www.thenownewspaper.com
the NOW NEWSPAPER

Multimedia show in Cloverdale

Photographer shares 'Off the Wall' adventures

Matthew Gauk
Harbour City Star
mgauk@NanaimoDailyNews.com

William Jans prepares to dine on a scorpion in an area of Beijing.

Leave it to William Jans to find himself stuck on the wrong side of the Great Wall of China.

An avid world traveller and showman with a taste for the absurd, Jans comes to Cloverdale next month with a "multimedia extravaganza" based on his self-described exhausting adventure last year in some of the more remote corners of China and the Philippines.

From dwarfish shadow puppetry to real-life crucifixions, "Off the Wall in China (and Far Flung Philippines)" relates every aspect of his exotic experiences – except for the smells.

Because he has no agenda to sell tours or any other promotions, Jans said he can relate to guests the good, the bad and the crazy of each location.

"It's very much not a lecture or seminar," Jans said of his live show. "It's sort of like a live movie in some respects. It's a mix of stills and video and music and storytelling, and I even bring in costumes where appropriate."

A business photographer by trade, Jans started doing live shows after having come back from early trips abroad and regaling friends with stories.

He has done past presentations on trips to Tanzania, South America, Nepal, Burma and the Burning Man festival.

One of the most significant experiences he had in China was the treacherous Huashan hike, famous for requiring hikers to walk along the side of a cliff face on planks. He climbed volcanoes in the Philippines, went mud-caving and ate a scorpion.

The name of the show comes from his trip to a remote stretch of the Great Wall, where he got stuck on a side without any access to the impenetrable structure itself. He eventually found a ladder up on the wall, climbed up and (illegally) spent the night there.

"It's a beautiful section, and because I showed up just as a massive thunderstorm was happening… nobody else would have gone there," he said. "I ended up having 21 kilometres of the Wall to myself. It was unbelievable."

Travel in China is a unique challenge because there is so little English used, said Jans. "I find the more remote places I go, the consistently nicer people are.… I hope the warmth I see there I'm able to bring back to my daily life."

Jans will present "Off the Wall in China (and Far Flung Philippines)" at Clova Cinema at 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 8. Tickets for the all-ages event are $21.99 at wrjphoto.com, $21.99 in advance at the theatre and $24.99 at the door.

"I have had so many (people) coming in from Surrey, Langley, Abbotsford, etc., to my Vancouver shows over the years, to see my wacky shows about overseas travels, I thought it was only fair for me to bring a show out closer to them," Jans told the *Now*.