

Q&A

Tim Jarvis, explorer & environmentalist, 55

You've crossed the Great Victoria Desert, weathered Southern Ocean storms and trekked unsupported to both poles. What inspired you to push yourself this way? When I was a kid growing up in Malaysia, my parents would say to me and my younger brother, "Go outside and explore – see you at five". I spent a lot of time outdoors and I enjoyed that resourceful side of my personality, which emerged when I got myself into some scrapes. It's remained with me ever since.

Of your many expeditions, what was the toughest? Retracing Ernest Shackleton's 1916 Antarctic survival journey in 2013 was challenging because it was so logistically complicated. We had to rebuild the boat he crossed the Southern Ocean in, which was essentially a surf boat with a little toy sail. We docked at South Georgia, where a heavily crevassed mountain range sticks straight up out of the ocean; we crossed it using virtually no climbing equipment, wearing old-style clothes and eating congealed animal fat.

You lost your expedition partner for several hours in an Antarctic blizzard. How do you survive isolation like that? It was pretty terrifying; he had the tent and I had to just shelter inside my sled, let snow gather over the top and hope for the best. I wouldn't have made it through the night if we didn't find each other. You cope with it by breaking down the enormity of the situation into small pieces and you work through those with physical skill, positivity and good problem-solving.

What does it feel like to be stalked by a polar bear? Well, it's interesting because we always think that we're at the top of the food chain but [in the Arctic], we're not. The bear just saw a source of food. It was stalking around where I was for a week; I would set up tripwires at night which have a little explosive charge on them. The wire would wake me up and scare the bear away, but still it's nerve-racking.

In 2018 you revisited South Georgia to recreate some of Shackleton's journey in virtual reality. Why VR? When you have the goggles on it's the closest thing you can get to being there, and the expression "seeing is believing" is powerful. *Thin Ice* gives people the opportunity to see what Shackleton



WE WORE
OLD-STYLE
CLOTHES
AND ATE
ANIMAL FAT

◀ The world premiere of *Thin Ice* VR is presented by the Adelaide Film Festival at the 2021 Illuminate Adelaide Festival, July 26 to August 1; adelaidefilmfestival.org ▶

endured but also the amount of glacial melt there and how that is directly attributable to human behaviour.

How extreme is the melt? Due to the effects of climate change, Antarctica has ice shelves breaking off quite regularly. South-polar ice melt is contributing about a millimetre of water a year across all of the world's oceans, which is huge. In South Georgia, we're seeing 97 per cent of its glaciers retreat.

With Masters degrees in environmental science and law, you're all about finding pragmatic solutions. What are some things ordinary Australians can do? A third of Australia's carbon footprint comes from heating, lighting and cooling buildings. We can all play our part in switching off lights, putting in LED globes, signing up for green power or putting solar on your roof if you're able to do so. A proactive individual can also invest in green funds through their super provider.

At home in Adelaide, how do you wind down? Music, good company, friends and decent red wine are all good things after an expedition. You just really want to stop having to focus; just let your guard down for a while. But once you've been back in civilisation for about a week, you're ready to go back out there.

By Jack Kelly Photography Sam Roberts