

We headed down to Arrowtown for our holidays mid February. With a copy of the Classic NZ Road Rides book and an article in NZ Cyclist magazine written by John McKenzie on riding the crown Range, we set out for 7 days of cycling around the Lake District.

With fantastic scenery, cyclist friendly roads and traffic, and more importantly, great weather we started off with the Arrowtown loop ride, which takes you past Lake Hayes and onto low volume traffic roads such as Speargrass Flat and Littles roads. Watch out for the last climb on Littles Road up towards Arthurs Point as it's a bit of a test at 15 to 20%. A diversion into Queenstown and back adds an additional 12Km with the total ride being around 55Km.

With the big ride of the trip being the Crown Range we set off from Arrowtown on a crisp but fine morning heading to the 'top'. Turning off the main road onto 'the climb' you got your first appreciation of the gradient ahead of you, so with head down and bum up we started the ascent with the 7 switch backs, which was just magical as after each turn the view changed, with more of the vista evident the higher we climbed. I'm in awe of how fast those in the Tour of Southland go up this section, and on reaching the lookout point it was a quick stop for photo and to take in the view. The next section of the climb is gradual, but after a while and a tight left turn you see what's in front of you and you know its time to turn off the alarm on your heart rate monitor. The last 3 to 4 Km to the top is just a phenomenal climb, with no respite; not even the go/stop man at the road works 1 ½ K's from the top giving us a break, as he waved us inside the cones past the waiting cars. Completing the last left hand turn you get your first view of the top with the stone monument finally visible, and mustering the last vestiges of energy, and some deep breaths, you push to the top. The sense of achievement at reaching the summit is fabulous, with some parked tourists asking 'did you just bike up there' and with a sense of pride we said – yes. For the adrenaline junkies out there the descent is a must, with a very good road surface, courteous cars and feeling pumped after the climb; the ride down is fantastic with wind in your face and smell of burning brake pads up your nose you won't beat it.

For a change in scenery, we drove through to Wanaka to do the Wanaka/Lake Hawea Flat Loop ride as described in the classic NZ Road Rides book. Don't be fooled by the title as 'flat' on this ride means undulating with occasional leg testing 'pinches'. That said, it again is a very scenic and enjoyable. Riding through the settlement of Hawea at the lakes edge is magical, and by extending the ride a bit out around Hawea Flat before heading back through Albert Town to Wanaka, you extend the ride out to around 60Km.

Deciding to have a rest day from the road riding, we hired some 'fat tired' bikes with the help of the great team and R&R Sports in Queenstown and checked out the mountain bike parks around Queenstown. Catering for all abilities, the tracks around Queenstown are world class and our final ride of the day was hell-raising blast down from the top of the gondola to the base station. Forget the mortgage and give it a go, as this must do is absolutely exhilarating.

The final ride of our trip was the Queenstown to Glenorchy return ride of around 100Km and with some tiredness in the legs, this was a bit of a testing ride as its very undulating with a number (read many), of sharp climbs. With lake Wakatipu at your

side and riding through areas of native bush it is just stunning and with a stop at Bennets Bluff look out you realise how lucky we are here in NZ to have such a pristine environment to enjoy. To make the picture perfect, on the way back, to watch the SS Earnslaw head out from Queenstown, with the smell of burning coal in the air, coupled with tired bodies from a week of challenging riding; it was a perfect end to our holiday.

Without John McKenzie's article on riding the Crown Range leading us to explore other rides around the area through the Classic NZ Road Rides book, we would never have considered a riding holiday in the Lake District. We are so glad we did as it was a magical time, enjoying our own back yard – and its worth enjoying.

Peter & Rowena