

The Otago Climber

August 2019



Roxanne Vogel on the North Ridge of Everest. Read Lydia Bradey's personal view of the peak and crowding – page 5.

The Otago Climber

*The monthly newsletter of the
Otago Section of the New Zealand Alpine Club*

August 2019

Club Night

Wednesday, 14 August 2019

University of Otago Staff Club, Union St, 7.30pm

This month David and Mimi take us China for Spicy Noodles and Stinky Tofu.

Earlier this year, David Liu and Mimi Chiu spent a month traveling in China revisiting the most famous area - Yangshuo. There they made some exciting new discoveries when they found the weather was not to their liking.

For anyone who's thinking of planning a climbing trip to this area of China, they'll also talk about the logistics, what to do on rest days and their other favourite subject, food!

"Hope to see you there to share our experience of climbing in China".
Everyone very welcome.



PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DATE FOR THIS CLUB NIGHT.

Trips and events calendar

Indoor Rockclimbing. 1 August. Eve O'Brien has organised for us to join North Otago Section for indoor climbing at the Waitaki Recreation Centre wall on Thursday 1st of August. Their session is from 5 - 6:30pm so we would be leaving Dunedin at 4pm from usual Logan Park meeting spot and expect to be back in Dunedin around 7:30pm. Bring \$10 cash to contribute for fuel plus cash for admission fee. They have some ropes/harnesses/shoes available for us to borrow if needed also but bring own gear if possible. Could people please text Eve on 0276423211 if interested, so that we could arrange transport.

Section book sale continues. Following the success of the recent sale of Section Library books, the Committee will continue the sale each Section Club Night. Ryan and Alex will bring along a couple of boxes of books each month – with everything for sale for a gold coin donation. A great chance to get winter reading material at hugely discounted prices. Remember to bring a few dollars when you come to Section Club Night on **Wednesday, 14 August.**

August Ski Touring. (snow permitting). Section chair Ryan Thomas is planning a ski touring trip during August – but is reluctant to set a date of mountain until he is confident that there will be sufficient, safe snow. This will be a trip for those with learner or intermediate ski-touring ability, so if you are keen, make sure you are registered with the Trip Website – and you will be automatically contacted once the details become clear. If you are not already registered – full details on page 10.



Bouldering in Christchurch. If you are into bouldering, there are two outstanding events in Christchurch at the end of August and in early September. Here is the link <https://nibs.nz/> for the bouldering comp on 31st August. A good excuse to go and try new Uprising. NZAC are a sponsor.

The other possibility is Flockfest <https://www.facebook.com/events/469022570560534/>. It is a fun bouldering comp on the Saturday at Flock Hill and removing of wilding pines on the Sunday. Again NZAC are a sponsor.

If you are interested in either event, email us at otago.climber@gmail.com and we will look at coordinating transport if there is enough interest.

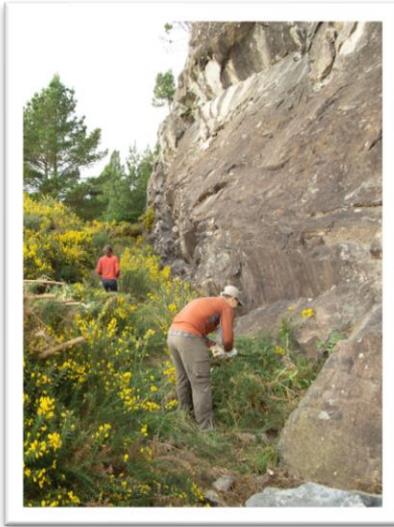
Section AGM and Club Night. The Annual General Meeting of the Otago Section of the NZ Alpine Club will be held on Wednesday, 4 September. As is usual, there will be a brief presentation from Section Chair Ryan Thomas and elections for Chair, Treasurer and Section Committee members. Please give some thought to joining the committee. Following the AGM, there will be a guest speaker – who is yet to be announced.

National Climbing Camp. The Otago Section are organising the National Summer Climbing camp to be based at the site of Ferguson Hut in the Hunter Valley from Saturday 1st Feb to Saturday 8th Feb. There are several peaks within easy reach of Ferguson Hut, and it is a great opportunity to explore a remote corner of the New Zealand Mountains. For full details and booking info, go to https://alpineclub.org.nz/single-event/?event_id=3413939

First – clean your crag!

