

After doing Coast to Coast
And lots of other races
I hardly felt a need
To put me through the paces

My 'mate' Warren said
Let's do the TA20
A little ride upon a bike
3000k's should be plenty

'What's the Deal', a ride he said
A bike with all your stuff
Take all your gear, a little trip
From Cape Reinga to the Bluff

Holy S..T I replied
I think my legs will last
The 30 days upon a bike
But what about my arse?

We'll be fine he said
How hard can it be
Heaps of people do it
It'll be fun, you will see



Well now the time has come
To start this epic ride
Gear and bike all ready
It's time to beat the tide

Met Steve and Kim at the top
And stopped to have a chat
He was riding on his own
Must be hard like that

11.00am, the 21st of Feb
We start and hit the beach
103k's of road and sand
It's Ahipara we must reach



Tour Aotearoa 2020

**Rudy Baptist
and
Warren McQuoid**

21 February to 17 March

Well, 90 mile beach was cool
A tail wind and some sun
But After 4 hours on the beach
I wouldn't call it "FUN"

Our first night camping
Put us to the test
Tents & gear to get sorted
And not the best nights rest

Up early, pack the gear
Try & fit it back on the bike
It seems to grow in the night
A bit more than I like!

Off the seal onto the gravel
We climb & climb up high
Why do this to us guys
We grumble with a sigh

With 30 degrees and sticky heat
It's grumpy boys, not merry
But at last some downhill
To catch the little ferry

Rawene is gone & on we ride
Opononi and Omapere
It's off into the forest
To view a giant tree

Tane Mahuta, straight and tall
The Giant Forest Lord
Is well worth the effort
For all the sweat we poured

Our second night, another camp
We're experts now, you hear
Warren's mate, Dean appears
With junk food and a beer

139k's for our day 2
With hills and heat and rain
We're going well but tired
And the start of a little pain

On the back roads into Dargaville
A local teen on a bike
How's it going guys, he said
I can join you if you like?

We.....ll ok if you want
We both look quite surprised
But our questions are all answered
As we climb a little rise

Just by his farm gate
He has a little feed
Cool, cold water and some melon
For TA riders with a need

Sustained and on our way
He continues us to follow
Before suddenly turning back
And disappearing with a holler

Got to go, more riders coming
I've seen them on the app
Got to go, they'll be here soon
I follow them on the map

Surprise, surprise, you never know
What you'll find in your day
A teen, a bike, some melon
To help you on your way

A little R&M at Dargaville
At the Time Too Shop 4 Bikes
Some brake shoes and a lube
And coffee's what we like



And Steve is here already
Who we spoke to at the top
We thought we were ahead
How'd you beat us to the shop

Kim picked him up again
His freewheel packed a sad
Up in the Waipoua forest
It's looking really bad

It's Sunday in Dargaville
And parts are hard to find
"Time Too's" trying hard
But he's really in a bind

We left them at the shop
With best wishes and good luck
We're thinking of you Steve
To stop would really suck

Onto Pouto and the ferry
The 5.30pm is our aim
But the wind has turned
And doesn't play the game

The sealed road is straight and flat
And it's boring, into gusts
Then the hilly gravel starts
But it's Pouto Point or bust

More than 50 bikes and riders
Are at Pouto for the boat
We are booked but others aren't
But all hope to get afloat

50 plus bikes on the roof
Of our little ferry
All the riders crammed inside
Most still keen and merry

Got a message through from Kim
Steve was back up on the horse
Great to hear, but how?
Got a brand new bike of course

The further south we go
As life on the road gets hard
The answers to your troubles
Is your credit card

The Kaipara is acting up
The wind and tide are tough
But the ferry battles on
Even though the sea is rough

It's late and dark when we dock
It's the fishing club for the night
Beer soaked carpet on the floor
All the riders jammed in tight

100k riding and 40 by boat
Brings Auckland near to us
An early start to day 4
Will get us through the rush

A small detour is required
As Warren's house is near
A shower, all our washing
And some maintenance on our gear

Auckland's where we live
And it is our home patch
But it's on to Orere Point
A night of comfort at the Bach

After 130k for the day
The bach will be the best
But 5 extra riders
Did not give us much rest

David, Gerard, Thierry, John & Dave
All TA riders with a need
So it's at the bach they stop
To sleep and have a feed



After food and drinks we sleep
And we're all up in time
To breakfast and pack our gear
We aim to hit the road by nine

Rick, our neighbours keen
To escort us out when ready
7 riders leaving Paradise Point
Behind the '39 Chevy!



