



# Rat Tales

May 2008

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*Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club*

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## NEW ZEALAND JOURNEYS

MARCH 3 — 14, 2008

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I will keep this brief because there were 18 club members on this trip and I am sure others will want to share their experiences with you.

This is the best adventure I have ever had!!!

The Milford and Kepler Tracks are absolutely awesome! They are quite different to each other. It would be impossible to compare them; they are both spectacular in their own way.

The Milford Track follows beautiful rivers with the clearest, purest and greenest water I have ever seen, through dense rainforests with mossy vegetation in vivid shades of greens and amazing shapes. Colourful fungi grow on the forest floor and whilst others cling to fallen trees. These trees and fallen logs also become home to many different types of ferns. The Wetlands act as a giant sponge and nourish and sustain the surrounding trees and shrubs. Waterfalls are frequent and fast flowing; the highest, most powerful and mind blowing being the Sutherland Falls. The terrain and gradients are ever changing. There were some challenging climbs and some even more challenging descents.

In contrast, the Kepler Track, at the highest point, is above the snow line and at some stages we were walking along the top of the Southern Alps with breathtaking

views in every direction. Mountain ranges spread in every direction with lakes in their midst and glacier capped mountains towering above. As I stood and gazed in awe I could only wonder "*Will I ever see anything more beautiful than this?*" When descending we were challenged with over 90 switchbacks which meant the gradient was super steep but we soon were back down into surroundings quite similar to the Milford Track with rainforests, raging rivers, cascading waterfalls and interesting birdlife.

The huts on both walks were great! There were plenty of gas cook tops and bench space to prepare our meals and the bunks were very comfortable.

The whole two weeks went like clockwork for me. Angela had organised everything to perfection from booking the walks, huts etc, accommodation, bus trips, the cruise on Milford Sound and the trip on the Catamaran out to the cave to see the Glow Worms.

I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to do these walks and share the experience with a wonderful group of fellow club members. I look forward to doing similar trips in the future.

Marianne Kennedy