Robin Reijers reports on recent gorse removal at Cutting Crag

Together we started out with 6 people, heading up to Cutting Crag by parking at the Mapoutahi climbing spot and then walking until we reach the end of Purakaunui Bay. Ascending to Cutting Crag, we immediately encountered gorse along the way in small clusters. When we passed the railroad and headed into the more bush-like path the gorse started cropping up like crazy, and it was at this moment I also started to doubt my choice of attire (shorts and short sleeved shirt).



Juliet and Ryan start the clearing

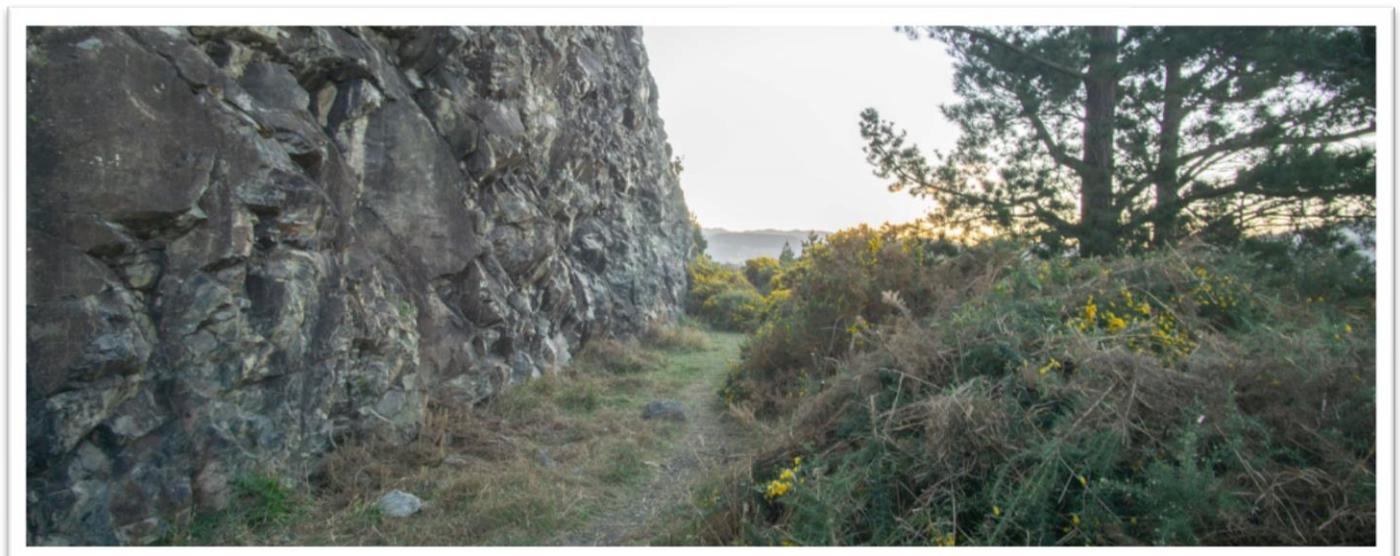
Arriving on-site we saw quite a lot of gorse; most is along the sea-side cliff where it grows several meters thick and about two meters high. The climbing part itself is less overgrown but still had quite a few bushes at the base of the climbs. It was decided that we should first start to clear out the base of the climbs, and, armed with a couple of saws, pruners and shears, the clearing started. The all-round strategy was to first clear the outer

branches and then come in with the heavy equipment and take the plant out at the base. Using that we quickly cut through the gorse and cleared out the climbing sites. Afterwards the path leading from Mapoutahi was also cleared.



"Now we can start climbing."

In the end we finished the day with some good climbing and enjoying the view from up high. Also some of the route setters bolted new routes at the right side of the crag, so that is something to look forward to for the next time.



The finished product - gorse free access to Cutting Crag.

EVEREST ESSAY 2019

Following her recent success, Lydia Bradey very kindly shares her views of the joys and challenges of Everest with Otago Climber. Story and pics from Lydia's Everest Essay.

On Wednesday, 22nd May, I climbed Mt Everest for the 6th time, my first from the North /Tibet. My climbing partners were Mingma, Pasang and Roxanne Vogel. We were alone on the mountain apart from the Chinese Tibet Mountaineering Association's (CTMA) rope-fixers, who reached the summit half an hour before us. They all high-fived us and all hugged us too on the way down, such a special, unique experience.

