

8.1.2016 Tuatapere, Blue Cliffs Beach

As we depart Lake Hauroko a big herd of sheep comes across our way. Due to our presence the sheep want to turn around immediately, but are forced to walk past us. The bravest sheep walks courageously in the front towards our car...



Upon arriving in Tuatapere, the weather has changed completely. It is very windy and raining, so we decide to stop at the Cafe of the Last Light Lodge, which was very cozy and played funky music. Afterwards we head down to the rivermouth of the Waiau and despite the stormy weather Werner goes fishing. While we are parked there, three German tourists get stuck with their car next to us, the pebbles right next to the track are unexpectedly soft. Werner helps to push them out and we continue our way to the Blue Cliffs Beach – the sign has made us curious.



We find a sheltered spot near the rivermouth so Werner can continue fishing. He comes back with an eel! Now we have to research eel recipes.



9.1.2016 Colac Bay, Riverton

The very strong wind has blown away all the grey clouds and is pounding the waves against the beach. The rolling stones make such a noise, it's hard to hear you own voice. Nature at work...



Again we pass by the beautiful Red Hot Poker and finally have a chance to take a photo.



We continue South on the 99, coming through Orepuki and Monkey Island. When the first settlers landed here a monkey supposedly helped to pull the boats ashore, hence the name Monkey Island.



Bushes and trees have given in to the infinite strong wind blowing at this coast. Their interesting shapes even find mentioning in our travel guide book.





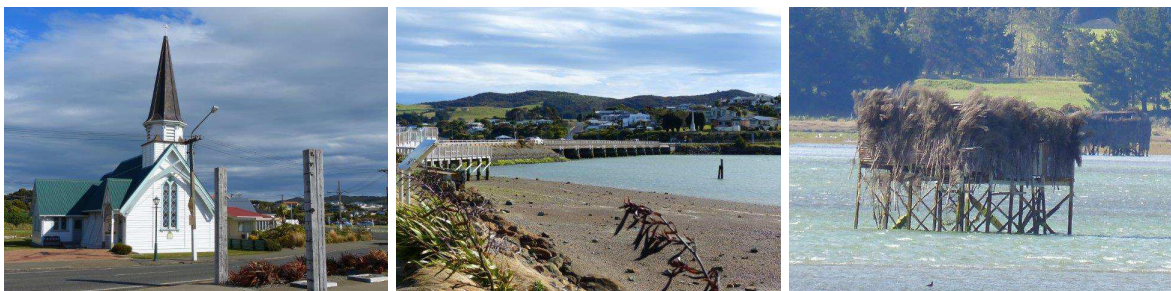
In Colac Bay the cemetery has a good fengshui and definitely room for expansion... We go for lunch at the same place we went two years ago and remembered as being good. Hmm, maybe we have been more hungry last time or they changed the chef, we got a different impression this time... And off we are to Riverton.



Riverton is one of the oldest places New Zealand, it was founded at early whaling days. From our place at the Beachfront Cafe we can watch all the surfers in the water. It's a good spot to learn how to surf, because the beach is wide and shallow with enough waves.



In Riverton, the Aparima river flows into the sea, separating the town. In the water we can see some funny constructions and learn later that these are elevated, therefore rat proof, storages („Whata Teitei“), which were used in the past century.

