

## ARMCHAIR JOURNEY

### **Antarctica: A Different Journey**

By Jason Kimberley

Hardie Grant Books, 310pp, \$39.95

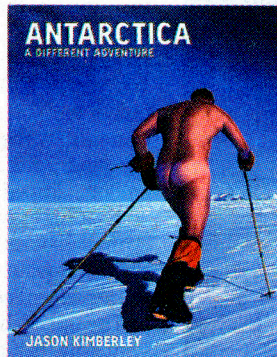
What do you call a book that has a vast number of photographs, some spread across double pages, and plenty of detailed text?

It isn't really a coffee-table book and it isn't a conventional work of non-fiction. In fact this book – which is essentially the story of three men trekking across Antarctica – comes across as a strange, almost bizarre mix of genres.

Many of the photographs are not technically good but all of them are either educational or so evocative you feel as though you understand what it's like to be in Earth's southernmost continent.

The book includes an overview of Antarctica with short biographical snapshots of early explorers such as Dr Xavier Mertz, Sir Ernest Shackleton and Laurence Oates. There's also a how-to manual on travelling to Antarctica with a six-page equipment guide containing no fewer than 42 photographs of objects such as polypropylene underpants and a one-litre "pee bottle".

Finally, there's an account of the preparations (they started at Falls Creek and moved to New Zealand's Mount Ruapehu), the journey (they flew to Punta



Arenas in Chile and then to Antarctica) and the experience of spending 16 days dealing with white-outs, snowstorms and minus 45 degree temperatures.

If the closest you are ever going to get to Antarctica is a vicarious journey courtesy of someone else's experience then this is about as good as it gets. Kimberley's account is so detailed that you could, if you memorised the text, persuade people that you

have just returned from a gruelling trek in the steps of the great explorers.

**Reviewed by Bruce Elder**