



The Winter Challenge 2009 Coasts & Passes – Aug 6-9.

Second running.

**An exciting event for those who like to go looking
at “winter” from their classic vehicles!**

Who better to report on the 2009 Winter Challenge – Coasts & Passes than the organisers..

In Brief: This winter's coast to coast classic vehicle rally started in Timaru on Friday morning the 7th of August, with an overnight stopover in Wanaka. On the Saturday morning the group travelled over the Haast Pass and down to Jackson Bay on the West Coast for lunch and then to stay at the wilderness frontier settlement of Haast Junction. On the Sunday the group returned over the beautiful Haast Pass then over the Crown Range in Central Otago. The finish was near Cromwell, the afternoon of the 9th of August. All this in New Zealand's beautiful South Island.

Day 1, Friday. The fellowship and fun had by all was fantastic. On Thursday evening we all met up at a Timaru Hotel for drinks and a meal. For those who had been on a Winter Challenge before, it was good to meet up again and meet many new people who, after the three days, would form new friendships. Friday morning, we awoke to a clear blue sky and a light frost. We all met up at a neat café on the south side of Timaru called – “Off the Rails – Goes Country”, a warm and inviting venue that provided us with a fabulous morning tea. After a briefing it was hard to get the people out and going. But never-the-less underway we got. The entrants (39 people in 19 vehicles) either involved in the trialing or enjoying just touring set off with their tulip instructions for Wanaka and in between the absolutely beautiful South Canterbury and McKenzie Country areas, along the way crossing Burkes and Lindis Passes. At Lake Tekapo the lovely church by the lake front was a draw card for many to take a picture or two. The blue sky and the snow right down to the lake's edge made for good pictures. On down the road we went to turn off into Lake Ohau – a drive that many won't have done before this trip – this place has a ski field and a Lodge for anyone who would like to escape the real world – just lovely. The Lodge provided us with lunch after a drink and many sat out on the sunny deck taking in the views of Mount Cook towering over the other mountains at the top of the lake. Once again getting the group on the road again was a mission! Next after travelling through Omarama it was a good idea to stop at the top of the Lindis Pass – the plan was to gather for a group picture and the press people would be there to record a story or two. But, after 20 minutes or so we took a very good picture record ourselves. The day's motoring concluded in Wanaka at the Oakridge Resort Hotel and we all gathered at 6.30pm for drinks by the fire and a meal. Many had travelled with their hoods down in the fresh air – so the relaxation was too much and had to retire early. A fabulous first day.

Day 2, Saturday. A relaxed starting time 10am. After a good breakfast and a walk for some, we gathered in the resorts entrance car park area for briefing and got underway to the West Coast. The weather in Wanaka was a bit dark and about six degrees! The skies to the west looked quite bright – good news for us – following the route out of Wanaka to Albert town and onto State Highway 6 for the coast. Great motoring roads around here! The drive from Makarora to Haast through the Mount Aspring National Park is one of the world's prettiest drives. On this day we drove into the sun and a lovely day (we later were told that this day was the first fine day after 15 of rain). Many dropped their car's top and enjoyed the scenery. The waterfalls and plant life roadside are just amazing. Once in Haast Junction, it was on down to Jackson Bay for lunch about another 49kms. We had organised the Cray Pot to provide us with lunch (a once mobile pie cart once in Cromwell – and now without wheels). Arriving at 1pm to a very fine day for Jackson Bay we all enjoyed our very freshly built lunch (fish was just off the boats) as a group. Many went for a walk to have a look around – I guess Jackson Bay is one of those places you are at only once or twice in a life time! The place has a lot of history and is a place for the keen and hardy types. The low sand fly count made it bearable too!

Back the 49kms to Haast Junction to finish at the local DOC visitors centre where we all got to view an enlightening video of the lower West Coast and the mountains behind – very interesting too.

That evening, we doubled the population of Haast and more or less had the Hotel to ourselves. The group gathered for a drink in the house bar and then a meal in the hotels main restaurant and enjoyed the fellowship after another full and interesting day.

Day 3, Sunday. After a good West Coast breakfast, we all gathered for the day's briefing outside the hotels main entrance on yet another fantastic day with blue skies above. We hopped onto State highway 6 heading East to Wanaka and on. We stopped at a Makarora café for morning tea – another neat place with their fire going. Heading now into Central Otago on a beautiful sunny day with the snow capped mountains all around us was just lovely and how lucky we were! Through Wanaka township and on up and over the Crown Range. At the top of the pass the snow was roadside and a number of us stopped to take a memorable photograph under the brilliantly sunny sky. Down the zig zags and onto State Highway 6. Our finishing and final function place was The Big Picture just outside Cromwell. Here we enjoyed a very nice luncheon and prize giving for the winners of the events trialing. Mid afternoon it was time to start heading home.

The group had people from all around New Zealand and a couple from Australia – all of whom could have carried on for a few more days doing what we had been enjoying.

All in all, the event was very enjoyable for its fun, fellowship, really good people and that beautiful scenery around us. We must say, even if the weather hadn't been as great the event would have been just as good any way! The people were delighted they didn't need to put on their tyre chains either!! Roll on 2011!

The next Winter Challenge – Coasts & Passes will be starting in Dunedin and heading for the Coast again early August 2011.

David & Christine Mehrtens.



The gathered group picture at the top of the Lindis Pass.



Heading into Lake Ohau for lunch – day one.



For further information about this event or about other events visit our website at: www.mainlandclassic.co.nz

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