



SARCC Tour South Island New Zealand was a success, 😊

thanks to the participants who understood that the more you put in the more you get out.

SARCC DIY Tours are designed to challenge participants just enough to give riders a warm fuzzy “whoopie, I did that” and this Tour certainly did that. The first fortnight 500km was available and the extension to Queenstown added another 120km a surprising number of participants rode all of that.

Cyclone Gita cancelled our fourth day's Ride and overloaded our accommodation; wow Gita was an experience.

Accommodation was adequate but could have been better, particularly the singles bedrooms. Our choices are limited by the competition for space with commercial tours, remoteness of location and our group dynamics. Only Twizel could realistically have been improved it should have been 2 single males per room not 2 bunk rooms of 4, a large school party deprived us of that opportunity. Maybe for another \$265 each we should have stayed 2 nights at the luxurious [Lake Ohau Lodge](#).

One really big improvement was pre-allocating rooms and advising proprietors weeks before arrival. The other new success was meal teams of 4 different riders for each of our 7 group meals it retained the focus on the raison d'être i.e. riding. It turned a chore into fun. The meals stayed basic guided by menus and buying recommendations; yes, we catered effectively for our vegetarians. Thank you to all the meal preparers (that's everybody, except Eric) you did a great job.

The Tour was Déjà vu regarding transport - - two ancient noisy diesel twelve seaters that worked hard and did all we asked of them – they struggled up to 90kph with passengers aboard and trailers behind. The Trailers were with new paint and new racks. The bicycle racks were still head high requiring a regular balancing act on top for daily loading. The People Mover was an all too popular transport option. Thank you to Steve Mc, Rick, Kevin and all of you who shared the driving.

What was the Best Trail? The [West Coast Wilderness Trail](#) 145km took first prize by a nose hair - it had fabulous views, native bush, a switchback downhill, incorporated [Treetops](#) or [Mahinapua Lake Cruise](#) and enough challenges for riding without being excessively demanding.

The [Alps to Ocean](#) ride was the photo finish runner-up for the sheer endurance achievement of riding continuously for five days, helicopter start, 308km long, tough climbs with spectacular views, fast rail trail downhills, flowing creek crossings, rough surfaces, and even a tunnel.

The [Great Taste Trail](#) was disadvantaged with its lagoon front boardwalk shattered by a Cyclone.

The [Old Ghost Trail](#) was a sample of what with full suspension MTBs you could do on Grade 4 trails.

[Hanmer](#) was a Taste of the Splendid open spaces of the Clarence River valley which runs a further 120km to St Arnaud passing lake Tennyson and the Rainbow Valley – maybe when they sort Accom'.

What was the Best Accommodation? That was [Ross Motels](#), it was ordinary with no spectacular features or views, but it was an oasis of quiet, clean tranquillity with comfortable beds (no bunks to climb up to), good showers with no waiting, off street parking, no sharing with other guest we occupied all the beds plus we had a very warm welcome from the proprietor. The bonus was Eric organised, for nostalgic reasons, a meal in the Historic [Empire Hotel Ross](#) next door to our Ross accommodation which was probably our best eat-out of the Tour.





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Saturday 17th Feb 2018 We started in Christchurch collected Bikes and vehicles shopped for supplies and stayed at the excellent [Meadow Park Top 10](#). Evening Meals DIY or at the local Thai Restaurant. Robyn organised a ride for those not part of the mundane organising - an excellent ride through the [Forest to the Beach](#) a pleasant ride to start the tour. A hired bike was stolen an hour after it was hired. The rider stopped to read a map and the bike rested on a pole 3 metres away when an audacious thief jumped on the bike and rode away – albeit finally paid for by insurance it left a scar on the participant both from the invasion and the clumsy complicated resolution of a 2nd hiring ([Natural High](#)'s unpublished insurance policy inadequately does not provide cover for a replacement hire).

Sunday 18th We drove to Hanmer a great morning tea enroute. We then drove to Jacks Pass – albeit discovered that Jacks Pass Road leads to an impassable track; the Pass is reached via Clarence Valley Road. The ride from [Jacks Pass](#) saddle down and alongside the Clarence River was spectacular and a fast spin then we rode over Jollies Pass and a downhill that tested all our nerves and brakes with a steep rough surface. We made it down and revived ourselves with a long soak in the [Hot Mineral Hanmer Springs Pools](#). [Kakapo Lodge](#) was a good night sleep clean and comfortable.

