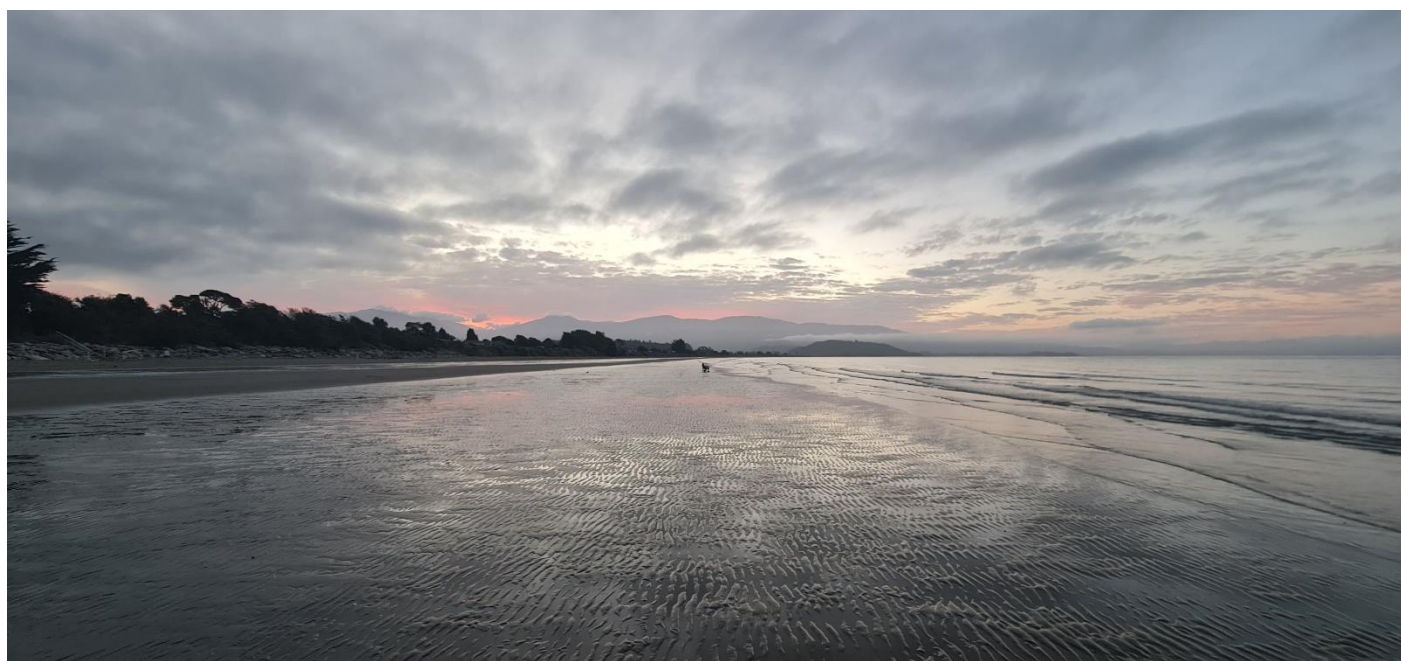


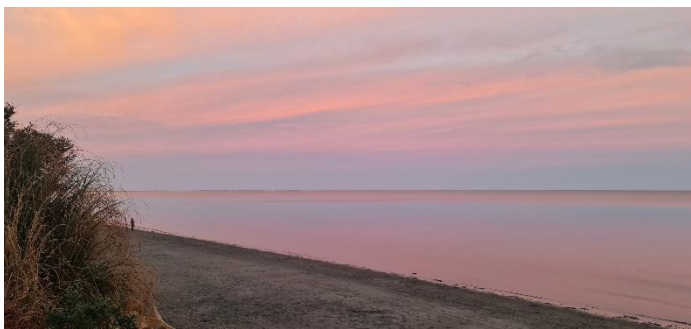
Vicki & Trev's

Trip to Nelson -

Golden Bay

February 2026





Day 1 - Sunday the 1st of February 2026

We rose early and were all packed and on the road before 9.30am. Just south of Waihola, while thinking what I needed to do when I got to the caravan, I realised I hadn't packed the 4kg gas bottle that I use on the BBQ. I had had to bring it back to Dunedin after Xmas to get it recertified. We decided to turn around and go back. Coco seemed confused when we arrived back for about three minutes. We made good time to Lawrence where we stopped for our traditional coffee and a cheese roll at the Night & Day. Unfortunately, their coffee machine was out of action, so we decided to carry on to Etrick where we got some apples from Darlings Orchid and our lunch at the diner. We topped up at McKeowns in Alexandra then onto Bannockburn. After hooking on the caravan we pulled into onto Steve and Lynley's site as ours had people on it, which wasn't a problem as I could just leave it hooked on while I gave it a bit of a clean, checked the lights were all working and got up on the roof to give the leaking area where the solar panel wire go through the roof a couple of coats of CRC Leak Stop. After bacon and eggs for tea we watched a bit of tele and headed to bed around nine thirty.