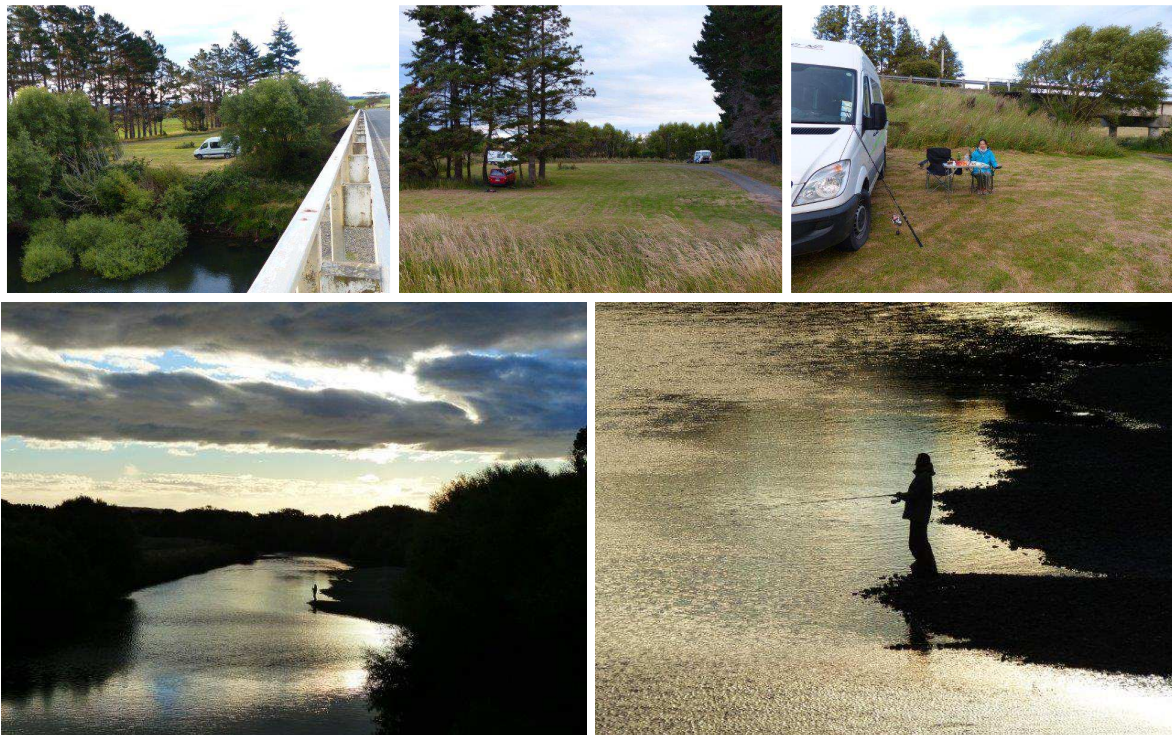




As we drive along the Aparima river we see a lot of Whitebaiting huts. Whitebaiting means to fish small white young fish of different species, like Kokopu, Koaro and Inanga, with a net. Whitebait is a great delicacy in New Zealand and meanwhile has been protected due to the huge demand. The saison, net and mesh size are strongly regulated; the whitebaiting rights can cost up to 200,000NZ\$ depending on the region. The whitebaiting huts are handed down for generations and are almost impossible to buy. If so, for some little old shack quite some amount of money is asked for. Pensioners are earning some pocket money with whitebaiting, as this delicacy has its price. Normally, a kilo of whitebait would cost 60-70NZ\$, but the season is particularly bad and already more than 100\$ /kg had been asked for.



For the night we drive to the Aparima Bridge Reserve, a freedom camp directly located at the river. Unfortunately the weather only allows a quick dinner outside and no sundowner.



10.1.2016 Invercargill, Bluff

What a stormy night! Branches were pulled of the trees and hit our car, everything was shaking, hard to find sleep.

Today we drive to Invercargill, one of the Southernmost places of New Zealand and the world. There is the word, that Invercargill is a slightly backward place, but we didn't find it so. The 'Aquatic Center' was inviting us for a swim, the hot whirlpool reminded us very much of Iceland.

Swimming makes hungry, so we googled 'best café in Invercargill' and ended up in the Batch Cafe, which indeed is a nice café with lovely food. Afterwards we drive to Bluff, located on the Bluff Hill peninsula, the Southern most town of New Zealand.



Stirling Point behind Bluff is the Southern end of the State Highway 1, which crosses the whole of New Zealand on 2,047km North to South. At Stirling Point there is the 'famous' yellow sign, which posts distances to major cities in the world. A must-do-photo for every visitor.



From Stirling Point the Foveaux Walk runs along the coast at the Foveaux Strait, opposite Stewart Island. A nice walk through local flora and fauna and as soon as we are back, the sun is out again.





On the Foveaux Walk we learn, that the Titi (or Muttonbird) are migrating birds who each year fly about 64,000km around the Pacific Ocean until the coast of Japan and even to California!



Steward Island near the coast of South New Zealand is one of their main nesting areas.

Titis have been a major staple food in the past and were kept in kelp which could be blown up like balloons.



Since there is no freedom camping facility in Invercargill, we drive back to the Aparima Bridge Reserve where it is time to cook our eel for dinner.





11.1.2016 Invercargill, Fortrose



Wow, blue sky and no wind for a change!
What a beautiful start of the day.

We have lazy morning before we drive back to Invercargill to run some errands. Unfortunately is the shoe repair shop still closed for Christmas holiday.

