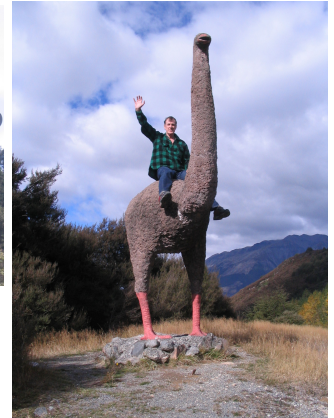


Hi

I have just spent five days and nights at Ruru in the Lake Brunner area. After spending several hours in Christchurch buying food, Keith and I went across on Wednesday of last week. On the way, we stopped at the Bealey Hotel and, like Leonie and Tom, had photos taken with the moa statue. I had never been to the Lake Brunner area before and I



must say it was quite a surprise. I had expected a somewhat underdeveloped area with just a few houses of the type at Bealey where Bill Ellwood's was. And from the photo I had seen of the Moana railway station, I thought it was just an outback stop in the middle of nowhere. But the area is not like that at all. The road there is sealed and Moana is a very attractive little town with many nice houses. And then there is the development at Iveagh Bay further around the lake with its very



expensive, luxurious houses. And Keith's 'bach' is indeed very nice, accommodating eight people in its three bedrooms plus two more on the fold-open sofa. The weather while we were there was very good and sometimes hot. The West Coast weather can be very good but also very bad. I think that after we left, the weather became bad.

On arrival, I met Keith's four sheep – Kaia (named after the town of Kaiapoi near Christchurch and not our Kaia), her son Nova and the two lambs, Jess and Bo (the one with the brown nose). Considering that they will all eventually end up as food, I was surprised at how friendly Keith was towards them. Anyway, the first thing we had to do was to move them from one field to another so that we could enter and leave the property without them running out onto the road.



On Thursday morning, we spent some time in the lake area around Moana. We went for a walk across a suspension bridge and along a track. Saw a weka near the bridge trying to get into an empty cardboard box of beer cans. Then we had a walk along the foreshore and an area that was being developed for housing. There was a very large montage of



pictures on a board at this site, one of which is shown on the right. Who do you think it looks like? After this, we returned to Moana just as the Trans-Alpine train was arriving. One person got off. I don't know if it always stops there or only if people have to get on or off.



The observation deck of the train was crowded with people all taking pictures of the lake area. Later that afternoon, Keith and I went for a run along the main road, ending up doing 7 km in 42 minutes. (We know it was 7 km as Keith had turned around at the same point on one of his runs and had measured the distance to that point when in the car.)

On the Friday, we went out onto the lake in Keith's speed boat. It was a very nice day and the water was very calm. Spent some time fishing for trout but never caught anything though on two occasions we saw trout breaking the surface. Then I attempted to do some water skiing. However, I am afraid this was an unmitigated disaster. I just could not get out of the water and after about six attempts I gave up. I have only ever done water skiing once in my life, in Hong Kong, and was successful though not terribly proficient. Also, although I was wearing a wet suit (picture with Te Kinga in the background), the water temperature of the lake surface was not cold. According to the depth/temperature gauge on the boat, the temperature varied from about 15°C to 17°C. After the 'waterskiing', I took over the controls of the boat and did some high-speed driving around the lake. This was good fun – more enjoyable than water skiing. I even managed to drive the boat up onto the boat trailer behind the car. In the evening, Keith went to a friend's place where somebody was talking and showing pictures of his recent visit to Israel and Palestine. I did not go.



The main river that feeds Lake Brunner is called Crooked River. On the Saturday morning, we drove to a farm area away from the lake and walked up the river some way. The river water was incredibly clear and it was easy to see the bottom even when it was deep. However, we did not see any trout at all in the river. I am beginning to think that all this talk about trout in the area is just fishy talk. At one point along the river, we came across a memorial to one of two girls from England who were killed on the river in 2004 as a result of a white-water canoeing accident. By the time we returned to the



‘bach’, Bruce and Edward had arrived from Christchurch to spend the remaining time with us.

Sunday was the day I enjoyed the most. This was the day we decided to go up Te Kinga, which is about 1200 m or 4000 ft above sea level. We had originally planned to go up on the Monday, but as the weather forecast did not look too good (checking the weather on the TV or radio seems to be a major preoccupation there) we went up on the Sunday. Actually, when I say ‘we’, it was only Edward and I who went to the summit; Bruce and Keith decided to just go as far as the lookout (the second one where the sign is) where Leonie and Tom went. It is not too steep to the lookout but is very steep after this and also the track is less-well defined though clearly marked with small orange triangular markers stuck on trees to show the way.



At the top, we spent about an hour just looking at the spectacular views. On the return, I managed to have two spills while running, though did not hurt myself while Edward had one spill. The time for the return trip was just 3 h 11 min (not including the one hour at the top) – 1 h 57 min up and 1 h 14 min down – which is considerably less than the 8 hours indicated at the start of the track, though this time is for people walking rather than running the track. An interesting thing happened at the top. We discovered what appeared to be a lunch box and rubbish strewn around the summit so picked it all up to dispose of when we returned. However, before getting rid of it, we looked at it and discovered it was actually a cache of ‘treasure’ that was supposed to be hidden at the summit. The ‘treasure’ consisted of a small ball, a (mathematical) compass, a coin, two small



pencils and a small notebook. In the notebook were several comments by people who had been to the summit plus a reference to the website www.geocaching.com. Have you hear of geocaching? This is where people all around the world hide things and, given a minimum of clues, others have to find them. So, this ‘rubbish’ was actually one such cache. So, instead of throwing the stuff away, we cleaned and dried it and some time in the future, Keith will take it to the top of Te Kinga again. On returning to Christchurch, I looked up the website and found a map of the Lake Brunner area with this cache marked. There is also another cache somewhere near the lower lookout. I was then surprised to see that there are caches hidden all over the place; there must have been at least 100 such caches shown on the West Coast. I then looked up the map of Hong Kong and there too, there are many caches all over the place.

On Sunday evening, we had a barbecue dinner, and ate the leftovers as breakfast on Monday morning. We left for Christchurch just after lunch on the Monday. I returned with Bruce and will stay here until Thursday when I move across to Keith’s.

That’s about it for now.

Cheers