Day 2 - Monday the 2nd of February 2026

Up before 7 and we both showered before I made sure all the tanks were either full or empty before leaving camp just on 9am. The van flew through for its WOF at Camco Autos, so after a stop at Freshchoice for some fresh bread and a few other supplies we hit the road and headed north. The trip over the Lindis went well until we came down off the pass and got a message on the dash about a wiring problem with the van. We pulled over and check the plug was still attached, which it was, so when we pulled into a layby on our side of the road, I gave it all a closer look. It seemed ok but the left-hand indicator was going fast which means there is a connection issue so when we stopped at Omarama for a wee stop I got out my knife and spread the pins a little which seemed to fix it.

We carried on towards Twizel. There were spaces at the pop by the salmon farm but decided to head up Max Smith Drive to the freedom camping area at the top of Lake Ruataniwha. We found a spot overlooking the river and got all set up. After a bite of lunch, I went down past the boat ramps and had a fish while Vick read her book. I only saw one fish rising and didn't touch anything. Around teatime the rain which had been light and intermittent became fairly steady. While we cooked tea the rain set in and it rained most of the night. Sausages, spuds, carrots and cauli for tea then watched tele till 9.30ish, then bed and read for a while.



Day 3 - Tuesday the 3rd of February 2026

Lightish rain when we woke. The view outside the caravan was a bit limited with the cloud so low. We got hooked on and on the road around 9.30am. After filling up at McKeowns in Twizel we headed north. We followed a heavy transporter with a twenty-ton digger on the back for quite a way. I am not sure if the driver was new at it or not, but he seemed to be all over the road and slowed down a lot when going over bridges. I pulled over and let a few vehicles past which put a bit of distance between us which was good. Traffic on this road is crazy. So many rental cars and campers. I decided to be patient. We pulled over at Burkes Pass and had a quick look around while waiting on a coffee each and a couple of cheese rolls. The rain got heavier the further we travelled north. We pulled in a Fairlie and got a pie each from the bakery and one for Lynley, then travelled onto Geraldine. We had been in touch with Steve and Lynley who we camp with at Bannockburn, as they had planned to take their Jayco back to Christchurch to get a service and WOF to keep their warrantee live. They had stayed the night before at Woodbury Domain and were thinking about coming back there for Tuesday night. However, they had found out that they probably would



not be picking up their van from Jayco Chch until after 4pm, so we decided to meet up at NZMCA Weedens Camp at Rolleston. We pulled in just outside Geraldine and ate our pies then headed north again. The rain was steady all the way which made driving a bit harder. When we got to Weedens it was still raining and we found a spot with a space on each side so Steve & Lynley could join us. It continued to rain and after we were joined by the Hockings after 5.30pm we had a catch up with a few drinks, then got tea ready. With not a lot of sunshine during the day our batteries were showing a bit low so we headed to bed reasonably early and reading till about 9.30pm.



Day 4 - Wednesday the 4th of February 2026

The rain had stopped when we rose but it was still very wet underfoot. After breakfast we said our goodbyes and hit the road again. After filling up at Mckeowns by the airport we tried to call into the Bunnings nearby but couldn't really find a spot big enough to park up, so hit the road again. We travelled on to Waipara and had a bit of a drive around to see if the Weka Park Railway was operational, or at least open to have a look around. It wasn't, so we carried onto Waikari where we pulled over for a coffee and a scone each at the "End of the line" cafe. We would really recommend it as being worth a visit. Nice coffee and very nice cheese and date scones. There were a lot of sealing works heading on towards Hanmer so there were a number of 30K zones, and we had to stop for about ten minutes at one worksite where they were spreading emulsion and chip so traffic was stopped both ways for a while. With all the rain the day before all the rivers and streams we crossed were very dirty, so stopping for a fish was not on the list. We stopped before the Waipara turn off and tried to book in at the Alpine Adventure Camp in Hanmer that we had stayed in last year on our way back from the West Coast, but they said they had no spare sites, so we called the Top 10 who said they could fit us in for a couple of nights. We found our site and got set up before heading into town to get a few supplies from Four Square. Our site was on a bit of a slope which meant I had to use out Trek



ramps in the front and couldn't actually get the back feet to hold us up at all. But I could connect a hose up directly to the van and not worry about the water pump at all. One of the first things we did was both have showers which were amazing. The water pressure was incredible. After shifting over a very heavy picnic table I set up the BBQ and cooked pork chops for tea which we had with hash browns and salad made with lettuce bought from home. After tea we watched tele before heading to bed and reading for a while.



