

Riding Above the Clouds in New Zealand



I left Luxembourg in April to travel to New Zealand and embark on a "High Country" experience. Having traveled to South Africa twice before, it was time for a complete new change of scenery. I certainly found it in New Zealand with Hurunui Trails and Adventures.

Good food, comfortable beds, meeting locals, summer, winter and autumn all in one week. You couldn't have a better experience.

Day 1

After having traveled from the other side of the world I arrived in Christchurch International airport. I was welcomed by the first local, Pat. I was looking forward to my 9 day riding trip through the mountains of New Zealand.

Pat drove us to where the High Country meets the Canterbury plains in Haywarden. I was welcomed into Pat's home with fresh homemade biscuits and tea.

A few hours later I was sitting at the dinner table looking at an amazing range of food, which set the scene for the rest of my trip: an abundance of delicious local food.

Day 2

A royal breakfast was prepared by Pat. Heather and Pete, owner and guide for Hurunui Trails And Adventures came to pick me up for the ride. We traveled through Haywarden and towards the

mountains. Off the tarmac roads and onto dirt ones we arrived at the base along the Waitohi river.

An old farm house with a large front patio with a back drop of steep hills greeted us.

After saddling the horses and safety briefing, from Pete and Heather, I mounted my black mare named Jam. Little did I know at that point she would be my mountain goat!



We set off along the Waitohi river, fantastic views, clean fresh air and perfect weather. We stopped near a small stream for lunch we sat and watched the horses munch on some grass nearby. You certainly don't go hungry here! With all those home made cookies! We continued our ride up and down past fantastic

scenery to our final destination for the day, a shearer's hut. Pete was waiting for us and as soon as the horses were let loose we were treated to a nice cold beer, which does wonders after a long ride.

Day 3



After a good nights sleep, from a combination of fresh air, and long rides, Heather came by to pick me up from Pats, we had a couple who joined us for one day; as did the wind. Hats were no longer safe and had to be firmly stuffed into our saddle bags. We stopped at a tiny shearers hut by some willow trees. The horses were

pleased by the sight of the fantastic green grass and enjoyed the lunch too.

We carried on and had some demanding climbs and fantastic views. We returned to the shearers hut for the night and I was brought back to Pats.

Day 4



Heather and Pete picked me up, and we made our way to the shearers hut to pick up the horses. It seemed the wind of yesterday was nothing compared to today's wind, the plan was to travel up and over Windy Ridge. Heather decided to take a different route through the gulleys and as we reached a much lower ridge we

discovered that missing windy ridge probably was a very good idea. That night I met Nancy and Jack with whom I stayed, they had a lovely farm home with some stunning views of the Waitohi.

Day 5



Due to the weather we got a "float" out to the Hurunui river and we saddled the horses there. We crossed the cristal clear blue river and stopped for lunch as we watched the kayaks making their way down. We set off again and rode through the fairytale forest, picture perfect! Up through boulder gulley, thick forest, and out into the fields and yet again the fantastic views. We made our way out and along to Lake Taylor Station. With a fantastic

back drop of the mountains.

Day 6



It had snowed during the night which suddenly made the mountains a lot more imposing more crisp and detailed.

Due to the weather conditions we went to Hamner Springs and spent the day in the baths. As we returned from our "day off" the mountains had been covered with

another royal layer of white purity.

Day 7



It had snowed all night so there was a covering of snow down on the farm. We left early for our long ride past the lakes, oil painting perfect. We rode around Lake Taylor up to Lake Sumner and Loch Katrine. We stopped at a little red hut next to lake Mason where we had lunch. On the way back to the farm we enjoyed a fantastic open field canter.



Lake Taylor



Lake Sumner

Day 8



We had another long ride, this time the clouds had covered the mountains. We left Lake Taylor Station and made our way up the mountains through the clouds. Once at the top a fantastic view of the Hurunui River and the adjacent mountains awaited us. A climb not to be missed.

We walked down the side of the mountain and rode along the Hurunui towards Waitohi Hills.

Jam Looking down at the Hurunuri River

Day 9



We had a short ride around Waitohi Hills with the dogs, enjoying what they do best.

We made our way to Hamner where an 8 second bull riding competition was taking place. Sitting on a natural outdoor arena, I watched in awe, the riders being rocked and the clowns warming the crowd. They even had something for the kids with the 8 second sheep



riding...nothing like I've seen before.

A fantastic holiday....thank you.

Pete

