



80 degrees south

Images: Jason Kimberley

Antarctica – A Different Adventure

Jason Kimberley, Hardie Grant Books
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"Life in the freezer is odd – and invigorating", Jason Kimberley informs us midway through his expedition in Antarctica. The continent's harsh and desolate nature make it a bloody difficult place to travel, which is why it remains the final frontier, still relatively untouched by humans. *Antarctica – A Different Adventure* documents the struggles and triumphs of Kimberley's trip and we quickly realise that "the thing about life at 80 degrees south [is] everything takes time and effort – a day in the Antarctic is the equivalent of spending the entire day in the gym".

Since the expedition in Antarctica itself is only 16 days, the commentary of this 300-page book is padded out to accommodate the extensive collection of stunning pictures. The extended description of Kimberley's training and

preparation, clearing customs and killing time (drinking, eating, sightseeing) in Punta Arenas, Chile, is a tad tedious save for the visual stimuli. The anticipation Kimberley feels is obvious when he says, "after nine months of planning, training, gear-gathering, list-checking and travelling, we are here" – because it has taken the reader five chapters and 140 pages to get here also.

The level of detail also works to make sure the reader is fully onboard during the journey. We learn the details of daily logistics – however seemingly banal, like bowel movements or food preparation. For curious armchair travellers, this is one of the book's strengths, as it provides a feel for what it's like on such a trip, far removed from cruise ship comforts. The photos portray Antarctica's surreal nature, backed up by Kimberley's comments like "life here is as different as life on another planet". Kimberley accepts the difficulties as part of the package. The challenges of the trip are many: precariously crossing a field of crevasses, navigating 20km with minimal visibility during a whiteout (no horizon, sun, sky or ground is visible – only white) and being holed up in the tent waiting out bad weather.

Kimberley's style reads like a mate telling a yarn and quirky additions (like the impromptu nude shoot which made it onto the cover) pique the visual interest since the vastness of the landscape and 24-7 summer sunlight make Antarctica a difficult subject. Without wildlife or local people to encounter, the narrative, inevitably, focuses on Kimberley's personal journey – from dealing with fear to the bond developed with his two companions. Unsurprisingly, Kimberley comes away with



a keener appreciation of things like shelter, warmth, food and drink as well as life itself. After experiencing firsthand the volatility of Antarctica, Kimberley respects its power and recognises how precious and fragile the continent is. The trip has, predictably, inspired him to urge us to protect this environment. Take what you will from his conservation message, but the value of this aesthetically pleasing book about a land less travelled is obvious.