The Chevy leads the way
Horn blaring all the time
The parade loops around
Bikes and rider in the line

The Chevy pulls off the road
Once again, we start our day
Riders heading south
After our short bach stay

Te Aroha is our aim
116k down the road
And another bed for us
To help to ease the load

The heat is beating down
The rail trails not much fun
It's still hot and humid
Out riding in the sun

Michelle's place is in the town
It's where we'll rest our head
Clean clothes, washed and fed
AND a comfy bed!

"One ring to rule them All"
The land of Hobbits draws us
Matamata's iconic I-site
Is our next selfie must

The Waikato river trails
Past dams that we ride by
From Arapuni to Maraetai
The sun shines in the sky

130k's finds us in Mangakino
With a pizza for our tea
Tents again for tonight
And tomorrow? Wait and see

The day dawns bright and clear
As we rode away from the dams
And the last thing we expected
Was to meet a traffic jam!

A narrow wire bridge
Across a little stream
That stopped us in our tracks
Was a nightmare, not a dream

Bikes waiting to get across
Taking off all the gear
To make it possible to try
And cross the bridge with care

Finally across that little bridge
And repacked all our stuff
We set off up the track
And carried on to Bluff

At the centre of the north
Another selfie for our quest
A ride along a boardwalk
Turned out not to be the best

Round a corner, hit a tree
Off the boardwalk with a yell
Down the side bike and all
Was a tale that I can tell

No damage done, so lucky
Had a fright, a little scare
I will have to concentrate
And treat boardwalks with more care

Onto the Timber Trail
Mt Pureora was the climb
And down, down, down to Camp Epic
Where we called it time

Hot showers and a feed
Was what the doctor ordered
Only 85k's for the day
But a hard and tough day sorted

Day 8, the first week gone
A massive day ahead
From Epic to Whakahoro
Before we get to bed

Problems on the Timber Trail
My back carrier had, had enough
All that bouncing on the downhill
It snapped, the thing was stuffed

Luckily, I'd brought a strap
And tied it to the rack
Turned it into a little pack
And stuck it on my back

30k's to Taumarunui
To find a new bike rack
\$80 and some fiddling
Sorted out that bike back pack

On the road again to
Whakahoro and Blue Duck
A big climb up to the top
But man that "downhill" sucked

40k's of gravel down
Would be ok you'd think
More like 40k's of grovel
Man, that down was really stink



A DOC cabin for the night
Up early to beat the rain
Needed to get to the river
Before that rain became a pain

Left early, at first light
To grovel up the hill
500m of climbing high
Didn't give much of a thrill

Flew down the clay road
From the top, it still was dry
And then the rain got started
And fell steadily from the sky

The Bridge to Nowhere track
Became a slippery mess
Narrow paths and big drop offs
Put us to the test

Made it to the river
In one piece, I'm pleased to say
Not like some of the others
Who had, had a hospital stay!

The jetboats were there waiting
For the riders, all drowned rats
They'd tracked us in that morning
How I love those smart phone apps

On the boat, the rain had stopped
And at Pipiriki we had a feed
Those Whanganui river guys
Fulfilled our every need

Whanganui River Adventures
From Bridge down to the dock
Awesome TA service guys
Your whole Whanau Rocks

As Whanganui called us
Mark & Phillipa had a place to stay
The only problem is she said
It's a bit out of the way

Go into Whanganui and
Cross the river bridge
Go up the other side a bit
And climb up to the ridge

"Climb" I said to Warren
As I packed a little sad
After the day we've just had
You must be f....n mad!

