IN THE KINGDOM OF ICE BY HAMPTON SIDES (Doubleday, $29) Confident in their thick, reinforced-hull ship, the USS Jeannette’s crew set sail from San Francisco in 1879 to explore unknown Arctic Ocean waters certain they will succeed – until they breach on an ice floe and are forced to abandon ship in the middle of nowhere. Left ill-prepared in a deadly, frozen landscape, the 33 men and their dogs face a harrowing fight for survival in this real-life thriller that leaves you with the best of chills.

BRAZIL BY OLAF HEINE (teNeues, $125) To successfully photograph a country like Brazil – a place known for its vibrancy, color, and candor – in black and white takes courage. To capture its spirit requires a deft hand with juxtaposition to find beauty amid the glamor and grit. A master of restraint who’s best known for portraits of actors and musicians, Olaf Heine delivers both with remarkable balance; his photos of models, architecture, locals, and street scenes leap from the page with a cinematic quality. For collectors, 30 limited-edition books ($2,775) come with one of two signed prints.

INDIA: A SHORT HISTORY BY ANDREW ROBINSON (Thames & Hudson, $25) Here’s an unenviable task: Give us the short history of India, and make sure it’s a quick and informative read. Andrew Robinson tackles this country of incredible depth with a primer that stylishly takes readers from the roots of Indian civilization up through today. Covering religion, philosophy, economics, and noteworthy individuals with equal weight, India provides travelers with an essential introduction to the land and its people.