Day 5 - Thursday the 5th of February 2026

After a bit of a lie in we did a load of washing and hung it out to dry while we had a lazy morning and a read. After lunch we headed into town again for another look around and a visit to the I-site where we found out what tracks were still open after the big winds last year had caused havoc through the forests. We had a wander around the "Fairy House" track and then, after putting some fuel in the truck, we headed back to the camp for more of the lazy day. With being hooked up to the water pressure Vick enjoyed a shower in the van.



Day 6 - Friday the 6th of February 2026

Up early, a quick shower for Trev, emptied all the tanks and on the road by 9am. It was a lovely day to travel, and we made good time over the Lewis Pass and across to Springs Junction. There was a big queue at the coffee cart by the car park, so we gave it a miss and headed up to Murchison. After a drive around to find the NZMCA Park we found a spot and got set up. The park has its own dump station and water which was handy. We wandered down to the Rivers Café and got beef burgers each for lunch as we had planned to have van-made pizzas for tea. Got talking to a couple from Wellington who were on their way south and heard of a couple of things to check up while we were up around Takaka. We checked out the “general” store and one of the second-hand stores, then wandered past the camp to the end of the road and checked out the Matakaitaki River. There was an Anglers Access there but not easy to get down to through blackberry, slippery steps and a very wobbly sty. The pizzas worked well and we watched some tele and headed to bed 9ish and read.



Day 7 - Saturday the 7th of February 2026

It rained lightly overnight, up and on the road by 9am. Put \$40 worth of diesel in the Everest at the Mobil across from the park and checked all the tyre pressures while there. It was the first time we had seen a tyre gauge at a service station. I increased the pressure in the rear ones to 44psi which made a difference. Another very pleasant morning to travel with not too much traffic to contend with. We turned off at Kohatu and headed down the Motueka Valley traveling through Tapawera and Woodstock into Motueka. The NZMCA park there had been showing a filling up fairly fast with it being a long weekend. We found the park and got set up for a couple of night stay. As we headed into town from the park we headed to the beach and looked across Cook Strait to the North Island then drove past the wharf and boat ramp. We got kebabs from the Turkish shop at the north end of town then wandered



down to the I-site to get some maps and brochures. After a wander through the Sally Army shop, we headed for Woolworths to get some supplies then back to camp. It was getting very full so we were pleased we had got in early. Spent the rest of the afternoon sitting in the lovely sun and having a read before tea. Sausages, hash browns, tomatoes and eggs for tea then a bit of tele before heading to bed for more reading and sleep.

Day 8 - Sunday the 8th of February 2026

We decided to visit the Sunday markets so up earlyish. The markets were a mix of the normal stalls that seem to make up this type of event. Lots of second-hand stalls, food and clothes. All we bought was some fresh sourdough bread (very hard to cut, but nice flavour) and some cheeses for Vicki. A sheep Gruyere and a deer's milk Gouda, both with interesting flavours. Later in the day we travelled out to the top of the Ruamanuka & Motueka Sandspit then across the bridge and up the north side of the

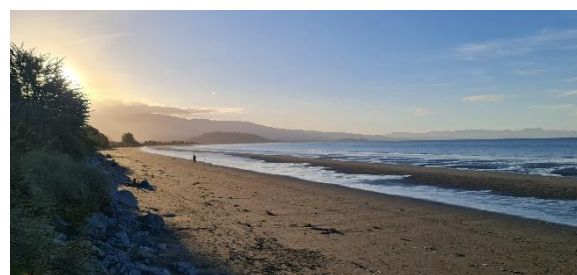


Motueka River as far as Alexander Bluff Bridge and back down into Motueka by the airport. We saw a Rose Garden sign so turned off and tried to find it. Found out later it was actually a display garden for a local rose nursery but has recently been shifted out near Riwaka. We did however find a rose garden on the main street that was built by the tobacco company WD & HO Wills for a bloke who had worked for them for 50 years. It is called the Pethybridge Rose Garden. We were a couple of months late for seeing it in its prime but there were still a number of flowers to check out. Also some very nice echinacea flowering plants. Saw some really big ones in Takaka when we got there. After a visit to The Warehouse we headed back to camp for tea.



