



previous walk being only 3 and a half hours, it was time to go.

Off now on the second 19 kilometres. The second stage was lots of downhill, completely different muscles to our uphill stage, we certainly were getting a complete workout. This section is along a boardwalk on the ridge, the views to the left were over the Southern Ocean, sparkling in the early sun and to our right was Fiordland with patches of snow on the highest ridges and beautiful green valleys. The whole track was pristine and we did not spot one piece of rubbish anywhere, just completely natural bush and spectacular scenery. This must be the clean green NZ that they talk about overseas. We continued down to Luncheon Rock for a snack and to check Deryn's sore foot. On down to the flat and onto an old railway line that was used for forestry. We followed this all the way to Port Craig back on the coast. On this leg we crossed the largest wooden viaduct in the Southern Hemisphere hanging very high above a tiny stream. There was also a lot of wooden swing bridges which only take 1 person at a time.

At Port Craig we were greeted by the DOC workers with hot soup and sandwiches. This is the home of some Hector dolphins and the lodges are the best I have seen, you can even book your own room with a double bed. Everyone had to pass through here by 5pm or they could not continue until the next day. We were here by 11.30am. Deryn was having trouble walking at this stage so we decided to attack her expensive boots with a knife. We cut out the ankle sections which were hurting and were off again. No more pain and a very trendy look. I wore running shoes and did not receive any pain or blisters at all.

We left Port Craig at noon (12 hrs gone) and continued along the track to Blowholes Beach, through beech trees and down onto the sand.

Just like the movies, green bush right down to white sand and then clear blue sea, not a person or power line in sight, magic. Then back onto a four wheel drive track. We were getting pretty tired at this stage and just wanted to get to the end as quickly as possible. We went into overdrive and powered it up 170 stairs, up the cliff and through the last 30 minutes of bush, walking, walking. We passed quite a few people on this stage, some looking quite weary. We were on the home straight and just trying to finish as soon as possible. We just went for it and arrived home at about 4pm greeted with drinks, snacks, photos, certificates and lots of encouragement from the Hump Ridge crew. The first person arrived in 14 hours and 32 minutes, an amazing time considering the varied terrain and the darkness. We came home third in 16 hours and were truly blown away that we had completed the challenge in this time. Two groups of people decided to stay at Port Craig Lodge and complete the 3rd leg the following day. There were several checkpoints along the way, manned by volunteers to make sure we were all OK and not lost (also that we were not cheating).

This was a great challenge and so glad we did it. A once in a lifetime experience especially the night walking and the sunrise over Stewart Island. Special thanks to my buddy Deryn, also Kerryn Smith from Venture Southland Tourism for showing us her special part of NZ and Kate Hebblethwaite from the Hump Ridge crew. This challenge is going to be held again next year for adventurous individuals. I highly recommend it or as a 3 day tramp for those wanting this experience at a slower pace. Check it out.

Website-www.humpridgetrack.co.nz

kate@humpridgetrack.co.nz

kerryn@venturesouthland.co.nz

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