

Fiordland Odyssey 2011



A paddling trip which starts with a coffee at the Wellington Railway station has to be good! Six of us, Andy, Steve, Adrienne, Greg, John and Raymond, caught the 5.30 pm Bluebridge ferry, and overnighted at Waikawa.

Bright and early next morning we drove to Blenheim for coffee, and Kekerengu for breakfast, reaching Martin's (our seventh trip member) crib in Cromwell at 6 pm. Next morning we drove to Lake Hauroko via Invercargill to collect Martin.

In good weather, but too late in the day to paddle, we set up camp and Raymond demonstrated his new barbeque. The night became chilly, wet and increasingly windy. In the morning we paddled into wind and waves towards Mary Island where a quick recce revealed 35 knot winds in the main body of the lake.

We camped in the lee of the island! It was a very comfortable possie, even though the temperature fell to 3°.

The next morning we were alone on the lake in a freshening north wind, paddling into a strong headwind and steep chop from waves reflected off the cliffs. Adrienne practised rolling which caused Andy to oversee the rescue! A quick cuppa at a nearby beach warmed us up.

Five hours paddling brought us to Hauroko Burn hut at the northern end of the lake and the southern end of Dusky Track. We landed amongst piles of logs from the Hauroko Burn.

When the day dawned pleasant we agreed to make up lost time and paddle the 30 kms to the lake's southern-most hut at Teal Bay. The wind was with us.

We paused for lunch at the Caroline hut, a lovely location, and continued to Teal Bay. Andy tried his sail, but the wind died away! We enjoyed paddling in calmer water and found a good landing late afternoon.

The hut is excellent and within easy walking of the Hump Ridge Track. I suggested portaging the kayaks over the hill to paddle Lake Poteriteri but didn't get much support. I can't understand why!

Next morning we had a leisurely paddle to the Wairaurahiri River mouth, the outlet of the lake, then back to the put in and off the water. Naturally, the weather was brilliant during our last paddling session!

We were off the water at midday, packed up and on the road to Milford Sound in great weather. Tired after a long, satisfying day we reached the Lodge in good time. Next morning at 9 am Martin and I chose coffee instead of paddling while the others paddled off in calm conditions.

Clouds soon filled the Sound and rain settled in. Around 1.30 pm we heard on the VHF the paddlers were coming in. Five joyous faces greeted us. They'd had amazing contact with about 300 dolphins. Weather had closed in, but it remained calm and not too cold. Definitely a magical Milford experience!!

A quick return to the Lodge for showers and we were on our way to Te Anau for the Sunday Special roast dinner at the Ranch and good backpacker accommodation at the Great Lakes Holiday Park.

On Monday, we had planned to return to Martin's Cromwell crib, but we'd made such good time that Mt Cook/Aoraki and the Tasman Glacier lake were do-able. We had lunch in Arrowtown, dropped Martin off in Cromwell, bought fresh salmon and headed up the Mt Cook road to

Glentanner Station Park Centre. We arrived about 5 pm, just before it closed, and scored excellent accommodation.

In the morning we drove to the Tasman Glacier, trooped up to the viewing area and checked out the lake access track. It's about 600 metres, manageable with kayaks on trolleys. We didn't paddle this time, but we will someday!

The weather was excellent, but the wind got up as we were leaving. Alas Mt Cook village had no coffee but the DoC museum was well worth a look.

In Hamner Springs we had Thai food for dinner, good company and an early night. We were first in the queue at the pools next morning, relaxed for a couple of hours, had lunch, and took the road to Kaikoura, Picton, the ferry and home.

All in all, a really good trip, part road, part paddling, thoroughly enjoyable!

Cheers, Steve Rogers



Photos by Adrienne Vermeulen & Martin Taylor



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