



Filming in wonderland

I simply enjoy today and appreciate it for what it is.

Richard Sidey

Prince Albert II's expedition photographer, Richard Sidey, has a big appetite that continues to be satisfied, writes his sister, ANNA SIDEY.

Richard has no letterbox. There is no driveway to his front door. His home has just one window. Welcome to Cabin 363.

A media designer and photographer, he lives aboard Prince Albert II, an expedition cruise ship which accommodates up to 130 passengers on two-week-long expeditions.

Richard is the ship's expedition photographer. His job is to take photos of the landscapes, the wildlife, and the people, to tell a story of the voyage. He also runs photography workshops and presents lectures.

During his current contract, he will travel from the Norwegian Arctic to Antarctica. Journeys into remote environments generally conjure images of hostility and hardship. We imagine cold and violent weather interspersed with cramped sleeping quarters and monotonous food provisions, but chefs on the Prince Albert II serve five-course dinners, including pineapples from Costa Rica, New Zealand lamb, and water from France.

Passengers can smoke cigars and sip cognac in Connoisseurs Corner while watching icebergs out the window. The 6072-ton ship, designed to navigate the most remote oceans, has a library, an

internet cafe, boutique shopping, a full-service spa, a beauty salon, a fully equipped gym, and live entertainment in the evening.

On the top deck there are two whirlpools. Staff are not allowed in the whirlpools, but they do, however, receive free drinks, and Richard believes that he doubles his wages with his consumption of fine beverages.

Living on the open sea makes him constantly hungry, but he does have the five-course dinners to work his way through. He prefers to eat early, with the crew, most of whom are Filipino.

Previously, he travelled to the Antarctic on ice breakers with Quark Expeditions, which employs many Russian crew members.

He returned to New Zealand with a tendency to play frenetic music at parties and with a strong tolerance for straight vodka.

His brown hair is slightly unkempt and there are dark rings beneath his eyes. Over the top of his Kathmandu shirt hangs a heavy pounamu necklace on a tired leather ribbon.

"I take photos because of where the photographs take me," he says. "Whether it's camping overnight on Roys Peak [Wanaka] or exploring Shackleton's Antarctic hut, I'm there because of my camera."

In studying for a degree in visual communications and design at Wellington's Massey University, his final project, Aeon, became an award-winning time-lapse experimental landscape documentary of Wellington.

He got to Antarctica by filling in for a sea-sick bartender, and on board Quark's Russian icebreaker, the Khlebnikov, he transformed from bartender to artist-in-residence.

Since his first Antarctic voyage in 2003, Richard has had many wildlife encounters. In March last year, for instance, his ship off Chile was surrounded by dozens and dozens of towering blue whales which blocked all vision of the horizon.

"Before taking a photograph," says Richard, "I look. That's one of the most important pieces of advice I can give."

To capture the movement of ice, a process unnoticed by the naked eye, he plugs an interval remote into his Canon 5DmkII camera. The remote allows him to shoot frames automatically at various intervals. He then places the images together in a sequence, creating time-lapse imagery. Time-lapse

imagery in the polar regions allows patterns to become visible, and new perspectives are gained.

Recently he saw the Aurora for the first time. His neck is still sore. "Nothing could have prepared me for the beauty I saw that night; magnificent green lights with shades of blue literally dancing over the entire sky."

Calm seas have allowed him to take long exposures. Arranging these photos in a sequence, he created a time-lapse animation of the dancing movement. "The lights have returned four times," he says. "I would have loved to have seen these 1000 years ago before

knowing about solar winds and charged oxygen particles. Imagine the mystery in that!

"As to the future," Richard says, "I don't have a five-year plan, let alone next week. I simply enjoy today and appreciate it for what it is. Tomorrow's a new day with new opportunities, or we could hit an iceberg!"

Richard Sidey's work can be viewed online at richardsidey.com

More information: silverseacruises.com and quarkexpeditions.com

New visions: A young elephant seal, known as a "weaner".



Surveying possibilities:

Adele penguin on floe.

Photos: RICHARD SIDEY

