

Snow place for a holiday

Antarctica

Blender Gallery

Photo Exhibition



When it comes to perilous adventures into the unknown, Antarctica is up there with the best of them. Photographer Jason

Kimberley's journey to the vast land of ice turned life-threatening before he even got off the ground. Strapped into a Russian cargo plane, Kimberley and his two companions sat facing each other, inhaling the smell emanating from the barrels of jet fuel that lay in front of them.

"All of a sudden we could smell cigarettes," Kimberley recalls. "We were looking around to see who was lighting up. Someone said, 'Oh, it's OK . . . it's the captain'."

"So there we were, all choking, waiting for the thing to blow up."

If he thought that was a testing time, it was nothing compared to the harsh and relentless conditions he faced once in Antarctica. Accompanied by Peter Hillary (the son of Sir Edmund Hillary) and Jason Veale, he



Cool as . . . two of Kimberley's photographs of Antarctica at the Blender Gallery in Paddington

trudged through snow and ice across the windswept Horse Shoe Valley on the edge of The Ellsworth Mountains.

Kimberley was there to explore and, as a bonus, take some photos of an area of Antarctica that is not as well travelled as others.

His amazing photos capture the

windswept purple-blue alien world in all its icy glory. The men were there for three weeks last year, at a time when, for three months, the sun doesn't set.

Although it's the most hospitable of Antarctica's seasons, with temperatures dipping to minus 45 degrees, it

was hardly beach weather. Kimberley likens the conditions to being stuck in a desert in a continuous sand storm. As the weather started to bite, his focus shifted to self-preservation.

Adjusting the lens and even taking the photo can't be done without taking off your gloves.

"I had to ask myself, 'How good is that shot going to be? Is it worth spending the next hour and a half trying to get my hands warm?'"

Kimberley also had to contend with what is called a "white-out", where the snow becomes so thick, you can't see further than a few metres in front of you.

His breathtaking photos reflect the terrain he was in.

One photo is of strange footprints. These occur when the wind blows away all the loose snow from around the snow impression, so that it becomes elevated.

For Kimberley it was a life-changing experience and one which has yielded a collection of impressive photos.

But would he go back?

"I don't know if I could say it will be my last trip," he says, then adds: "But it's not a place I feel I'll dash back to straight away."

□ 16 Elizabeth St, Paddington.

June 8-July 4, open Monday-Saturday, 10am-6pm, free.

Details: 9380 7080 or blender.com.au

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