



We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.

– Oscar Wilde

THE BEST KIND OF HERO

Adviser, environmental scientist and adventurer

HAVING spent much of his childhood in Asia – five years in Malaysia and six in Singapore – Tim Jarvis now works in an Asia-Pacific-wide sustainability role for Arup, a global design, engineering and business consultancy firm. Based in Australia since 1997, Tim conducts expeditions and environmental project work for multilateral aid agencies and private organisations throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

With 17 years of experience in environmental consultancy and 13 years in international environmental project management principally in the mining, manufacturing, defence and agriculture sectors, Tim's specialist disciplines include environmental auditing and site assessment, environmental impact assessment, natural resource management, environmental management systems (EMS) design and implementation, and provision of sustainability advice to both the corporate and overseas development sectors.

Tim is committed to finding real solutions to environmental issues related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable land management. Tim takes time out from his busy schedule to answer some probing questions from *ASIAN Geographic*.

ASIAN Geographic: WHY ASIA?

Tim Jarvis: Initially, I didn't have much choice, in that my father's work took us to Malaysia and subsequently Singapore. From the age of seven, however, it was my home and the place where I had many of my life's formative moments. I can't think of a place that has more natural beauty, diversity and innovation across disciplines than Asia, so it feels like home to me. It is, however, also an area subject to many of the effects of climate change, particularly in South Asian countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, and yet we have some of the most technologically advanced and populous cities in Asia too.

AG: HOW DOES ONE BALANCE DEVELOPMENT WITH CONSERVATION?

TJ: Obviously, the two are not easy to reconcile, in that the traditional model of human development involves us making life as comfortable as possible for people while paying little regard to the environmental costs. I see my role as trying to ensure that we factor in the costs of environmental protection into business, personal and development decisions, while making people aware of the fact that there are real win-win situations that save both money and the environment at all levels.

I also try to balance both helping people and protecting the environment when deciding what projects to support with my work as an advisor to the World Bank and Australia's aid agency, AusAID. In terms of the major environmental issues facing us, I think the biggest ones relate to water and food availability and the relationship these issues have with biodiversity and climate change. Perhaps the biggest issue of all, however, is people's resistance to change; they are not doing enough to be more sustainable.

AG: WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF "ECO-TOURISM"?

TJ: Eco-tourism for me is activity that either protects or actively enhances the environment of the place in question. An example of this is that I have been working to help preserve the rainforests on the largest uninhabited island in the South Pacific – a place called Tetepare (Solomon Islands). The strategy is to promote eco-tourism on Tetepare itself while developing appropriate income-generating activities for the island's traditional owners, who live on the surrounding islands. This is so that they don't see the need to log Tetepare whilst also learning to value Tetepare's wilderness.

AG: AS BOTH AN ADVENTURER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTIST, YOU'VE SEEN THE WORLD AND ITS "GREEN" CONCERNS. WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT TYPICAL SCIENTISTS DON'T OR TYPICAL ADVENTURERS CANNOT?

TJ: The expeditions I do involve going to remote places of high environmental or wilderness value. This gives me the chance to highlight their value in any books, films or articles produced and any environmental change I observe in the regions I visit. I normally do this either by taking water and soil samples, etc. during the course of my journeys, or by documenting what I see in articles, books and films. The latter, ironically, has far more impact, with photographic evidence of change having the greatest impact of all.

My different roles as international development advisor, environmental scientist and adventurer-explorer give me the chance to see change across different disciplines. As an adventurer, I see the impacts we are causing to the remotest places of all, which are furthest from the sources of pollution, and yet I also see what problems industry, agriculture and urban expansion cause as a scientist. Basically, my roles let me see the issues across disciplines more than most. **AG**

Tim Jarvis, a senior associate of Arup, holds Masters degrees in both Environmental Science and Environmental Law and is an internationally certified environmental auditor.

