Jim's 'Xtreme' Rimu

Guide's Choice winner 2007

Hike Cascade Saddle, Mt. Aspiring National Park • Bike Hanmer Forest
Swim with Dusky Dolphins • Mountain Bike Queen Charlotte Track and Craigieburn Skifield
Sea Kayak Abel Tasman National Park • Hike Mt. Owen, Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Park

14 days: Christchurch – Queenstown **Fare: US$3999 + tax**

Our guides often have great ideas for new activities and destinations for our trips, so in 2006 we created an annual competition giving guides the chance to design their own trip. The 2007 winner was **Jim Hawkridge,** and his *Xtreme Rimu* had everyone talking. Over the years we've received many requests for an extreme version of our classic *Rimu* trip. Well – here it is. A trip guaranteed to get your heart pumping and your endorphins flowing, experiencing New Zealand's wilderness with a true adventure multisport athlete.

Jim's love of adventure racing permeates this trip, with challenging bike rides, stunning little-known trail runs, incredible hiking and a few exciting extras – swimming with local Dusky dolphins, sea kayaking in the idyllic waters of Abel Tasman National Park and soaking in natural mineral spas in Hanmer. We're not exaggerating when we say Jim is a top athlete – in 2006 he and his team-mates competed in the gruelling Southern Traverse multisport race finishing 5th overall. In May 2007, he ran (and won) the annual Routeburn Classic Race, running the full 24 miles (38km) of the Routeburn Track in just under three hours. You don't have to be quite as fit as Jim to do this trip, but good all round fitness and stamina is a must for this adventure!

Not that it's all about gruelling activities – in addition to his athletic achievements, Jim receives rave reviews from our past travellers for his boundless energy, approachability… and fine backcountry culinary skills! So you'll be well fed at the end of each day. We know you'll have a great trip, but enough from us, here's what Jim says about his dream trip…

"I often found myself in a guiding role, while on adventures with friends. They kept telling me that I should do it for a living, and here I am. Over the years, I have competed in adventure races and mountain runs and usually the training takes me on some interesting adventures. I find it extremely rewarding to share such adventures with people, seeing them overcome their own personal challenges and having a blast doing something out of the ordinary. Knowing you have made a difference is for me the essence of guiding...

Cheers! Jim"

The Guide's Choice trips are a great option as a returner's trip if you've travelled with us before, or if you've never been here and want to see a different side of New Zealand, away from the usual tourist trails and into the areas where real New Zealanders go when they're looking for an active adventure!

Monday **Arrive, bike Hanmer Forest**

Most people leave the Northern Hemisphere on a Saturday evening and arrive in Auckland early on Monday morning. You'll lose a day to the dateline – but you get it back on the way home! You'll immediately take the short flight to Christchurch in the South Island arriving by mid-morning. We'll meet you there and drive up the coast to the mountain village of Hanmer Springs. You'll be fitted with a 21-speed front-suspension *Specialized* mountain bike, and we'll get our endorphins pumping with a mountain bike ride in Hanmer Forest. Afterwards we head back down towards the coast to the seaside town of Kaikoura. We'll arrive by late afternoon, so you'll have time to relax and enjoy the spectacular ocean views from our beachfront lodgings before dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: *Panorama Motel, Kaikoura* *(L,D)*

Tuesday **Swim with Dusky dolphins**

We'll rise early this morning to greet the day with a quick breakfast before swimming with some of Kaikoura's more famous local personalities – playful Dusky dolphins! With mask, snorkel, and fins you'll have the opportunity to enter their world and swim among them. If you prefer, you can stay on the boat and marvel at their acrobatic displays from the deck. After an early lunch we'll head to Anakiwa on the edge of Queen Charlotte Sound. After a short water taxi ride, we'll arrive at the secluded Lochmara Lodge – a run through the forest at dusk anyone?!

ACCOMMODATION: Lochmara Lodge, Queen Charlotte Sound *(B,L,D)*

Wednesday **Mountain bike Queen Charlotte Track**

We offer a range of fantastic single-track and road riding to suit your experience and interests. The Queen Charlotte Track is rated one the best mountain biking tracks in the South Island and is one of the few areas of New Zealand wilderness where mountain bikes are permitted. We'll spend the morning biking back towards Anakiwa, and if mountain biking is your thing, we have challenging single-track riding available for the more experienced. Alternatively, road cycling along Queen Charlotte Drive allows you to cover a greater distance and take in more of the Marlborough Sounds – it's your call! After we've finished biking we'll continue up to the Abel Tasman National Park for dinner as the last rays of the sun steal across Tasman Bay.