A comfy bed and some food
Was not to be ignored
But that "hill" took us ...
To new depths unexplored

As the sun rose next morning
With the river wrapped in fog
Up high upon that ridge
We looked around agog

The views were panoramic
Lost in the dark last night
The far mountains standing
Tall in all their might

Ruapehu and Taranaki
Standing tall and proud
And far below the Whanganui
Wrapped softly in its shroud

What goes up must come down
The morning started chill
As we left our eagles nest
And glided down to Durie Hill

Deep into the river bank
A long tunnel burrows far
And at the end ... not light
But an elevator car

A tight squeeze of bikes and riders
The lady slides across the grill
It creaks and groans and rattles
As it takes us up the hill



A photo at the tower
Is another selfie pic
Another checkpoint on our list
To mark off with a tick

A 12" crescent on the road
Is always a good find
But on the way to Bluff
It should be left behind

But as all "Dutchmen" know
"don't look a gift horse in the mouth"
Just pick up the bloody spanner
That thing is going South!

200k's to Palmy North
Is not so far to ride
The home of my son Josh
With a crescent by my side

But before Palmy comes Apiti
And behind the pub our tents
Good company and a feed
A pleasant evening spent

And breakfast in the morning
All things cold and hot
Riding off we all know that
Apiti really hit the spot

Some Trail Angels did their work
Near Totara Reserve today
A smorgasborg of treats
To help us on our way

Some fruit and cold drinks too
Yummy things just what we need
Even breakfast cereals and milk
With some koha for a feed

Leading from the front
Its Ashhurst soon or bust
After draughting off our wheels
Debs and Irene left us in the dust

I can't believe it Warren
Those girls used us half the day
Then as we get close to town
They go and blow us both away

Palmy is our aim today
My son lives there in the army
He doesn't understand this ride
He thinks the old man's balmy

Josh, it's your birthday soon
I brought an early present
Oh, thanks he says as I ...
Hand him a 12" crescent

Only 80k's today
To give a half day rest
To freshen up and tune the bikes
Then continue on our quest

Leaving Palmy North
After our half day rest
Polson hill is the first
An early day 12 test

154k's is a big day
With gravel and hills to ride
The average speed is good
The wind still on our side

We book a cabin for the night
Tomorrow head winds and rain
An early start to Wellington
Wet tents would be a pain

The Remutaka Cycle Trail
Provides a welcome change
From traffic and tar seal
As we cross the mountain range

From Te Marua to the coast
The wind and rain were steady
It's finally into Wellington
The Interislander waits ready

A bit of time to wait
To "My Ride" with my bike
A chain, a tune and brake pads
Great service, what we like!

To the wharf, onto the ferry
On board, time for a rest
A feed, a drink, a snooze
Boat rides are the best

Picton slowly shows itself
At Top 10 for the night
Put up tents, time for bed
Goodnight all sleep tight

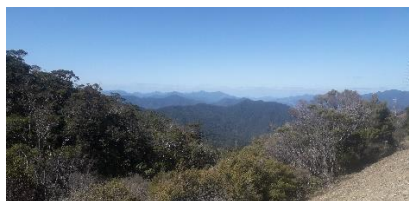
Queen Charlotte drive beckons
So, we climb above the town
Decide to take the single track
A climb, then sweet ride down



Cross Pelorus Bridge and leave
The tar seal for a while
Onto 4 wheel drive track
To ride a rocky pile

There's Murderers Rock to see
Then the hardest part to walk
It's hot and steep and stony
No time for a talk

740m to Maungatapu Saddle
A big climb to the top
Hours have past of the day
Now the time to stop



After lunch we look
At the downhill side
Bloody hell it's steep
Really ... can we ride?

Through the gate we walk
Decide to ride the bike
Slowly, carefully down
More gnarly than I like

Quite surprised myself
Rode the whole way down
Only one part, shit myself
Should of walked, you clown

Matai Valley is the bomb
Gravel fast and smooth
Draws us into Nelson
Like a Sunday cruise

98k's to Nelson Yesterday
On the bike, when we awake
Through Spooners Tunnel then
To Rotoroa and the lake

Hit the lake for a wash
Bottoms full of mud
Clean and dry back at the tent
Those sand flies want your blood

Cover up and cook our food
But those sand flies are hell bent
On feeding on our flesh
It's time to hit the tent

An early night, a good book
Saves me from the hoard
But 12 hours in a tent
Is a long time to get bored

Early in our ride south
A virus is in the news
But to be not to glib
Its Corona I would choose

Crisp and cool, a slice of lime
A Corona's a nice drop
But Covid 19 is no Joke
And it has to STOP!