Monday 19th We drove the 255km to [Norris Gully Recreation Area](#) with a good Morning tea at Rivers Café Fairfax Street Murchison. We unloaded the bikes and rode 3km to the Spooners tunnel – lights were required in the 1.3km tunnel. Then we cruised down to [Belgrove Tavern](#) for lunch – sorry closed for food on Mondays – oops – no worries we found a great Bakery at Wakefield. Then on to Brightwater and Richmond, a great well marked trail. Reloaded the trailers at Richmond and drove to the [White Elephant Backpackers Motueka](#). We arrived to the news that Cyclone Gita was soon to hit so the Cooking Team had to rush to buy food at the Supermarket which may have needed to close. Many tenting fruit pickers were ensconced on the floor of the lounge, hall and every spare space to shelter from the approaching storm.

Tuesday 20th CYCLONE GITA came, we cancelled all riding and watched the constant rain. We were sheltered from the powerful winds. We watched the water flowing off the fields and from lakes around the Lodge, a lake 20cm deep formed on the front lawn and water flowed across the back yard – all the water magically disappeared next morning.

Wednesday 21st We had a DIY day as Eric took timeout to travel to Blenheim. Some rode the hills to [Mapua](#) a rewarding climb with panoramic views and great café stops. Others rode the [Great Taste trail to Kaiteriteri](#). The trail passes through Riwaka Town where water 50cm deep had flowed through the day before its flood passage marked by apples in the town tennis courts fence half a metre from the ground. Some riders played in the still flooded water on the trail others used the dryer elevated road alongside. The Trail ends in a MTB park at Kaiteriteri where one rider took a nose dive over a steep 65degree 12 metre slope, being hauled up by the ankles by your fellow riders was not the excitement desired but only bruises and pride damaged. All of us returned home with great experiences to relate.

Thursday 22nd We rode our Tuesdays cancelled ride '[the Great Taste Trail](#)' in three groups:
A group of 4 went Kayaking and although there was a swell they enjoyed the experience.
A group of 9 started at Richmond at the junction opposite the Speedway, Lansdown and Lower Queen Street Junction – they avoided all the Cyclone damaged trail and had more time in Mapua for food, ice cream and shopping. Their ride was approximately 43km.
A group of 12 started from [Tahunanui and cycled through Nelson city](#) which added 22km for an approximate 65km total ride. A great ride albeit on a severely damaged trail from the Richmond Aquatic Centre to Nelson Pine Industries where we re-joined Lower Queen Street.





The trail is severely damaged for 8km with boardwalks that are either damaged or missing entirely. We negotiated the Coastal section at Richmond with safety and ease, but trail management are right to mandate a detour this is not for the casual lower skilled riders until repaired.

We used the southern Forest Trail on Rabbit Island, thoroughly enjoyed blasting through puddles left by Cyclone Gita and avoided the damaged coastal trail. The ferry from Rabbit Island to Mapua \$7 is a great adventure component. Mapua settlement is a great bonus for a stop for shopping and food. After Mapua there is a significant climb coupled with panoramic views and a screamer of a downhill home to [White Elephant Lodge](#)

Friday 23rd A big day in the vehicles 288km to get to Greymouth. We had an early start and amusingly two vehicles got lost getting out of Motueka because of Gita flood damaged roads and Detours. We met again at Murchison Morning Tea. Then off to Lyell Creek and the [Old Ghost Trail](#). The bush scenery is impressive with flowing deep creeks and tall tree ferns. The stronger MTB riders went up 4km and returned; a great challenge to break the journey. Some did a walk-through history of tough gold miners and were rewarded with a waterfall and tranquil bush. We then all drove on to Greymouth with a few in the people mover using the coastal scenic route. [Noahs Ark Backpackers](#) was a Quaint but comfortable night's sleep albeit we were a bit crowded in the singles bunkrooms.

