

celebrity profile interview: 'a journey to remember'

by megan porter

Australia is a country of diversity. From the cosmopolitan cities of Sydney and Melbourne to the country towns of Broome and Katherine, the people are as diverse as the landscape with a blend of cultures to match.

One down-to-earth Australian bloke is the renowned photographer Jason Kimberley. Not only does he embody the traditional spirit of Australia, but he has a love for the land that comes across in his works of art.

Back in 2000, Jason packed up his home and travelled to the remote parts of the country with his wife Caroline in tow.

What made you decide to travel around Australia and how did you prepare yourself for the enormous task?

I fell in love with the Australian countryside after a family vacation took me to the interior of the land. I remember being ankle deep in red mud, seeing the sky darken and the steady rain intensifying, and watching my father struggle to put together our tent. I was sure it would be my last camping experience. I was nine years old.

When the rain cleared and darkness lifted, I was amazed at what surrounded me. The vastness. The light. The colours. This journey soon took on a much greater significance—the destination diminished in importance to the getting there. The seed was sown.

For the year-long journey, we went all out with our vehicle. Driving lights, radio telephone with the long antenna, bull bar, recovery kit including pulley, snatch straps and u-bolts and of course the water tank—the most valuable supply.

Please describe your funniest or most interesting experience on the road.

Well, I went slightly overboard on customising the vehicle and bolted a chair onto the roof—purely for the reason to capture the remote stretch of road which lies ahead. One day on the Nullarbor Plain, I asked Caroline to take the wheel and I climbed up top. I asked Caroline to take it up to 80km so I could photograph the dust as it rises—that was my first mistake! Sitting on the roof gives you a far greater sensation of speed. Caroline finally hit 80km and it felt like 120km. You put this down as an experience not to be tried again. I ended up taking very few photographs.



What do you use for your ultimate inspiration?

There is nothing like the colours and textures of the Australian land. I love that there are parts of Australia where you can go and not see another person for three days.

I believe there is an interesting story behind your camera.

Yes, this is a story in itself. During another family vacation in 1982 I began using my mum's camera. I just loved the way it felt and how the objects appeared in the view finder so I borrowed it. In fact, I borrowed it for the next twenty years.

Then one day I was showing mum my photographs from the trip and she asked what camera I used. 'My old SLR35mm that I have had for years', I answered. I saw the surprise drift across her face and then realised I had never told her I was borrowing it.

How did your relationship withstand the test of time and distance travelled?

I'm sure I began to test Caroline's patience. At times we would drive past something that looked interesting and I would be thinking how it could be interpreted. I'd still be considering whilst driving along and realise we had driven 5km past the subject before making a decision to u-turn and go back and capture the object. Caroline would give me a look of controlled patience before reaching for a book.

What other travel highlights from around the world do you have?

Besides travelling extensively throughout Australia, I have also climbed the challenging Mt Aconcagua in South America—the highest mountain outside the Himalayas and have trekked the highest mountain in North America, Denali in Alaska.

Complete this sentence: I am at my most creative when...

It is me, my camera and the land.

What do you want to achieve by showing your images?

I really hope the photographs inspire Australians to travel to the remote areas of the country and to have a better understanding of this place, this land—which to me is another country in itself.

Check out *What's On* – page 44 for more details on Jason Kimberley's photographs.