The closer we get to the Bluff
The deaths are really sad
NZ starts to shut the door
This Corona virus is ... BAD!

But on we ride through Murchison
Maruia Saddle passes by
Springs Junction for the night
Good food, and not a pie

Springs Junction at our camp
We're joined by Vic and Stu
In the stream for a wash
The others joined me too

Vic and Stu dropped their pants
Displaying all with pride
Didn't quite know where to look
Tried to take it all in stride

Now I am not a prude But
I knew, even as they bent
I had to look away as they
Crawled headfirst into tents

An early start, off by first light
Hit Reefton early on
Two pies and coffee quick
Rains forecast, must get gone

Big River draws us closer
The mountain looming near
All the talk about this trail
Has left us all in fear



We ride the 4 wheel drive track
Right up to the hut
And lunch with Steve and Fleur
It's time to head down but

The trail has disappeared
Turned into a tramping track
We mount our trusty steeds
To give that track a crack

There's twists and turns aplenty
To test our riding skill
Slippery roots across the track
As we descend that hill

Dry river beds to struggle through
We're off our bikes to push
Dead trees cross our path
As we struggle in the bush

Light rain is falling down
We find the girls and talk
Deb has had a fall
And they have had to walk

A bucket hangs nearby
Merrijigs Hotel Snack Bar
Provides us with a fix
Ems Power Cookie best by far

Once down the hill we find
Smooth riding going down
A cabin for the night
In Ikamatua town

Just as we settle in
The heavens opened wide
The rain came pouring down
Up on the mountain side

Just yesterday the barman said
She crashed out with a twist
A car ride to Greymouth
Turned into a broken wrist

Riders still behind us
Had to walk down in the rain
The track became unrideable
To try would be insane

Other riders struggle in
All with tales to spill
To add to the stories
Of the Big River Hill

Two riders turned up just on dark
Both Stu and Vic were here
Wet and cold they shivered
A tough day, that was clear

Just walking down the hill
They both fell off the track
And even with some help
Struggled hard to get bikes back

But bloodied, muddied, wet and cold
The riders all limped in
Just making it to Ikamatua
Felt like we'd had a win

A shower and dry clothes
A drink and some good grub
Life didn't seem so bad
That night at the Ikamatua Pub

Sadly in the morning
Vic knew he couldn't win
A risk of pneumonia, so
He had to pull the pin

Charles, earlier up north
Went home, he'd had enough
He'd stopped and given up
He was finding it too tough

Once home he had regrets
And talked it over with his wife
"If I don't finish this thing
I'll regret it all my Life"

So back to the tour he went
To continue with the ride
We sometimes rode with Charles
With him by our side

Charles carried on each day
He who'd stopped and had enough
He kept the pedals turning
And finished up in Bluff

"Mike and the Americans"
Sounds like a 60's band
But actually 3 riders
Who started with us and...

Rode with us on the beach
Later passed us in a burst
you knew that they were coming
you always heard them first

Hey "NMNUTZ" How ya doing?
You'd hear the Yankee call
And fly past in a blur
Shouting "see ya all!"



Mike would ride on too
Chewing up the miles
All the time maintaining
One of his big smiles

Now, those boys were glamping
Didn't need to carry tents
Half the load to carry
And thrice the money spent!

Andy and Susan said
Of course, come and stay
There's beds here for you
To help you on your way

They lived near to Greymouth
Close to Shanty Town
A small climb up the hill
In the morning down

Rode the old tram line to Kumara
Onto Cowboy Paradise for lunch
2 bucks for a coffee
But we sorta had a hunch ...