ACCOMMODATION: Abel Tasman lodgings, Abel Tasman National Park *(B,L,D)*

Thursday **Hike Mt. Owen Circuit**

At 6,150 feet (or 1,875 metres), Mt. Owen is the highest point in Kahurangi National Park, a sculptured landscape of marble karst topography including New Zealand's longest cave system. While most people hike this track in three days, your guide will lead you on his two-day version, approaching from the north side, camping near Granity Pass, before summiting on day two and returning to the trailhead that day.

Today we'll begin by climbing to Granity Pass, either via the Blue Creek Track or the ridge walk, depending on the conditions at the time. The climb is quite steep through open forest for about two hours until you reach a clearing overlooking the west. There's a fantastic echo and, of course, views to die for! The next section of the track travels through spectacular and unusual alpine vegetation, and we'll be walking along a dry creek bed for most of the last leg of today's hike. We'll camp this evening alongside some tarns, where the lack of artificial light gives us the perfect opportunity to check out some of the Southern Hemisphere's most well-known stellar features, including the Southern Cross, the Coal Sack, and views of the Milky Way like you've never seen before.

This is serious wilderness country – no roads, no shops, no TVs – just incredible views and marvellous solitude. Jim's aim is to help you keep your pack weight as minimal as possible. You'll be carrying a sleeping bag, a few spare clothes, some food, and we'll share the tents between us.

CAMPING: Near Granity Pass, Kahurangi National Park *(B,L,D)*

Friday **Summit Mt. Owen**

Today is an unforgettable day – the scenery gets better and more bizarre with each step! The track changes to a route marked by stone cairns as we hike for two hours to the summit of Mt. Owen. As we ascend, we'll guide you through a labyrinth of crevices and dramatically distorted rock formations, which give this landscape an aura of other worldliness.

Once you've reached the summit, you'll be inspired by the surrounding views, and you'll know that all the sweat has been worth it for this moment. You'll see the ranges of Nelson Lakes National Park in the distance as well as stunning views to the ocean in the north, with the immense Kahurangi National Park in between. We'll then head back down Mt. Owen, before returning to our base in Abel Tasman for a well-earned cold beer (or orange juice) as you reflect on your day's adventure.

ACCOMMODATION: Abel Tasman lodgings *(B,L,D)*

Saturday **Sea kayak Abel Tasman National Park**

Today we'll take a water taxi to Anchorage Bay, and then kayak back again! Upon arrival at the beautiful beach of Anchorage, you'll have some time to appreciate the solitude of the area before jumping in your kayak for the journey back to the lodge. You may be up for a race today, but you'll find it hard not to stop from time to time for a swim along the deserted golden beaches dotted along the Abel Tasman National Park coastline. We'll paddle around Pitt Head before passing Te Puketea Bay, and the carved granite headlands of the 'mad mile'. From here we'll kayak south past tidal estuaries, sea caves and the calm waters of the 'Astrolabe Roadstead', before heading back to shore.

ACCOMMODATION: *Abel Tasman lodgings, Abel Tasman National Park* *(B,L,D)*

Sunday **Hike at Cape Foulwind, seal colony and trail run along Pororari River**

This morning we'll travel to the West Coast for a coastal hike from Cape Foulwind to Tauranga Bay past awesome sweeping views of the Tasman Sea, long stretches of often deserted beach and rolling West Coast farmland. Along the way we'll visit a local seal colony and watch them play among the craggy islets and sheltered rock pools that dot the coastline. Then, after a picnic lunch, we'll head to Punakaiki where we'll have the afternoon to go running in the limestone canyons and lush rainforest that characterise the area. We'll take a trail run along the Pororari River in the Paparoa National Park. If you prefer, you can stroll along the beach or just enjoy the views and hunker down with a cuppa and a good book to celebrate reaching the halfway point of the *'Xtreme' Rimu* trip – up to you!

ACCOMMODATION: *Punakaiki lodgings – comfortable and quiet* *(B,L,D)*

Monday **Pancake Rocks and blowholes, mountain biking Craigieburn**

We'll start with a gentle walk down to Punakaiki's famous Pancake Rocks and blowholes before heading inland over the Southern Alps. From Punakaiki, we'll travel over Arthurs Pass, one of only three alpine passes that traverse the Alps, to Craigieburn ski field. Today, we have an awesome downhill bike ride in store for you. There are various well-formed single track rides available, or gravel road riding if single track mountain biking isn't your thing. Later this afternoon, we'll retire to our lodgings at Flock Hill station, a working high-country sheep farm.