Day 8 - Monday the 9th of February 2026

There was no rush to get up early as we were booked into the Pohara Top 10 Campo and weren't supposed to sign in until 2pm. We hooked on the van and headed up over the Takaka Hill. The traffic was light and we had an easy trip until we got about halfway down and caught up with a line of traffic slowed down by a camper van, then a truck then a caravan. We joined the queue and travelled on into Takaka. We found a park behind the Memorial Gardens and wandered up the main street. We had lunch at a café just across from the Freshchoice then did the other side of the street on our way back to the car. We headed out to Pohara and arrived around 1pm. The camp was happy for us to book in early, so we got to our site, no 126, and got set up. The camp is very clean and has great facilities even though you have to pay a dollar for a six-minute shower. The block that was nearest to us



had everything you could need and when you walked around the back of it there was a set of stairs down onto the beach. After getting set up we went for a drive east past Ligar Bay and as far down the coast as the Wainui Bay carpark. We went a k or so up the road to Totaranui Beach but turned around as the corrugations were shocking. Back to camp and did

a load of washing. We hung it out for a while then brought it in when the sun went down. It was half dry. We noticed the tree on our site attracts cicadas as there were heaps of them attached to the bark. When we looked closer, we noticed that they were shedding their skins leaving behind just a exoskeleton.



Day 10 - Tuesday the 10th of February 2026

We woke to a beautiful morning and hung the washing out again. We gave it a bit of time outside and then moved it into the van while we headed away. The Cobb Reservoir was our destination, so we bypassed Takaka and headed back towards Mot'. At North Takaka we turned off and headed up Cobb Valley Road. It is sealed all the way to the Powerhouse but is single lane in many places. We travelled past the grounds where the Rolling Hertz music festival took place over Waitangi weekend. They were



still cleaning up and there were a lot of people still onsite. We stopped at the power station and took photos then headed up the hill. The road is unsealed and very narrow in places with a sheer drop on one side and some very deep drains on the other. We passed a Fulton Hogan two-man crew painting some of the wooden side rails. We spoke to them on the way back and they said this road, along with a number of others, keep them busy all year round. Particularly after the weather



events that the region had suffered from recently. There were a few recent slip sites, and you could see where trees had needed to be trimmed to open the road. We only meet three oncoming vehicles on the way up. Fortunately, they were in areas that had room to pass without either party having to back up too far. Really lucky! At the top of the hill there is an info shed where you can read about the power stations history and a DOC toilet. There was a great view down onto the reservoir and the Weka were very friendly. We travelled down the hill to the dam face and then headed to the head of the lake where there is a carpark and camping area. The park was fairly full with people off doing the hikes that started there. I had a fish for half an hour and again never touched anything so we headed back over the hill back to Takaka.

This time we met a few more vehicles and again we were lucky with where we met them. We called into the Freshchoice and picked up a few supplies (Pensioner Tuesday) and back to camp so a late lunch (3pmish) then a late tea of burgers.



Day 11 - Wednesday the 11th of February 2026



Another beautiful morning after a restless night. Something disagreed with my stomach so there were a few trips to the loo overnight. We decided to stay on for another day at Pohara Top 10 so after a late breakfast and moving the van to another site because the one we were on had been booked by someone else, we drove back through Takaka to the Te Waikoropupu Springs. It

had all been upgraded since we were last there in the 90's with a fancy entrance way and tidy boardwalks as we did the circuit to the springs. I don't think the water pressure is as much as when we were last there as I remember the height of the water being very visible. It is still amazing to see such clear water flowing. Since 2007 they have been saying that they don't even



want people to touch the water. That seems a bit over the top to me. After heading back to the van via a visit to the Takaka Paperplus, and another one to Freshchoice, we had some lunch then decided to go over to Totaranui Beach. As I said a couple of days ago the corrugations were shocking. I don't think they have had a grader over the road since the last time we were over it thirty years ago. I emptied all the stuff out of the back of the Everest before we left to make it a bit quieter and just took it easy.



The trip in was uneventful with only meeting a few cars coming the other way. It really is a spectacular beach with the coarse yellow sand. The DOC camp there had a lot of campers of varying sizes and a few caravans too, I hate to think what the rough trip in would have done to the cabinetry in some of the newish pomy vans that were there. There were also quite a few boats there too and I checked out the boat ramps. One of them goes straight down into the beach with a very long concrete ramp. The trip back over the hill was good too. We stopped at a few places to take photos which was a bit tricky.