That the place was a bit more,
No ordinary watering hole
As that old cowboy saloon
Was bedecked with stripper poles

Leaving Paradise with a smile
Imagine this place at night
All dancing girls and cowboys
Now that would be a sight

Alas, that was a sight
We would never come across
Cause we had to mosey on
To a little place called Ross

Ross top 10 was really cool
Containers by the sea
Put up our tents and ...
Went shopping for our tea

Rode our bikes into Ross
Bout 2k's up the road
Did our shop and headed back
With our shopping load

As we slowly rode back
From that little town
Looking back to check all clear
My riding mate went down

I swear it wasn't me
That caused my mate to squeal
As he somehow managed to
Fall off onto the seal

"What the hell happened"
I surely had to ask
"I'm not sure, I think
I took my mind off of the task"

A few holes in his gear
And a bit of gravel rash
More worried bout his bike
Than an elbow with a gash

Mrs Top 10 was on call
And cleaned the blood away
Stuck on a bit of second skin
A bandage made it stay



From Ross to Franz Josef
Don't know what happened here
Must have been riding half asleep
Cause my memories not too clear

From Franz to Fox, 3 good climbs
An early wake up for the day
A little stroll up to the Glacier
Then onto lunch at Bruce Bay

Lake Paringa was our aim
But feeling good we went past,
An extra 50k's for the day
We cycled on to Haast

Day 21 of our long ride
Chris camped with us at Haast
He was on day 12 I think
Man, that guy was Crazy

Chris was up at 4am
To carry on his ride
Set off into the blackness
Just took it in his stride

Our start was more sedate
But we had to face the pass
Very steep at the start
But eased a bit at last

At the summit of the pass
We stopped, got off the bikes
Oh look, a track to climb
Like we really need a hike

Hid the bikes in the bush
And climbed up to the top
Views forever North and South
They didn't seem to stop

After 150k's yesterday
And the pass to climb today
We decided to call it quits
At Makarora for the day

The further we head south
It's harder to be thrifty
And you don't even care
When the pie cost you \$8.50

At Makarora we met a lady
A cyclist from Taiwan
Touring around New Zealand
But her name has gone

We sat and had a chat
Of adventure here and there
And shared our food for dinner
Before Corona Fear

Left Makarora behind us
And early in the day
Climbed over the neck
Before the Lake Hawea Cafe

A stop for morning tea
We caught up again with Stu
Having a coffee and a scone
With the Taiwan lady too

We went our separate ways
Stopped by the river side
As the kayakers played "the Wave"
Hope they enjoyed "their" ride



Finally off the tar seal
And on to the river trails
Sights to take your mind off
All your backside ails

Relaxing time for lunch
On the foreshore of the lake
Round the Wanaka A & P show
Was a detour we had to make

Back on the main road south
An Iconic place to stay
Cardrona Hotel for the night
But did they make us pay

Nearly 200 bucks a room
The decision wasn't hard
If in doubt, close your eyes
Anduse your credit card

Found our room, then went
Out to get our gear
Just as our lady from Taiwan
Arrived as well, out there

No room at the inn
No other place to stay
Not allowed to camp
I'll have to go away

No, just wait and see
It's not all doom and gloom
When they're not looking
We'll sneak you in our room

Quick, get in fast
Get in and shut the door
We've got the beds for us
But you can have the floor

So just for one night
The two became a three
Sorry about that Cardrona
That's the way it had to be

We struggled up the crown
And heard chit chat far behind
Muscles burning, gasping air
Were those voices in our mind

No, we were not hearing things
Those voices closer still
How could they even talk
As we struggled up the hill

Climbing up the range
Working harder than I liked
Two old grannies passed us
On bloody electric bikes



Sweeping down the range
Through hairpins turning tight
Riding onto Arrowtown
Finally, a welcome sight

Stu and Charles turn up
As we take a little tour
Through the streets of Arrowtown
The two becomes a four

As we stop in the town
Time for a coffee break
We head off down the trail
Towards the Queenstown Lake

Follow the signs to Queenstown
It's so easy most would say
But at every twist and turn
We were led astray

Trails went here and there
The signs point out and say
Names for every place around
But not Queenstown, no way

Just put "Queenstown" on the sign
It's not so hard we say
Then we'd not get lost
And we'd know the way

Finally made it to Queenstown
But no time to stop
Before we catch the Earnslaw
We will need to shop