ACCOMMODATION: *Flock Hill Lodge, Flock Hill* *(B,L,D)*

Tuesday **Hike Aoraki/Mt. Cook National Park**

This morning we'll drive to Mt. Cook village, at the head of Lake Pukaki. Mt. Cook is known as Aoraki or 'cloud piercer' by the local Maori and is the highest mountain in New Zealand. We have a stunning and little-known day hike (weather permitting) to the main ridge above Mueller Glacier – directly opposite Mt. Cook.

It's a tough slog up, but you'll remember the view of the Mueller Glacier and the surrounding peaks of the Main Divide forever! There are also other hiking options if you'd like to take it a little easier. The weather conditions are very important in this area, as it's a true alpine climate notorious for sudden weather shifts. If we aren't able to do the Mueller hike, we'll take an impressive hike up the Hooker Valley to a glacial lake at the base of Hooker Glacier, complete with icebergs.

ACCOMMODATION: *Mt. Cook Alpine Lodge, Aoraki/Mt .Cook National Park* *(B,L,D)*

Wednesday **Free day in Wanaka**

After breakfast we'll drive through to Wanaka, a lazy lakeside town, and one of our favourite chill-out spots. It's a chance to rest your body before the hiking and biking of the final few days of the *"Xtreme" Rimu*. You'll find all the comforts of civilisation here – massage therapists, restaurants, sidewalk cafés, and window-shopping! You'll also find some incredible optional activities too, such as jet boating, skydiving, horse trekking, fishing and winery tours – it's all here! There are incredible hikes and bike rides around Lake Wanaka as well. If you prefer, just soak up the atmosphere or lounge about with a book.

ACCOMMODATION: *Lake Wanaka Lodge, Wanaka* *(B)*

Thursday **Hike to Mt. Aspiring Hut**

You'll have the morning free to explore Wanaka, before meeting up for an early lunch. We'll drive through the Matukituki Valley to start our three-day hike over the Cascade Saddle, which links the majestic West Matukituki and Dart Valleys that lie in the Mt. Aspiring National Park. This is a World Heritage Area of glacier-clad mountains and natural beech forest, and a fantastic location to explore. We hike up through an alpine valley beside a crystal clear stream for a couple of hours to a clearing. All around us glaciers cling to cliff faces, broken by a myriad of waterfalls. Occasionally an ice avalanche will shatter the silence. From here we continue on to Mt. Aspiring Hut – a spacious and modern mountain hut, albeit in the middle of nowhere, and the scenery is off the charts with Mt. Aspiring looming 10,000 feet above you.

ACCOMMODATION: *Mt. Aspiring Hut, Mt. Aspiring National Park* *(B,L,D)*

Friday **Hike over Cascade Saddle to Dart Hut**

Today is the most challenging day on the whole trip as we hike up and over Cascade Saddle to Dart Hut. After a hearty breakfast we'll begin the steep hike through native beech forest and onto snowgrass-covered slopes that lead up to the saddle. It is an alpine pass crossing at an elevation of 5,500 feet (1800 metres), and generally takes between eight to ten hours. The views from Cascade Saddle toward the glaciers and surrounding peaks of the Mt. Aspiring massif are spectacular. This is a truly majestic region of Mt. Aspiring National Park, offering a unique mix of geography, flora and views that you'll remember forever. From the saddle we descend to the valley floor and lateral moraines of the Dart Glacier as we make our way to Dart Hut – our alpine home for the night.

ACCOMMODATION: *Dart Hut, Mt. Aspiring National Park* *(B,L,D)*

Saturday **Hike out to Sandy Bluff, overnight at Kinloch Lodge**

From Dart Hut we hike about 10 miles (16 km) down the Dart River valley, through open beech forest and grassy river flats to Sandy Flat. Along the way, you'll take in views of the Curzon Glacier high in the mountains across the Dart River. The track breaks out at Quinns Flat, a beautiful stretch of golden grass surrounded by mountains, and then returns to the bush as we continue on towards Sandy Flat. From there we transfer to Kinloch Lodge, a remote wilderness lodge, on the northern shore of Lake Wakatipu. It's a great place to unwind after the challenging hike of the last three days, enjoying good food, and soaking in the lodge's outdoor hot tub. What a place for our final night together!