Day 12 - Thursday the 12th of February 2026

We were hooked on and left camp just after 9am heading up the coast. We did a circuit of Collingwood but couldn't find anywhere to park up so just carried on to Pakawau. We pulled into the Beach Camp and asked if they had a spot for a couple of nights. They said yes but that it wasn't vacant yet so we could park our van further down the camp while we went for a drive. I noticed they had Hillyers Pies in the warmer so got a couple of them for lunch. Burt & Irene Hillyer who set up their bakery in Lincoln were Vicki's God Parents and actually helped with our wedding supper. Their boys took over the bakery when they retired, and it is now in Christchurch. After unhooking we travelled on to the Farewell Spit carpark and had a little wander up the beach. We then travelled onto the Wharariki Beach park and got a coffee and muffin from the Archway Café. Vick stayed at the car while I walked to the beach. I took a wrong turn and ended up doing a longer walk than planned but it was great. The rock formations along the beach were very impressive and there were some seals with pups near some rock pools. I had dropped the lens hood off my camera at some stage so had to retrace my steps and actually found it. Very lucky! Back to the camp and checked into our site. They certainly squeeze the people in with five sites in our bay. A couple of our neighbours moved their vehicles and helped guide us into our corner. I actually used my truck jack to lift the van to get it level so I could put the Trax wedges under that side which worked well. It was a great place and our neighbours turned out to be very friendly. We had afternoon drinks with them, and then after tea I went down onto the beach with Roger who showed me how he fishes with his Aeroo Drone. It wasn't a very successful fish, but we chatted with a couple of the other blokes in the camp and watched to tide come in, and the stingrays moving along the water's edge. We watched a bit of tele' then read till bedtime.



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Day 13 - Friday the 13th of February 2026

The forecast for today was for rain all day but when I go up around 6.30am it was just very light drizzle. The sunrise across the bay was stunning with a red glow to the east. After breakfast we decided to head over to the west coast via the Wanganui Inlet. After multiple causeways crossing and bridges, we arrived at the coast and ventured south. We came across another Fulton Hogan crew who were clearing out a ditch and spoke to the traffic control man. He reckoned it was a good drive and that there were beaches further on. We continued on until we got to the Anatori River Campground. We turned down past a sign that mentioned that non-self-contained vehicles should use facilities on the lower level.



Once we got down to that level, we found twenty or thirty vehicles of various builds parked very closely together and most of the people there looked very "alternate lifestyles". Vick reckoned we looked very out of place there so ventured back up onto the road. Continuing south we came across the river which had a good-sized wide ford to cross. Vicki was not very keen, so I waded across. It only came up to my knees but there was



still no way I was allowed to go across, so we turned around and headed back towards Pakawau. We stopped at a number of vantage points for photos and turned onto Richard's Road which took us down onto another beach where there was an Aussie off-road caravan, a bus and a few other "sliders". I had a walk out to the river mouth then we headed up the road again. We had



passed a bit of a rickety looking café on our way down and as we came back the open signs were out so we turned in to check it out. The Nugget Café was very rustic, but the food looked good and they did milk alternate coffees, so we got a couple of slices of homemade pizza and the lady commenced making our drinks. Just as we sat down three motorcyclists pulled in followed by a few more and a support van. Then an English couple arrived so the place became packed. The lady worked thru the orders, and everyone was happy except the pomy couple because there was no eftpos. It was only \$20 for our lunch so we left happy. We continued on towards home and turned off up to the Kahoka Lakes



where Ian and I had had a fish on our last trip. Still couldn't see any sign of fish and the lakes are not list in the F&G Info book for this region. The day had been overcast and drizzly but worse on the Golden Bay side that the coast. We got back to camp, we both had shower (Vick in the van, me in the very dated ablutions block) and by late afternoon it had cleared so we had outside drinks with our neighbours before tea, tele, a read then sleep.

Day 14 – Saturday the 14th of February 2026

Up to a less colourful sunrise. Breakfast and a pack up, then hitch on and start heading south. We decided to go to Kaitereteri so I had emailed the Bethany Camp, and a lady phoned me before we left Pakawau to say they could fit us in. The trip back through Takaka and over the hill was uneventful and we arrived at Bethany just on 12pm. We did a load of washing and had some lunch then went and visited



cousin Glenys and Ian Clements who have regularly rented a place on Bayview Road for about ten years. The place was really interesting to get to and has an amazing outlook up the coast. The wind was coming straight at the deck, but it had an area with tall glass panels so we were reasonable sheltered while we



chatted and caught up. After we left them, we headed up to Marahau which is as far as the road goes above Kai'. It was a fairly windy road with a number of areas where there have been recent slips. In the way back we called up towards Split Apple Rock. It was getting late and getting to it required a bush walk which Vick didn't feel up to so we headed back to the van and got a easy tea, tinned fish on toast for Trev and baked beans on toast for Vick. Watched the dog rescue show on late tele then off to bed.

Day 15 – Sunday the 15th of February 2026

Trev up for an early shower then breakfast and get packed up. We decided to move on, and, at Ros Forbes suggestion, we headed for the A&P Grounds in Richmond so we could catch up with her and John. We called into the NPD at Motueka to top up, as we were down to less than 80ks of range left, then carried on down the road. The caretaker at the grounds put us out under the trees so we emptied the tanks and got in position. After getting set up we headed for the Woolworths to restock the fridge etc. We also called into Kmart & the Warehouse for a few things and had lunch at Columbus Coffee. Because we were basically across the road



from the Waimea Club I suggested to Ros & John that we meet there for a catch up. It is many years since we have seen John & Ros, so it was great to spend time with them. In the end we were the last people left at the Club as all the others who were there had had their meals and gone home. We didn't realise that the kitchen had closed so we finally left there around 7ish and headed back to the van for a light tea of savoury scrolls with ham, cheese, tomato etc.

