

Waimakariri River

– the Speight's Coast to Coast secret!

By Diana Austin



I read the info on the world famous Speight's Coast to Coast event, watched the DVD and yes, the countryside looked amazing but do you really have to run / scramble up those rocks, wade that river, bike up that hill? The river section however was downhill but to do that leg required a 55 km bike ride first – would my team mate be happy for a later than usual start while I struggled up the hill with a few photo and snack stops along the way – I think not. I noticed the Waimakariri familiarization trips that were being offered by Rob Howarth from North Shore Canoe & Kayak – maybe we could tag along as pseudo Coast to Coasters. Yes, I was in and it didn't take much to get Luke on board too.

Now that we have been there, done that, it is time you were all let in on the secret. The Coast to Coasters have been hogging the Waimakariri River. It is the most stunning piece of water and scenery ever to be seen. Here is the story of our day...

An early start from Christchurch's North South Holiday Park included checking people, gear and helping our guide find his cereal bowl - a hazard of eating on the run I suppose. We jumped in the minibus and headed out of town, with a coffee pick up on the way (you can skip the trim for today). We were asked "are you doing the 1 day or 2 day?" I felt flattered they thought I could do either. "We are here for fun", we replied, which was obviously a new concept. However, inside I was getting more and more nervous about what this river would entail. Rob was confident that I'd enjoy myself.

The seven paddlers and two guides (Rob Howarth and Mo Kennedy)



The last break before entering the gorge. The scenery is stunning.

at the entry point, Mt White Bridge, thanks to our driver Roger. We were allocated boats and following a safety briefing were soon on our way. The river was running at 120 cumecs and from an initial glance all was looking good. I made it to the other side of the river, phew I remembered the eddy turns and ferry glides. From there on it was all beauty, exhilaration and definitely fun. The river started off braided and it was a challenge to know which the best path was. However at this point, a wrong choice was only going to involve a bit of bouncing or pulling of one's boat. It was then on to the rock gardens and you can guess where they got their name from. On either side, the Southern Alps towered above us – we were paddling through the Southern Alps – it was unbelievable. Roger met us at Gooseberry Stream to check the team was OK and then on we went to the Waimakariri Gorge.

We were whipped round corners, bounced over wave trains that seemed to be going in more than one direction and then a short reprieve before the next wicked ride. Before we ventured down each



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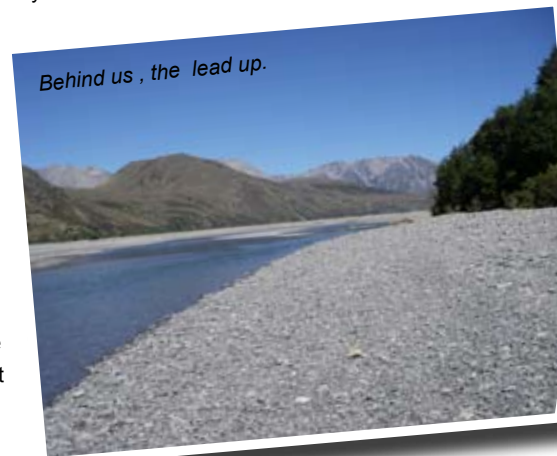


Diana & Luke Austin



of these stretches our guides briefed us on the hazards and the safest routes to take while still maximizing speed. It seemed to be over all too soon and we were paddling through the Canterbury Plains. Luke and I compared notes; yes we were both sore, no we didn't want to stop and catch a lift for the last bit. The group dispersed through the multiple paths of the Waimakariri River hoping for the quickest route, some more successful than others, all to end up at the Gorge Bridge and our pick up. Rob cheerfully explained that the competitors, on race day, would now need to run up the nearby hill to collect their bikes and ride into Christchurch. We laughed while I am sure I heard some expletives from other members of the rather tired group. Sixty seven kilometres and our bodies knew it. Onwards to the airport drop off and we were heading back to the kids (who had been asked to prepare the hot water bottles).

I don't feel words can do justice to this amazing experience so you will need to go and do it for yourselves. There is a cost but safety is never too expensive. The guides have amazing experience and it is well worth tipping out just to see them in action (I left that to the others though). Get your Grade Two white water certificate and be ready for next year's river run.



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Roof Racks

– Dispelling the myths and answering frequently asked questions...

By Steve Smith



As you'd expect, Roof Rack Centre staff are very experienced in carrying kayaks, bikes and roof boxes on cars. Because loads and cars vary enormously, your particular, almost unique requirements will benefit from their expert advice. They are more than happy to provide this.

When you wish to purchase you'll find that the 'Roof Rack Centre', a dedicated part of your Canoe & Kayak Centre, stocks everything you could possibly need for recreational or commercial use on **your** vehicle. Our brands include Thule, Prorack and Rhino-Rack.

In New Zealand in particular, there are a large number of imported vehicles which will often require a different roof rack solution from the one that you may find in a fit guide. We can advise further on these.

Here are questions commonly asked by kayakers:

What type of roof rack will suit my car?

While roof racks work on about 98% of vehicles, you'll require specific parts to fit them to your vehicle.

If your vehicle has rain gutters any rain-gutter mounted roof rack will almost certainly work, but you may need to change bar width and foot height. More than likely, you can take the rack off one vehicle and put it on another with a rain gutter.

However, since most modern cars do not have gutters, most roof racks are designed for cars without them. These incorporate removable and permanent mount designs, and some have rails, fix-points or take a clamp mount system.

Your gutterless vehicle's roof rack consists of the bar, 'feet' and the 'fit kit' which attaches around the upper edge of the door jamb to hold the roof rack onto your vehicle. The feet used fit many different types of vehicles, whereas each kit is made to fit a specific vehicle.

What is the difference between a roof 'rail' and roof 'bars / racks'?

Roof rails run front to rear on both sides of the roof. They are often factory-fitted.

On their own, they cannot be used as roof racks. Roof bars run across the roof side to side and are clamp mounted (secured with fit kits to the door frames), mounted to factory-fitted fix points or roof-rail mounted.

I would like to fit roof rails to my vehicle. Do you supply these?

No, roof rails require internal roof mounts and are mostly fitted during vehicle manufacture. Whilst possible, the cost would probably not be worthwhile and we have a specific solution for your vehicle anyway. You **won't** need to buy a set of longitudinal roof rails to find a roof rack to suit your car.

What is the difference between a roof rail & integrated roof rail?

Integrated Roof Rails are usually a moulded profile, raised slightly, running front to rear down both sides of the roof. There is **NO GAP** between the rail and the roof. Commonly these are found on the Subaru Legacy / Outback models.



What is a roof mounted fix-point?

A fix-point is a recessed, roof mounted, fixture point on a vehicle. It is normally a threaded hole or metal profile, concealed by lift up covers, slide back covers or plastic plugs.

What is a clamp mount system?

Because some vehicles don't have a fix point or rails, a specific fit kit or bracket is available to clamp the roof bars from the inside of the door frame. Contrary to some people's views these systems are very secure and need only an occasional check for tightness. Note that as you tighten some steel clamps on roof bars you'll see the steel bars curve slightly – this is entirely normal.

