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As one of the world's leading expedition and adventure travel photographers, **Martin Hartley** has garnered a global reputation for his polar photography. *The City Magazine* meets the man behind the camera

WORDS: HUGH FRANCIS ANDERSON





Born and raised near the Lancashire Moors, Hartley soon gained a passion for the outdoors. "I used to pretend that I was an explorer as a child. I started with hiking, then mountaineering in the Lakes, then rock-climbing, then winter mountaineering up in Scotland, then the Alps, then the Himalayas, and so on and so on. It was a steady progression of climbing, exploring and taking pictures."

At the age of 17, Hartley was named runner-up in the Young Wildlife Photographer of the Year Award, and realised that photography could be a way of life. "My first major expedition was as part of a writing competition for the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards scheme in 1993," he explains. "It was to help Rebecca Stephens to become the first British woman to summit Everest. My writing was shit," he chuckles, "but they wanted a photographer, and I got in."

From here, Hartley developed a thirst for adventure photography. In 1999, he embarked on his second major expedition to an unclimbed mountain range in the Eastern Pamirs, Kyrgyzstan. It was for this trip that he first secured corporate sponsorship. "We were sponsored by Motorola. They only came onboard two weeks before the trip, by which point I'd already sold everything I had to afford the expedition. That's when I realised that there was a way of getting paid to do these sort of trips, because the first thing companies want is imagery to enhance corporate responsibility."

When I interviewed Hartley, it was only days before he set off on yet another polar expedition, this time as part of a team measuring the changing levels of sea-ice, amongst other things. "I'll be photographing as part of a documentary for an environmental journalist based in the Netherlands. We're going to ski the last 120 miles to the North Pole to see the state of the arctic now, and how that's going to affect everyone," says Hartley. "There will also be 12 CEOs on the expedition. Each one will discuss what negative impact their company might be having to the levels of sea ice in the Polar Regions, and what they're going to do about it." As the impact of global warming continues to rise, it is the Arctic regions that are most affected. "The weather is completely different now. The ice used to be locked into the landmasses around, but now it's just a spinning disc. There's a lot more water and you sometimes have to swim up to nine times a day."

So does Hartley have an active passion for scientific research himself? "It's almost irresponsible to go all the way to the arctic and not collect any scientific data," he says. "Scientists are gagging for actual data, rather than theoretical models. So it's very satisfying to be able to help get that for them."

Looking at Hartley's work, we can only guess as to the effort that goes into capturing them. As Sir Ranulph Fiennes once said of Hartley, "I have experienced the polar world in all of its ferocity, when it is a challenge just to stay alive, let alone

t's a mild, bright spring morning when I meet Martin Hartley. As I enter High Road House restaurant in Chiswick, I spot him immediately. There's an air about the man, and a face furrowed by a life spent in the wild.

Hartley has been at the pinnacle of adventure photography for more than 15 years, and, to date, has documented 20 unique polar assignments. His work has been published by National Geographic, *The New York Times*, the BBC and CBC, to

name just a few media outlets. He is the current director of photography for *Sidetracked* magazine, and has won the Travel Photographer of the Year award, twice.

So how did Hartley fall into photography? "Well, it started when I was five years old," Hartley laughs, "but don't worry, I'll be brief... I got an adventure kit for Christmas, and in that was a plastic camera with a black and white roll of film. So I shot my first roll of film and I thought it was magic."

**PREVIOUS PAGE** Ann Daniels hauls her heavy sledge across unstable sea, near the North Pole in 2009

**ABOVE** Martin Hartley

**BELOW** Camera Man Dan Haylock celebrates on Mount Kinabalu, Malaysia, at 800m, in 1999

**ALL PHOTOGRAPHY** by Martin Hartley



pull out a camera and take a photograph. Martin Hartley's ability to take beautiful, powerful photographs, in the most difficult places to survive on our planet, is inspirational."

"When I first started, I didn't have a clue how cold it [taking photographs in the high Arctic] would be. I had six cameras with me, and the first day I went out it was -43°C, with a 48-knot wind, which brought the temperature down to around -71°C, and at that temperature, nothing works," Hartley says, casually. "I had to pick just one camera, stuff it under my jacket and run around for 20 minutes to warm the battery up. It was enough to capture six frames before it died again." The trip he talks about is his 2003 expedition to capture images of Pen Hadow as he embarked on his North

much we are all physically capable of."

Hartley is testament to the statement. Having developed frostbite on three toes on the third day of a 100-day expedition, Hartley was unable to leave the ice due to bad weather and decided then to stay on, whether he lost his toes or not. "The thing is, when it goes black, you don't know whether it's dead or recoverable. I had three completely black toes, and luckily they all recovered."

You have to be a very particular person to seek out a lifestyle like Hartley's, where the concept of 'the everyday' is so far removed from everybody else's. "I'm off to pick up a narwhal tusk from a guy a few streets away," says Hartley as we leave. Need I say more?

[martinhartley.com](http://martinhartley.com); [sidetracked.com](http://sidetracked.com)

**FROM TOP** Pen Hadow testing his immersion suit and sledge flotation device in Resolute Bay, Cornwallis Island, in 2003; Ex-Royal Marine Charlie Paton carves his way through some decent chunks of sea ice en route to the North Pole, in 2010

**"The first day I went out it was -43°C, with a 48-knot wind, which brought the temperature down to around -71°C – at that temperature, nothing works"**

Pole solo, in which he became the first person to reach the Geographical North Pole unassisted and without resupply. One of those shots recently made it onto the cover of *Sidetracked* magazine, the extraordinary adventure title for which Hartley serves as director of photography.

"The big polar expeditions aren't shorter than 70 days, and the longest I've done is 99 days, and that was certainly long enough. In total, I've spent almost 365 days on the ice and covered almost 2,000 miles."

What's the hardest part of spending such long stretches in sub-zero temperatures? "It's the cold that fucks with your head. The cold always gets in. Wherever there's a weakness, it finds it immediately. It's also not uncommon to spend up to 40 days living inside a glass of milk due to the profound white-outs, where all you can see is your ski-tips. But expeditions teach you that you're far more capable than you thought. It's amazing how