Day 16 – Monday the 16th of February 2026

Trev did a return trip to the shops to get a venetian blind cleaner from Kmart, and tried to find another pair of shorts, while Vick had a shower. After breakfast we headed back up to Mapua to have a look around. We had a coffee and muffin at one of the many restaurants and cafes there, checked out the wharf museum then cruised out onto Rabbit Island for a look around. From there we tried to find the heritage village we had seen signposted and ended up down the Moutere Valley. The Willowbank Village was shut so we found the Higgins Heritage Park and had a wander around there. We didn't actually see anyone there either but we had a wander anyway and dropped some coins into the donation tin. Heading back towards Richmond we stopped at the memorial to Ernest Rutherford's birthplace at Brightwater and had a read of the various info boards. We passed through Richmond and



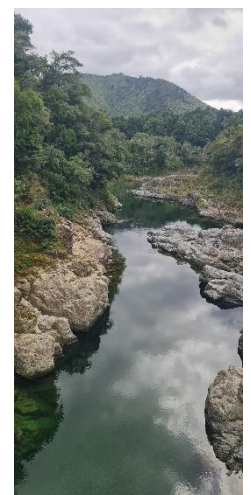
headed for Paddy's Knod Lookout that overlooks Tahunanui Beach. After a drive by of the camp that Chris & Anita stay at, we stopped at Subway for a bite to eat then drove into Nelson and parked at the Christ's Church Cathedral to eat them. We wandered around the cathedral grounds and Vick went in to see what it was like. We went down into town and stopped to check out a couple of shops then headed back to the caravan for tea, tele, read & bed.

Day 17 – Tuesday the 17th of February 2026

A lazy day planned today. When I went to pay for an extra night, I bought some very nice homemade raspberry jam and half a dozen eggs from the office. Very nice. After breakfast we went shopping so Trev could get his new shorts from Farmers, fridge magnets for Kaiteriteri & Richmond and a couple of things from PaknSave. Back to the van to sit outside reading for a while, a bite of lunch then we went and spent the afternoon with John & Ros at their home. A lot of reminiscing and catching up on the last thirty years. We left them about 6.30pm after a few drinks and went back for a bite of tea, tele, read & sleep. Very relaxing.

Day 18 – Wednesday the 18th of February 2026

While I was waiting on Vicki to have a shower and get ready I went back to PaknSave to swap the coffee that Vicki has got the day before. Filter grind doesn't quite work like instant coffee. On the road by 10am and we joined the slow crawl through Richmond and Nelson on our way to the Spring Creek Camp just out of Blenheim. We had stayed there on our last trip up this way with the Rutherford's in the mid-1990s. We stopped at Pelorus Bridge to take some photos as that is where Steve Connor and I had spent a couple of nights when we came this way back in the 1970s. The DOC Camp there now has a coffee cart, so we had a coffee each and a scone for me and a muffin for Vick. We turned off the road at Havelock and went down to have a look at the marina. No where to park so we just kept going. We went into Blenheim to find the McKeowns to top up. What an interesting place for a fuel





station. Street very narrow and the station had a curved set of bowsers. While I topped up Vick went across the road to a bakery and got a fresh loaf of bread and a couple of pies for lunch. We headed back out the way we had come to find somewhere to have lunch as we couldn't book in until 2pm. We turned into the A&P Grounds and had lunch watching the local contractors mowing the grass. By the time we got to Spring Creek it was just on 2pm so we got set up on site 43 and did a load of washing.

Under the trees alongside the river is nice but no satellite reception. Never mind there is always the wireless connection through the phone. The camp filled up with a lot of campervans which I assume are either heading to, or coming off, the ferries. We had tea, watched the news etc, then bed, read and to sleep.

Day 19 – Thursday the 19th of February 2026

Trev up early for a shower using the camp facilities (very enlightened having Breeze Classic being piped into the ablution block). Back to the van and got breakfast ready. Had to share my new jam with Vick. On the road just after 9am and heading up towards Picton. After a cruise down the main street to see if the bookshop was open (it wasn't), we headed out to Waikawa and up over the hill to Port Underwood.



