

NEW ZEALAND'S CENTRAL OTAGO RAIL TRAIL

Kathy Liley reports on her recent NZ trip.

Packing a bike for the plane

I was heading to NZ for a week of mountain bike orienteering (mtbo) in early January and had explored options for packing up the mountain bike. Finally decided on a soft (corduroy) Ground Effect bike bag with extra padding: a full length sheet of closed cell foam on one side, the front wheel in a padded bag placed on the other side of the bike with a bit more closed cell foam, and some thicker foam bits strategically taped around the disc brakes and derailleur. Turned the handlebars around, pedals came off and went into the bag with the tools and bike cleaning equipment (got to have it all sparkling to get through customs/quarantine at both ends). Total weight just over 15 kg. We'd looked at trying to attach wheels but couldn't get them stable enough. In the end it was easy to get trolleys at all the airports.

The Trip

Nearly 50 Aussies flew into Christchurch airport for the mtbo events. 33 of us were travelling as a group and moving on to Wanaka, 450 km further south after the first weekend. We hired three 12-seater buses with trailers which had bike racks on top for 12 bikes. Easy.

After 6 mtbo events in just over a week, the group split up – some returning straight home and others doing other activities. Two of us had decided to ride the Central Otago Rail Trail the easy way – hire a company to get us to the beginning and get us out at the other end, and transport our luggage each day to pre-booked B&B accommodation. There are a number of companies that do this. We were very happy with Altitude Adventures – see <http://www.altitudeadventures.co.nz/>



All the companies hire bikes but of course we had our own. That wasn't a problem! They

picked us up in Wanaka and drove us to Clyde (c 90 km) to the start of the trail. Then took our bags to our first night's accommodation in Lauder, 45 km along the trail while we got on our bikes! The first couple of days are mainly uphill but very gently, as you would expect from an old rail line. The trail surface is fine gravel (similar to the Yarra Trail at Heidelberg) on the first day and much of the last day, but tends to be stonier in the middle section – we were glad of our wide mtb tyres. The hire bikes have fairly wide tyres so they too would cope OK. But there are times when you're watching the trail more than the scenery!



The scenery is generally wide-expanse grazing country with rolling hills – which would get snow covered in the colder months. Lots of great old bridges and well-crafted stone culverts and 3 tunnels – take your torches, it's dark in there! Days 2 and 4 pass through the hillier terrain requiring the tunnels. Lots of good interpretive signs and sufficient coffee stops to just about satisfy the Latte riders!

We took 4 days – 3 nights: 44km, 34 km, 46 km, 28 km – and the fee of \$530 (twin share) included transport from Wanaka and to Dunedin (we caught the Taieri Gorge scenic train at the end of the trip) and B&B accommodation. On the second day we rode an extra 30 km from Wedderburn to Naseby (return) to try the sport of curling at the indoor rink there. Great fun.

We did see a few touring cyclists riding with their camping gear – some complained that their touring bikes didn't have wide enough tyres to be comfortable on the middle section – but most were taking the B&B option. The companies will pick up/deliver you back to Queenstown where there is an air service to Melbourne – but then you'd miss the gorge train trip which was a highlight!

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More traveling blues

A recent trip to Tamworth bought to the fore more inconsistencies in the system when it comes to traveling with a bike. In this case it was with a folding bike on Country Link. The person taking the phone booking knew little about the difference between traveling with a folding bike as against a normal bike that, by country link requirements must be dismantled and boxed. Sorted this out after a lot of explaining etc, but had to book the bike through which was OK. So I had a folding bike two panniers plus a sleeping mat and tent strapped together, as well as my back pack. I connected the panniers together by their buckles for ease of travel. At the luggage check in I checked in my bike but they said I had to separate my panniers and let them go as separate parcels which meant I would have to carry my tent and sleeping mat as hand held luggage. They weighed my panniers and my bike (an Aldi folding bike weighs in at 16 1/2 Kg) and booked them all through to Tamworth which was great. To come home they reweighed everything at Tamworth and said I couldn't book the panniers through because they were less than 5Kg each consequently would have to take them as hand luggage. So I emptied my back pack contents into my panniers then they were quite happy to book them through. Got to Sydney found my bike was only booked through to there not to Melbourne so had to rebook it. As there are no luggage carriers at Sydney station this created a problem in moving bike etc to the luggage check in. So many inconsistencies in the system make traveling more difficult than it should be and extremely hard to plan.

Beware bike attacks on the increase

A new hazard is emerging in bike riding circles. Of late there has been an increase in the incidence of bikes attacking their owners. Kathy Lilly is the latest victim. She is now out of action because she was attacked by her bike while orienteering in the Strzelecki Ranges resulting in her having to drive two hours home and then to hospital emergency. This resulted in nine stitches in her leg some internal. She is now out of riding action till two weeks after Easter. A similar incident was reported in this newsletter some time ago when Les too was attacked by his

cycle, a motor cycle in his case which fell on him, he too rode home with a broken foot causing him to lose quite a bit of riding time

Issues

In all clubs issues emerge at and rather than let these issues go on unresolved it is best to resolve them quickly before they have a chance to grow and cause a rift. The issue threatening the club at the moment is the name of this device.



A shackle or a D ring?

New Member

We would like to welcome a new member to the Latte group. Jason is probably the youngest member of the Bug having had his twenty first birthday just a few weeks ago. He was well and truly initiated last Fri when he had a tyre blow out on the way to Strathmore which was where the ride was headed. Welcome Jason hope you continue to enjoy riding with us.

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Movie Nights

Any one interested in a night at the flicks? Peter Heard has arranged a few movie nights for the Latte Group usually at the West Garth Theatre.

They consist of watching a film and then discussing it over dinner afterwards. The Black Swan and Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy are a couple of films we have seen. Anyone interested in these nights Email me at fisher_maureen@yahoo.com.au and I will keep you informed of future nights