

PLAN AN EXPEDITION

SHEET 1

Why bother leaving the house?

Ben Saunders

One of the magical things about this journey, however, is that because I'm walking over the sea, over this floating, drifting, shifting crust of ice that's floating on top of the Arctic Ocean is it's an environment that's in a constant state of flux. The ice is always moving, breaking up, drifting around, refreezing, so the scenery that I saw for nearly 3 months was unique to me. No one else will ever, could ever, possibly see the views, the vistas, that I saw for 10 weeks. And that, I guess, is probably the finest argument for leaving the house. I can try to tell you what it was like, but you'll never know what it was like, and the more I try to explain that I felt lonely, I was the only human being in 5.4 million square-miles, it was cold, nearly minus 75 with windchill on a bad day, the more words fall short, and I'm unable to do it justice. And it seems to me, therefore, that the doing, you know, to try to experience, to engage, to endeavour, rather than to watch and to wonder, that's where the real meat of life is to be found, the juice that we can suck out of our hours and days. And I would add a cautionary note here, however. In my experience, there is something addictive about tasting life at the very edge of what's humanly possible. Now I don't just mean in the field of daft macho Edwardian style derring-do, but also in the fields of pancreatic cancer, there is something addictive about this, and in my case, I think polar expeditions are perhaps not that far removed from having a crack habit. I can't explain quite how good it is until you've tried it, but it has the capacity to burn up all the money I can get my hands on, to ruin every relationship I've ever had, so be careful what you wish for.