The road is sealed all the way but still very windy and narrow. Some great views up the sounds and then out over Cook Strait. There are houses built in some very precarious places, but they must have amazing views. There is an unsealed road from Port Underwood back to Blenheim along the coast, but we decided to leave that for our next trip. Back over the hill to Picton, a visit to the second-hand bookshop then we had an early lunch at the bakery next to the motels we stayed in on our last visit to Picton when we did the train trip from Christchurch to Auckland. The steak & kidney pies are still good. After lunch we moved up to the lookout overlooking the ferry terminals and watch the Inter-islander's Kaitiaki and Bluebridge's Coonawera docking. From there we travelled the Queen Charlotte Drive around through Ngakatua Bay then Momorangi Bay before turning up to check out where the Anikiwa Outward Bound Camp is. From there we headed back out and onto Havelock where we had a



good look through the marina and then stopped and visited the museum. Back towards Blenheim where we stopped to get a cooked chicken and a couple of other things from PaknSave then back to camp to do a bit more washing and have tea. We have decided to stay an extra day so we can visit the Omaka Aviation Heritage centre and not have to rush before starting our journey south towards home.

Day 20 – Friday the 20th of February 2026

We headed for the Omaka Heritage Aviation Centre around 9.30am on a very sunny morning. The displays there are amazing having been done with help from Sir Peter Jackson and his people at Weta Workshops. The figures in the dioramas were very lifelike, and they really told the stories as well as highlighting the various aircraft. There was a lot to read so I took photos of many of the boards so I



could read them at my leisure. We had a coffee and muffin each then headed over to the Classic car museum also on site. Another great collection with some very rare machines on display. We headed back to camp for a late lunch, via a detour to top up the truck with fuel again at McKeowns, then went down the road to have a look through Makana

Confectionary which is less than a kilometer from Spring Creek. Vicki did very well by not buying anything.

Day 21 – Saturday the 21st of February 2026



On the road just after 9am and on our way south towards home. We stopped at Ward for a coffee and some very nice food at the local service station café, then hit the road again. A quick stop at Saint Oswald's Church at Wharanui so Vick could get a photo of it then on to Kaikoura. We pulled into the NZMCA Camp there and found a spot next to a slightly later model Liesureline that belonged to a couple from Whangarei. I had a chat to them and to a bloke who was opposite to us who was driving a 2023 Everest towing an Aussie van. He shown me a couple of things he had recently learnt about his one and I was amazed at how different his was to mine considering it was only a year older. No trailer assist, and there were a few things different on his display.

He had changed his wheels and tyres to give him a higher profile tyre on rims that allowed for cheaper AT tyres. After a bite on lunch, we went for a drive around the various bays and up to the lookout by the water tanks. We also tried to have a look through the Te Atu caves, but they were closed for the day, so back to the van for tea, tele, a read, then bed.



Day 22 – Sunday the 22nd of February 2026



It was a very clear morning when we woke with the sun lighting up the Kaikoura ranges very nicely. We were packed up and pulled out just after 9am. The trip down the coast was very clear and we made good time. We stopped at Cheviot at the Harris Farms Café and got our morning coffee and snack. They had some very nice-looking meat for sale and we were very tempted but resisted because we still have food in the freezer.

Traffic got heavier as we got closer to Christchurch. We called into the McKeowns by the airport where we drained the grey water tank and filled up the freshwater, as well as the truck with diesel. At the Weedens park we found a spot out in the middle, and both had showers ready to go out and catch up with Craig at the Speights Ale House at Tower Junction. The wind was blowing fairly hard, so our towels dried quickly on the clothesline behind us. Before we met Craig, we visited DressMart (as we normally do when in Christchurch) then on to the Ale House for a very nice meal. Back to camp and eventually bad.



Day 23 – Monday the 23rd of February 2026



A cool start to the day, with a very heavy dew, so after a bit of a play with the gas heater we finally got the van toasty warm. I popped around to Kiwi Gass in Islington to fill up the 9kg gas bottle while Vicki got ready. We were on the road just after 9.30am and headed

towards the Rakia Gorge. We did a bit of a wander across the Canterbury Plains and actually ended up on a gravel road for a while, so we took it easy. We arrived at the camping ground on the south side of the Rakia River around 11am and got a site overlooking the river.



After a bacon & eggs lunch we went for a drive up to Lake Coleridge. We had a wander around the powerhouse and then tried to head up the hill toward the inlet but found that that road was closed just past the lodge. There was a coffee sign up at the lodge, so we called in. One of the blokes on duty sat with us for a while and told us that the lodge was a Christian run overnighting hostel during the summer where they welcomed people walking the TA Trail. They gave them a free can of drink and a cookie and offered the trampers a few luxuries like a bed, bath and some reasonably priced food. After our coffee and cake, we took another road up to the lake and ended up down a track by the inlet. I had a fish for a while but didn't even have a follow in. Very nice clear water with a gravely beach. After backing up the track we headed for home. The wind was getting up so, after we had pizzas for tea, we packed everything away and watched a bit of tele before going to bed and getting rocked to sleep by the wind gusts.