Roxy made a VERY rapid ascent, summiting within 11 days of arriving in the country. She had been training intensely for a year, and she is a Nutritionist for Gu Products, tailoring nutritional supplements for everything from recovery to mental acuity. Her second conversational line to me was "don't worry about me, I'm a nerd!" (A very cute nerd I have to say!)

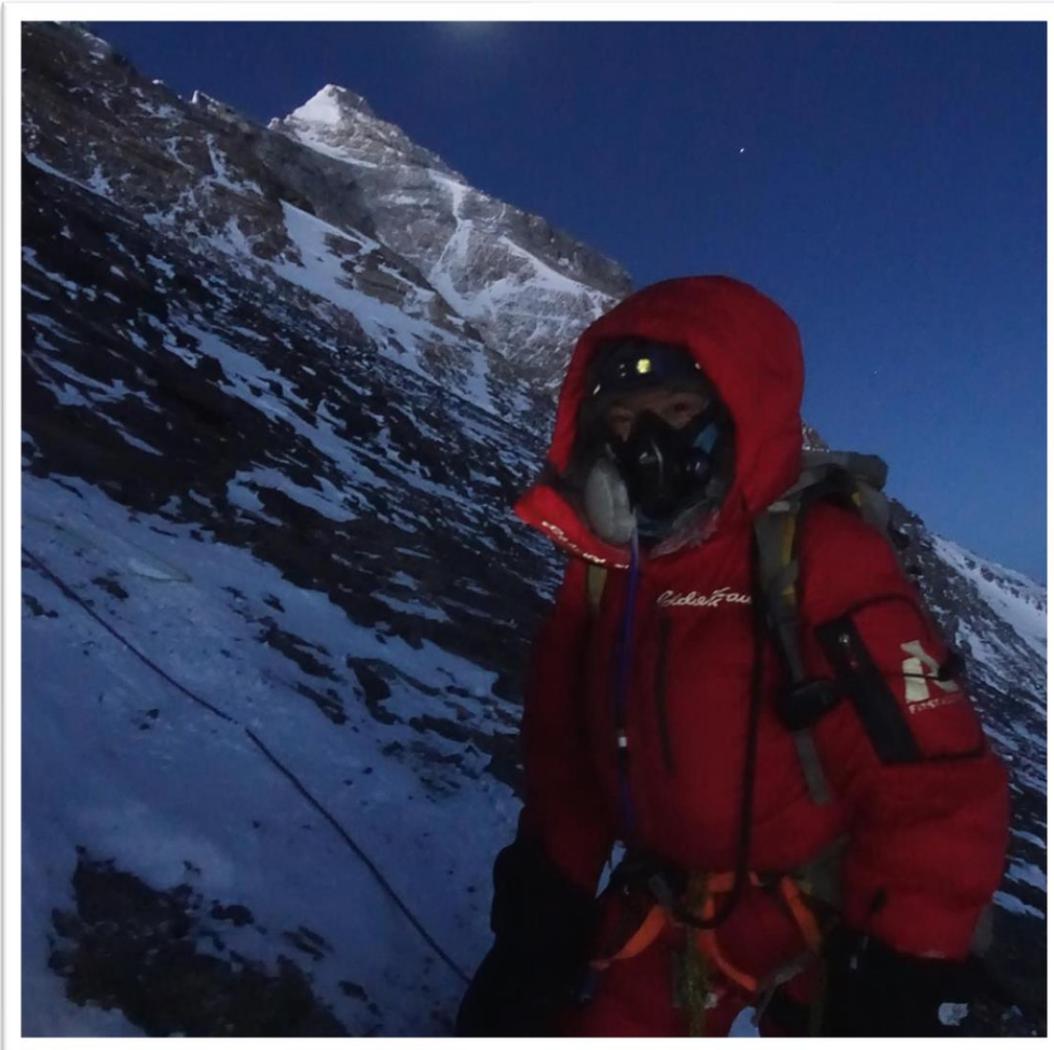


Roxanne, Lydia, and Sherpas Pasang and Mingma - the only ones on Everest Summit on 22 May.

However Roxy had never climbed above 7000m. Even our Camp 2 at 7700m, from which we climbed, eliminating C3 (8300m) was a "PB" - a Personal Best, by a long way!

The key for Roxanne was to be utterly extremely fit, used to carrying heavy loads uphill, a very good natural acclimatizer, and pre-acclimatized to circa,7000m. In Roxanne's case, she used Hypoxico low-oxygen tents both to sleep in and to work inside of at times.