With only an hour to spare
We get our food to take
On board the classic boat
For our trip across the lake

So we board the boat
Charles has left us here
And as we leave the dock
He's already drinking beer

From Walter Peak we ride
Through classic Southern land
A vast, wild country
Opens up before us and

We start to feel the burn
As we climb a hill called Von
Just as you think you're at the top
It keeps going on and on

Near Mavora Lakes we stop
At a shelter with a loo
A water tank and tap
With a picnic table too

James and Deano join us
For a night at the shed
Then Stu turns up as well
For a place to rest his head



Chris rides in to camp
A bit later in the day
Keen to go on further
Not sure if he'll stay

We all eat our food
And chat around the seat
James and Dean have chocolate
For us all to eat

Chris decides to stay
Four boys set up in the shed
Stu and I put up our tents
For us to rest our heads

I found out next morning
That I had missed the nip
Stu had passed out whiskey
That he carried on his hip

Chris took off early
As we woke up to the day
Ate, packed up our gear
And set off on our way

As the landscape got more rural
The gravel took a turn
Onto a cycle trail
That took us to Mossburn

Its twists and turns were many
As it followed a small burn
That gravel track seemed endless
As we took another turn

At Mossburn we found the dome
A café in the town
Coffee and good food
And a chance to sit down

We're surprised to see Chris here
He left early on his way
His plan was to ride as long
As it took to finish today

He still intends to finish
So he hit the road
While we drank our coffee
And sat to ease the load

The road's now straight and flat
Power poles disappear in the rain
Wind that blows against us
I start to feel the pain

The wind and rain don't stop
We're both tired and sore
Struggle hard to ride the bike
The worst weather of the tour

A good time for a break
Camp Taringatura is the place
Head up the driveway
And come face to face

With a great big dog
Barking and not shy
Luckily that dog
Only wanted to say hi

Nathan wanders out
And invites us in
For a cup of coffee
And a chat with him

His two kids run around
Tearing up the place
While we have some lunch
They both keep up the pace

The rain has given up
And time moves on and so
We need to get to Winton
By today, so we must go

Thank you Nathan, see ya kids
Sorry we cannot stay
But Camp Taringatura was
Some sunshine in a crappy day

Faulty towers comes to mind
Hotel Winton's old enough
Seems stuck in the fifties
Our last night before the Bluff

What "no food here tonight"
We find out with a frown
James and Deano join us
We have to hit the town

Monday night in Winton
Not the highlight of the tour
But still we find a good feed
For our fantastic four

Winton Hotel includes breakfast
No one told us when we booked
Just a minor detail
That they had overlooked

Luckily, we found out
Before we left the place
Shamelessly we went in
And totally filled our faces

Packed up and on the bikes
With faces fully stuffed
We set off to start
Our final ride to Bluff

The wind and rain were gone
Invercargill for a rest
Before the coastal trail
With more challenges that test

We had to run the gauntlet
Of sewage ponds down south
With all the flying bugs
You had to shut your mouth

Once back on the highway
Jousting with the trucks
Just keep left, and pray
You have to trust your luck

Finally we get to see
That big Bluff sign with rust
A place for a quick stop
And a photo is a must



The final k's to Stirling point
A classic photo by the sign
That points to Cape Reinga
And a toast with bubbly wine



Tania and Victor cheer us
As our challenge ends
Some close rellies of ...
Our Orere Point Friends

Other riders stream in now
Stu achieves his aim
More bikes coming, here's ...
Deano and his mate James



Now our ride is over
They have a house, not far
Right here in Bluff
We ride, don't need a car

Just looking at the app
Much later in the day
After all his challenges we see
That Steves not far away

Kim is still far north
Still heading south by car
Won't get here in time
The distance is too far

So we head back to the point
To cheer our new friend in
Make sure he's got a photo
To capture his big grin

Charles had also finished
After his rough start
No regrets now Charles
That guy rode with heart

Mike and his last American
Have also ridden in
"Hey NMNUTZ" calls the Yank
Mike just greets us with his grin

So our TA family
Who joined us at the top
Meet here again one last time
And now it's time to STOP!