



Arnold Acres

News

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CROESUS TRACK



The sun came out specially for this photo at the trail's end—we would have loved weather like this for the hike into the hut and back out again.

A few weeks ago a friend asked if we would host a small group of Christchurch trampers the night before they set out on a two day hike on the Croesus Track which begins about 25 k from our house, and by the way, would we like to join them.

Even though we hadn't been on an overnight backpacking trip in decades we didn't need to think about it for long. We quickly emailed back: sure, we'd love to go.

The Croesus Track (pronounced Kree-sus) is an old established goldminers' route between Blackball near us and Barrytown on the Tasman Sea. A modern 16 bunk hut sits on the open tops of the Paparoa range not quite half way across. The views are said to be spectacular and we were looking forward to seeing the Gray River valley on one side and the sea on the other. One group drove to Barrytown to make the steep longer climb to the hut and we started at Blackball for the shorter (four hour) less strenuous climb. The plan was to exchange car keys at the hut.

The forecast wasn't promising but we

were all hopeful. When we reached the trail head it was just beginning to spit. Gradually the light drizzle became heavier and heavier. With each increase in intensity I silently said if it didn't get any heavier it would be okay. It got worse, and worse. For the first few hours we were under a canopy of trees which gave us a little shelter but when we reached the open tops it was pouring and the track had turned to a river.

The hut was a welcome sight long before we reached it. Graham knew the secret to lighting a fire in the coal stove: firefighters brought from home. Before too long the hut was comfortably warm and we were waiting for the group coming up from Barrytown. All the guide books say west to east is more arduous and not to attempt it in bad weather. In the shelter of the hut, which even had double glazed windows, we could hear the wind howling. Finally we were glad to see Denise, Beate and Jackie walk through



Cliff, Clare, Kevin, Graham and Tracy at the start.



The first hotel site, about an hour into the walk.



One of the one-person swingbridges.



View of the Gray Valley from the hut.

the door. They were soaked as was much of their gear but warmed up quickly after changing into dry clothes, the fire had been going for over an hour by then. The track was so rough and steep and most of it had turned to rivers, the plan to swap keys was abandoned.

We enjoyed a meal together and after a well-earned night's sleep awoke to a winter wonderland with a few inches of snow on the ground. When the clouds parted we could see the sun on the valley below. After Mass and breakfast we all headed back to Blackball. After several stops to take off, put on, take off rain coats and other layers we reached the carpark and breathed a sigh of relief that the cars were still there just the way we left them. In a short while we were back at Arnold Acres and two of the group drove the 45 minutes to Barrytown to pick up the car that had been left there.

PHOTOS FROM around THE CROESUS TRACK



Cliff starts up the track. We didn't see or hear any kiwis but did see lots of stoat traps.



Fr Kevin said Mass for us on Sunday morning.



The hut in the snow overlooking a gray expanse.



The hut might have been deluxe but the toilet was typical back country.



Weka footprints in the snow.