None of this prep was easy for Roxy, and she forgave any social life, ate super carefully, did training scheduled by some well known climbers who have developed a program called Uphill Athlete, and squeezed in (very) rapid ascents of South American volcanoes over Christmas...that was her life for a year.



Mingma Sherpa leading out on summit day - Everest behind and the full glow of the moon above

Roxanne also paid a lot of money to have a private guide, and requested a female guide (go the #sistahood !)

Alpenglow Expeditions already ran a Rapid Ascent program and were super keen to support a nick-named: *Lightning Ascent*. Their doctor, Moni Piris, a Spanish/UK doctor, remains one of the most experienced altitude doctors around (and is one of my closest friends); oversaw the ascent via WhatsApp from Spain.

The result is that Roxanne has accomplished something

no Westerner - and we are certain no one else ever has previously achieved ; an ascent of Everest within 10 days of arriving in China, AND she had a positively life changing adventure. I am so lucky to share! She did an amazing job!

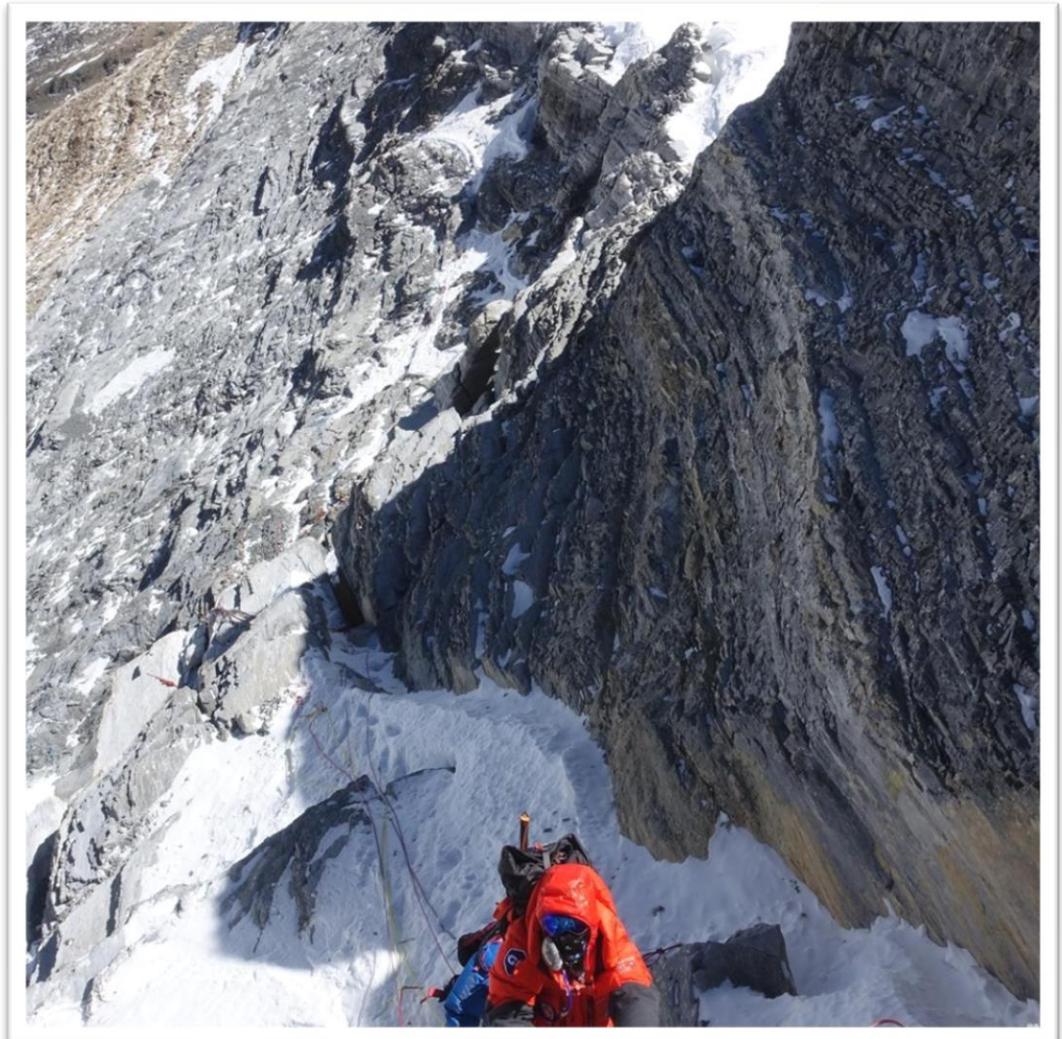
People often “dis” the Guiding & Climbing Of Everest, describing it as a Circus. The recent re-posted image of the summit from the 22nd of May this year, on the Nepal Side confirms many’s doubts. However, in the 6 times I’ve reached the summit, I myself or with my small team of clients (1-2) and Sherpas (2-4), we have been alone on the summit of the highest mountain in the world exactly 50% of the summits. Last year (2018), from Nepal on an Adventure Consultants (NZ) Expedition, members Brad & Mike, our four Sherpas lead by Sirdar Rinji , (all four carrying HEAPS of spare oxygen) and I - our little team, were the first to reach the summit by 40 minutes , and we watched the dawn rise on the world. Those 40 minutes surely remain some of my most memorable summit days on any mountain!