Saturday 24th We were out early and on the [Westcoast Wilderness Trail](#) on a grey morning on the Greymouth Waterfront. Greymouth to Kumara is a pleasant flat ride with a few bush and bridge surprises. There is a challenge at the new Taramakau Bridge where construction forces a detour and you follow vague arrows spray painted on river gravel – but it 'kinda' works and you get into the bush that quickly closes you off from the gouged construction scars. Kumara to Cowboy Paradise is brilliant it has enough climbing through native bush to make you earn the great scenery and views. Once you go over the Kawhaka Pass 317M you have a thrilling switchback down and a slalom through bush to [Cowboy Paradise](#). The Accommodation is good but why it faces a mock western shooting gallery not the fantastic scenic valley is odd – sadly the proprietor falls short on P.R. but will welcome you at his bar if you spend lots of cash; curiously there is no credit card facility, yet a glass of average wine is \$8 and a basic smorgasbord is \$30 – there is no facility for preparing your own food. It is a paradise it's just a pity about the cowboy.

Sunday 25th We had a thrilling ride off the Plateau weaving through the bush and fresh cow 'land mines' then an escarpment followed by viewing of [Lake Kaniere](#), then Meander along the historic Kaniere Water Race (hand-dug in 1875). From there it is mostly downhill sealed road at a good speed to Hokitika. We regrouped and divided some choosing to walk at [Treetops walk](#) others [West Coast Scenic Waterways](#) Eco Adventure Boat Cruise on Lake Mahinapua. The cruise provided birdsong tranquillity as we took in the scenery amid ancient Rimu and Kamahi trees with the mountains in the distance. With the lake too choppy to venture too far Gavin Hopper made us a cup of tea and coffee told us about the history of the area then we landed at the tramway bridge to continue our ride to Ross. [Ross Motels](#) were a welcome relief after a 145km two-day ride.

Monday 26th Our longest day travelling from Ross to Tekapo 388km. Early start and off to Arthurs Pass – we made the Minibuses grunt as we climbed the fantastic viaduct up over the 900M saddle. We took a break and walked up the 300 steps to the [Devils Punchbowl](#) and due to recent rain the waterfall was in full action. Back on the bus and lunch at Darfield. The afternoon included a stop at Geraldine for afternoon tea finally we reached the [Tailor Made Backpackers](#) for a comfortable night's sleep and no bunks.





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Tuesday 27th The big ride to start the [Alps to Ocean adventure](#). We started at two locations [Tekapo to Twizel](#) 52km and White Horse Camp, Mt Cook to Twizel 82km. 14 plus Drivers went to Mt Cook in the Minibus and People Mover they rode down 8km of trail to the Mt Cook Airport where they put their bicycles in a cage, watched the [helicopter lift](#) the cage over the Tasman river. In groups 5,5,4 we were flown over to Tasman Point in the Helicopter to our bikes. The ride began in a chilled breeze with rough trail, knee deep water in wide creeks to negotiate and not all downhill – it really was fun. We had morning tea at [Braemar Hay Shed](#) and the ‘boys’ threw stones at a rock in the lake. We eventually reached the point where the canal from Tekapo meets Pukaki for lunch. Off and round the base of Lake Pukaki to the Lake Pukaki Visitor Centre for yet another break, then we charged off the last 12km across the tussock and forest to Twizel with enthusiasm to finish the ride. The other riders from Tekapo had an enjoyable incident free ride of 52km along the road by the Tekapo canal and were well ahead of the Mt cook riders and organising the meal and all luggage, a luxury well appreciated by the Mt Cook group on their arrival at [Twizel](#).

Wednesday 28th An easier days riding along the canals from [Pukaki and Ohau lakes](#). From the Ohau Lake outlet to Ohau Lodge it is a sweeping trail alongside a beautiful lake. We received permission to eat lunch on the balcony at [Lake Ohau Lodge](#) a beautiful view while sipping gin and tonics. We were picked up and returned to Twizel town and mediocrity, but it wasn’t hard to get a good night’s sleep.

Thursday 1st March A really big day so we split into two groups. The shorter ride meant driving to Omarama and riding out to the [clay cliffs](#) a 34km on trails and back roads to a phenomenon that is a miniature canyon experience with eons of history layered and exposed. The other brave souls [logged up the trail](#) with a rough boulder surface for 11km to a height of 900M giving a panoramic view of the valley 500M below – words like stunning and rewarding don’t do justice to the spectacular views from the trail. Then it’s a big downhill ride that starts a little rough but gradually turns into a shingle road where maintaining 30kph on fat MTB tyres isn’t hard to achieve. Some diverted to visit the Clay Cliffs on the way down to our accommodation at [Top 10 Omarama](#).