ACCOMMODATION: *Kinloch Lodge – simply stunning!* *(B,L,D)*

Sunday **Bike to Glenorchy, depart for home**

This is the last day of your two-week trip around the South Island. After a relaxed and sumptuous breakfast we'll jump back on the bikes for one last ride through the New Zealand mountains along the road to Glenorchy, past Mt Alfred and the mouth of the Dart and Rees Valleys. This is a true wilderness cycling experience on a deserted back road. At Glenorchy we'll reconvene for lunch before taking the scenic lakeside drive back to Queenstown. We can drop you off at Queenstown airport at 2pm for flights departing after 3pm. If you've got a few more days to see the North Island, take a look at our *Kauri* itinerary. Or if you'd prefer to spend an extra day or so in Queenstown, we can help you arrange accommodation and we'll drop you off in town by mid-afternoon. Whatever your plans, you'll be refreshed and invigorated from the good food, exercise, rest, and great times you'll have had with us here in New Zealand!

(B,L)

Important Information

ACCOMMODATION: Our *Xtreme Rimu* trip is an activity-oriented trip around the South Island, with hand-picked comfortable accommodation throughout. Some places are quite luxurious, but many of the other places we stay are off-the-beaten-track – and don't have many accommodation options, like the Mt. Owen circuit where we are camping – but they are really, really spectacular. We think you'll love the places we stay! We prefer comfortable bed and breakfasts, lodges and apartments. As there's such a variety of accommodations on this trip, some places will have ensuite bathrooms and some will have shared bathrooms, so we may ask you to share a bathroom with other group members on occasion.

RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS: If you're flying in on the first day of the trip, we recommend arriving in Christchurch by approximately 9 - 10.30am on Monday. You can depart from Queenstown after 3pm on the last day of the trip. If you are considering alternative flight times please let us know so we can help make your trip as smooth as possible.

TRIP START: On the first day of the trip we can either pick you up from the Holiday Inn City Centre in Christchurch at 10.30am, or at the Christchurch domestic airport in front of the information desk at 11am.

TRIP END: On the last day of the trip we can drop you off at the Queenstown airport in time for the flights above, or anywhere in downtown Queenstown in the afternoon.

FITNESS: Our *Xtreme Rimu* trip has been designed for people who are physically and mentally prepared for a demanding trip. You don't have to be young or an iron man (although if you are, you won't be bored) but you should be in the habit of doing regular exercise. Age and experience are not important. For example, a person in their 50s who hikes weekly will be much happier than a 22-year-old couch potato. If you're concerned about your fitness level, have a chat with us so we can help you choose between the *Xtreme Rimu* trip and our other trips.

EXPERIENCE: You don't need any specific outdoor experience to enjoy the *Xtreme Rimu*. Our experienced guides are highly trained and will look after you. You don't need to have been in a sea kayak before to enjoy kayaking around Abel Tasman National Park. You don't need to be a serious cyclist to enjoy some of the rides we have available. All we ask is that you be energetic and in good shape and you'll have an incredible time. We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience, we have an impeccable safety record and we hold all relevant government licenses.

FLEXIBILITY: Because of the off-the-beaten-path and non-commercial nature of some of our accommodations on this trip, we sometimes need to change a night stop. We try to make as few changes as possible, but we ask that you know we retain the flexibility to make sure your trip is as good as it can be.

INCLUDED: The trip fare is US$3999 + 12.5% NZ government taxes. We quote all prices in US dollars, so our guests from all over the world can more easily relate prices to their own currencies. You can also join for shorter periods of time, at a pro-rated fare. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We have two guides per trip - a lead guide/driver and a co-guide who is responsible for meals and accommodations. This means we can really make sure you have a great time! We operate with small groups.
- Comfortable accommodation for the entire period you are with us. We can help organise accommodation for you if you want to arrive earlier or leave later.
- All your meals, except in Wanaka where your guides will point out the wide range of restaurants. Alcohol is not generally included, although we do spring for a few drinks here and there!
- All hiking, cycling, and kayaking described in the itinerary, except the optional extra activities. There are many optional activities available at extra cost, particularly in Wanaka. None of these activities are compulsory, and nor will your trip seem less awesome if you do the cheap or free options. Although some people enjoy sampling jet boating, skydiving, canyoning and so on, others prefer to just focus more on the hiking, paddling and cycling.

NOT INCLUDED: This is your holiday, and we are serious about not nickel-and-diming you! You'll have a few meals and drinks to cover, extra activities if you choose them, and you'll probably feel like tipping your guides at the end of a fabulous time, but you won't be pulling out your wallet every few minutes on your ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND trip!

We'll see you soon!

Itinerary valid through April 2010