Day 24 – Tuesday the 24th of February 2026



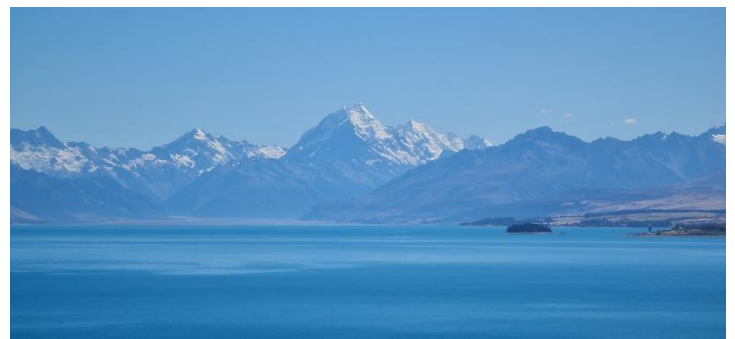
A dull morning but at least the wind had dropped a bit. Only a short trip planned for today, on to Geraldine. We pulled out of camp around 10 am and had a quiet trip towards our destination. We called into Mount Summers and found a shop that did very nice coffees and food. We had a roam around the info boards where the railway line used to go through, then got on our way again. We called into the Route 79 camp just past the Orari Bridge as they

are a Campsaver camp. The facilities were good, so we got ourselves hooked up to power, topped up the water tank, did a load of washing and hung it in the van as it was a bit damp outside. We called into the Freshchoice in Geraldine and got a few groceries to last us till we get home. We then had a wander through some of the shops and Vick got some sheep and deer cheese from the cheese shop. We then picked up some lotto tickets and headed back to camp. It was warming up a bit so we moved the washing outside into the breeze and had a lazy afternoon and evening.



Day 25 – Wednesday the 25th of February 2026

I got up 7.30ish and had a nice hot shower over in the block and Vicki had one in the van. After breakfast, we did the dishes, I emptied the tanks and we hit the road. The forecast was for a good day, and it proved to be right. We topped up the diesel at the McKeowns just before Fairlie and called into the shops at Burkes Pass to see if we could find something for Riley for his birthday. As we left, we got our coffees and a cheese roll each then headed onto Twizel. The traffic over to



Tekapo was busy with a lot of campervans and caravans in both directions, and as we got to Lake Pukaki they were pulling in all sorts of directions, so we just took our time and gave them heaps of space. We



turned off at the first entrance into Twizel, past the school, and I showed Vicki where we used to stay when we first came here for our Lions fishing trips. We passed the District's club and



continued out to the freedom camping area off Max Smith Drive. We found a space just along from where we had camped on our second night and got set up. I went down for a fish just below us and spent an hour thrashing the water without hooking anything. I only saw one fish in the backwater, and it was very skittish. The wind was starting to get up so we cooked tea in the van and watched television then



headed to bed when we ran out of programs worth watching and read for a while. The caravan rocked in the wind for a while which must have helped put us to sleep.

Day 26 – Thursday the 26th of February 2026

I woke just after 7am expecting to hear rain on the roof as had been forecast on TV One last night, but it was still dry. I had a look out the door and it looked nice and calm, so I headed back down the hill onto the water. I fished for an hour and a half and dropped two fish, and had a few follow ins. There were a few spits, but it didn't start to rain till I got back to the van. Vick was just getting dressed so we had breakfast then got packed up. The rain got a bit heavier as we got near Omarama and called into the Wrinkly Rams for a coffee and scone. Back on the road and it was just damp on the north side of the Lindis but very wet on the Cromwell side. It rained quite heavily as we drove through Cromwell and out to Cairnmuir. We got set up on Steve & Lynley's site as ours had people staying on it. After a bite of lunch, I got the hose out and poured some car shampoo into a bucket and gave the van and the Everest a good clean down. I took off the front and screen protectors so I could take them home and get the zip repaired. Tea was a mixture of the bits we had left in the fridge, then after watch a bit of tele we headed to bed for a read.



Day 27 – Friday the 27th of February 2026

A bit of a lie in this morning and then up and gave the van a last tidy up. Stripped the bedding and chucked everything that was to go home into the truck. We shifted the van over under the trees as we weren't going to be back for three or four weeks and we left camp just before lunch. A stop at Ettrick for some fruit and food for lunch, then home to Green Island. Coco was pleased to see us, and he told us everything that had happened while we were away. We started off a few of the loads of washing so we could hang it out in the morning then tea, tele and off to bed. It was really nice to be back in our queen size bed after a spent a month in the double sized one in the caravan. Nice to be able to spread out although Coco carried on meowing his stories. We are home again and back to normality.

Another adventure finished, and time to start planning the next....

