of eating and living, all of this forms what we call our home. The oil pumped in Nigeria fuels cars in Lyon which are driving to the malls because those consumers were attracted by mail advertising. We have blamed the faults too many times on "those who govern us". We forget that things can change through simple actions dictated by common sense. The crisis we are living in is not only about the economy, but also about values. What are we supposed to think when we see that a rich, blond and talentless starlet could become a type of role model for the young generation ? It makes me sometimes pessimistic.

5- What gives you hope?

The fact that we have no choice. Many saw Al Gore's film. These days, global warming is a fact that most people will tolerate and accept and that politicians cannot ignore any longer. Thanks to his documentary, Al Gore is very popular and trusted by his public. The environmentalists are no longer seen as crazy old scientists that nobody listens to, but hip and wise personalities, in tune with their time.

If those who visualise a new and modern way of life are heard and respected, we have new and better reasons to hope. Surfrider Foundation is on the right track since its speech mentions awareness, and that its image is linked to the surf that gives pleasure and happiness.

Our spokesperson needs to be heard, and it is essential that one day they become important role models. I hope that in 20 years, for the 40th birthday of SF Europe, Paris Hilton will become what she's supposed to be, a rich unknown heiress.

6- A final word to conclude?

I have great hope, and believe that with this partnership, friendships will flourish, good ideas will spread and be nourished, and the most difficult and expensive surf trips will be easier to achieve.

The spirit is carried by a project that aims to highlight these diversities and at the same time the universality that we find in the surfer community. "The 1000 surfers project", as well as swap and surf, is open to all. You can have a true look at what this community is all about, on Facebook. It supports swap and surf and at the same time, it helps me have a lot of fun.