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## Swiss Club Adventures

## Mt Ruapehu weekend



# Melbourne Swiss Festival





## Swiss Club Adventures

*March and April were exciting months for the Hamilton and Auckland clubs. Highlights included the combined weekend outing by the Hamilton and Auckland Clubs to Mt Ruapehu, and the performances of the Swiss Kiwi Yodelers and the Auckland Guggemusik at the Melbourne Swiss Festival. Pictures tell a story: please see our photos on page 6 and read Irene's story below. There is more information in the club news on pages 14-20.*

### Combined Outing Weekend to Ruapehu 21-23 March 2014

When the first announcement of the above outing came through to my inbox on 12 November 2013, I immediately thought: here comes my chance. Without delay, I passed the news on to my daughter who replied ever so promptly, "Count me in. It's beautiful but we will have to get some training in for you Mum". The weekend of 21 March seemed a long way off with plenty of time to improve one's fitness. Christmas came and went and January was for holidaying and relaxing... However, in February, Susie Wood (Helvetia's editor), and I finally started walking once a week from Long Bay to Okura for two hours.

On Friday March 21st, after checking everything on the list we had been sent, we three, Susie, JK and I headed South to Taupo, around the sparkling lake into the National Park. We arrived at our destination via the Chateau in the late afternoon. At the Tokoroa Lodge we were warmly welcomed by our Hamilton club hosts and shown our sleeping quarters. In the lounge, the fire was burning, drinks and nibbles were on the table. Meanwhile in the kitchen the meat was prepared for grilling and a colourful array of salads appeared on the bench. Aucklanders were responsible for

Friday's dinner and what a great one it was, followed by a fantastic selection of cakes. Cheerful banter finished the day and then into bed.

Saturday morning started early with breakfast at seven. The weather was perfect! Herbert organised the troops; there were three options: Ruapehu Crater Lake hike, Taranaki Falls walk and the Tongariro Crossing, our choice. Willetta volunteered to be our guide and shortly after eight, 12 of us were driven by Herbert, in his multipurpose van, to the starting point at Mangatepopo. The first three km were "easy as". At a casual glance, the surrounding landscape looked rather desolate. Yet, a closer look revealed a surprising variety of plants. The track through the Mangatepopo valley was well maintained, but then it suddenly became rougher and really steep. My heart went into overdrive and I started having breathing difficulties. Maybe not so surprising at my age – 72! But ..... once on the top – what a view of Mt Ngauruhoe and Mt Taranaki! This was then followed by a rather difficult patch along the South Crater, and more climbing to the highest point above the Red Crater. From there the vistas took your breath away: the vivid blue and green lakes below and the surrounding

three volcanoes – Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu. Truly spectacular! The path down to the Emerald Lakes, where we had lunch, was an extremely steep slide. From thereon, walking became easier and it looked as if we were following a ribbon all the way down to the Ketetahi hut. After another stop, we passed the Hot Springs with steam visible over the saddle, then descended steadily through tussock slopes before entering the forest. This stretch seemed unending, with a constant stream of fellow walkers hurrying past us to get to their waiting buses. (A typical summer's day can see up to 2000 hikers on this alpine crossing). Finally we arrived at THE END on the Ketetahi Road. "Our taxi" was waiting. Herbert and the rest of our group were keen to get moving. Back at the lodge, there was enough time to have a shower and get one's breath back before sitting down to an excellent fondue and platters of cold meat prepared by the Hamiltonians. Again, delicious cakes followed. By that stage, I was ready for an early night.

After breakfast on Sunday, it was cleaning and pack-up time. Thanks to the top notch organisation of both committees and especially their presidents, all this was done in record time. Before leaving we all had a farewell coffee. While some went on for a walk around Lake Rotopounamu, we three decided to treat ourselves to a soak in the Hot Pools at Tokaanu before heading back home.

I had a wonderful weekend and thank everyone for their company. Big thanks especially to the Hamilton committee and the chief organisers Herbert and Tanja for all the hard work they put in. At last, I can cross the Tongariro crossing off my bucket list. Hurray!

By Irene Knowles



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