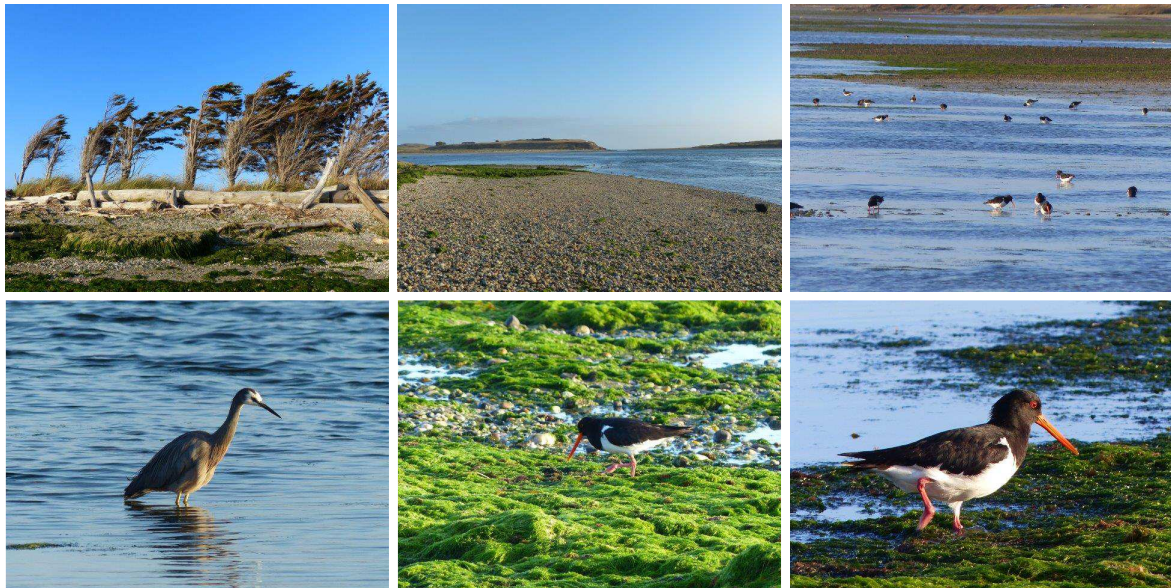
Well, a Harley Davidson is definitely a bike, too!



Our destination for today is Fortrose, a freedom campingplace directly at an estuary, where of course it is possible to go fishing. The entertainment program for today's evening is therefore clear, too.



The beach of Fortrose is ideal for bird watching. Incredible, how many Oyster Catchers and other birds are busy searching for food.

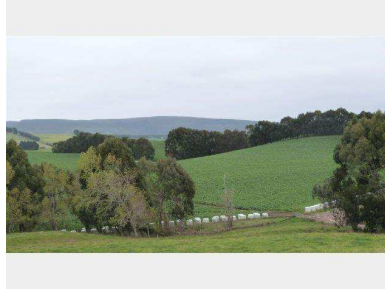


12.1.2016 Titiroa Heights

This morning we don't have to drive far to Titiroa, where we are invited at Titiroa Heights by Marg and John for lunch. They both take such good care of us and we learn a lot about this area. We would have never recognized all the former tiny dairy factories John pointed out, which are all now closed down. The cows on the paddock next door are very curious...



We go on tour to visit the Waipapa Lighthouse (built 1884), we see the petrified trees at Curio Bay (only visible at low tide), we drive through the Catlins Conservation Park, Mokoreta Valley and back via Wyndham and Edendale. A lunch turned into a whole day and in the end we stay over night.



13.1.2016 Slope Point, Waikawa, Hinahina

In the morning we go for a second „Smith Tour“, there is still so much to see. The area around Waimahaka is very popular for whitebaiting and their huts are all spread along the Maitara river.



However, after lunch we have to get going otherwise we will stay forever.



We see again Red Hot Poker although here they are yellow. Very interesting flowers – would they survive in the Northern European hemisphere?

First we visit the Slope Point – now we can proclaim to have visited the Southern most point of the South island of New Zealand.





We follow the South coast through the Catlins to the Florence Hill Lookout which offers great views of the Tautuku Bay. Here is one of the few last areas, where untouched native forest can grow from the hills down to the sea.



Our camp for tonight is at the Catlins lake near Hinahina at the Owaka Heads camp. A very pretty spot directly at the lake; we are all alone, only the birds and in the distance the sea are audible.