Friday 2nd We split again with some of us opting to start riding from Otematata reducing the whole ride of 68km by 24km. The others started off from [Omarama and the first 24km](#) was a pleasant ride weaving along Lake Benmore with a good climb at the end. Riding down the saddle into Otematata one of our riders who should know better passed the bunch at close to 70kpm – adrenaline rush and older age accounts for some stupidity. Then all of us in two bunches rode up up up the [Benmore Hydro dam](#) wall and the along the very scenic Aviemore Hydro Lake then across the dam to Kurow. A Group of five rode on to Duntroon a further 28km to get a fast start the next day. We had the whole [Kurow Hotel Top Floor](#) and a raffle of new renovated rooms and older more sag prone beds one bathroom beautifully renovated the other maybe 1955 renovated. The proprietors were very welcoming, they put a complete dining room at our disposal for a great meal. Being the penultimate night, our observer team awarded prizes – bells, horns, bags etc a lot of fun.

Saturday 3rd Departure day for the 7 riders staying only a fortnight. This split us into three groups five who rode [Duntroon](#) previous day, the tough bunch who were riding 82km Kurow to Oamaru and the rest who rode or drove the piece they chose. The Kurow to Duntroon was a water thrill with flowing streams to cross – oh yes, one did fall in. [Duntroon to Oamaru](#) was a mixed bag with steep climbs just put there to test riders then suddenly you are over the top through a tunnel and speeding down a rail trail. A converted Church Café for a lunch or Tea Break and on to a victorious





finish at Oamaru. The Departing 7 with 8 bikes on Board left us at 15:00 for an uneventful drive to Christchurch while we settled in for a comfortable night's sleep at [Oamaru Backpackers](#).

Sunday 4th We drove to 306km Queenstown on the way we dropped two members at Clyde. Clyde is a very inviting town for a lunch stop and the start of the Otago Rail Trail. We took the Minibus up the Kawarau Gorge to Queenstown and the People mover drove to Wanaka to drop off two members, then the people mover went over the Crown range to Queenstown. We all had a settling in evening at Queenstown. All but one stayed at [Lakeview Holiday park](#). One member had an Airbnb unit up a steep hill about 4km away, she had a palace with great views - with good cooperation from volunteers and landlords we were able to all ride together. We didn't get our bikes off that Sunday we simply explored Queenstown on foot.

Monday 5th We drove to 71 km to [Routeburn](#) had about an hour walk in scintillating bush with all the freshness of recent rain. Then we rode 25km to Glenorchy and had a quiet time at the [quaint hotel](#). A little exploring and a sit on the wharf looking down Lake Wakatipu. A pleasant picturesque drive down the lake to Queenstown – oh, and the site of a log truck accident, his trailer load of large logs spread at the side of the road in a tangled mess.

Tuesday 6th One introvert woke up humming a happy birthday tune, we tried to ignore him. Off to [Gibbston](#) 39km rather undulating. Start on the scenic Frankton arm trail then a bit of a kerfuffle at the reconstructed Kawarau falls bridge and we weaved through to the Lower Shotover bridge then through Lake Hayes Estate then over the bungy jump bridge and on to the Gibbston Winery. We had a minibus and trailer waiting because we split in two groups one rode out and the other rode in. Special mention must go to the two riders we dropped at Wanaka on Sunday they rode 70km to Arthurs Point up over the [Crown Range Road](#) 1121M up.

Wednesday 7th One member flew back to Australia direct from Queenstown. The rest of us had a day off albeit we had a planned to ride a trail up up up the Von river to Mossburn – we thought after 600km in the last few days perhaps another 90km was too much. Most of us rode the 31km out and back ride to [Kelvin Heights](#) a picturesque ride with a good surface and very few challenges just what was needed on a day off.

Thursday 8th We drove to [Arrowtown](#) on a cold Autumn feeling morning and walked the village then rode around [Lake Hayes](#) home to Queenstown about 30km in warmer sunshine. We did have time for a last hurrah in Queenstown

Friday 9th The Long Drive 486km to Christchurch we did it in style with a few stops and unloaded luggage first the bikes and trailers all done by 6pm not bad going.

Of all the fantastic Photographs that have recorded our NZ 2018 Tour this one seems to capture the essence of the Tour best of all – It is the Trail alongside Lake Ohau