This year again - the whole journey with Roxy has bonded the two of us in an adventure of a lifetime. Again we were the ONLY climbers on the whole North side of the mountain that day - apart from the rope fixers as I said, in a season where there were only three summit day weather windows on the mountain!



On Everest I am always guiding for a high-end Guiding company, usually for Adventure Consultants (NZ) and this year for Alpenglow Expeditions (USA). A high-end Guiding company (this is simply an expression) costs a lot of money, provides very good food, usually has a Doctor on site, provides individual tents to about 6400m, and employs a lot of Sherpas. On summit day these Sherpas carry a LOT of oxygen and this oxygen is the key.

On a high-end expedition you will climb on summit day and perhaps the day before up to high camp, on 4L of oxygen/min (it's mixed with ambient air). Each 4kg tank will last you 4-5hrs depending upon how full they are when you screw the regulator on. It would be unusual for a cheap operation to provide more than 2L/min for summit day, and some would have no more than 2 bottles available for the client because the client HASN'T PAID for lots of oxygen. This is the client's choice to go cheap. But on Everest, there's no escaping that going cheap is risking your life.



Looking down the ladders of the second step - Roxi in red and Pasang in blue keeping an eye on her

In the case with Everest expeditions, you get what you pay for; a cheaper expedition will have a high ratio of client (or "member" as they are called) to guide, or no guide at all. Limited or no medical support, overworked and fatigued Sherpas and low ratio of Sherpa to member; and not very much oxygen. If you are climbing too slowly on summit day, and the maths with O2 flow rates and number of oxygen bottles doesn't stack up... you will probably be told by your Sherpa or guide that you should turn around. Sometimes people actually get "Summit Fever" and they refuse to turn around. Possibly some people don't even have a Sherpa with them and don't know to check their O2 bottles. Others wouldn't know how to pass people safely on a fixed line, going up or down, nor how to bail, and descend. These days it's common for people NOT to carry ice axes on the climb, reducing their independence if they need to pass up or down, or if a fixed line breaks, limiting their escape from chaos. Thus sometimes, but not always, tragic avoidable deaths occur in crowded conditions when the climber has paid for a cheap trip.

There's so much to say or discuss... as in any tourism in the world, there is a population boom. To cut corners some cheap operators are even leaving their rubbish in the tents at 8000m, sometimes cutting their logos out of the sides of the tents and deserting the metal and plastic on the hill; increasing detritus on the mountain, and very severely reducing camping space.



Pasang releasing the prayer flags on Everest Summit

Alternatively, the best operators are striving to improve their service, skills and safety, reducing their footprint and increasing their success rates.

The bottom line is still the mountain. If you get lots of good weather in a season there will be no traffic jams. If there are only 3 days to Summit in a season then clever strategising and lots of resources (ie oxygen and people to carry it) is essential. In addition, If your operator pays five figures for (Swiss) weather forecasting, you won't be caught out by a storm.

So, if it's like this, why do we go to this mountain?

I climbed Everest once simply as a young ambitious mountaineer in 1988, and I was very alone, no oxygen (first female ascent no O2), no fixed rope above South Col 8000m (which protects you from losing your way) no climbing buddy, no weather forecasting.

Since 2008 I have returned 5 times as a guide, and have learned so much along the way! If you can manage your health and your clients' and create a summit day that really works, it is a hugely satisfying achievement. No one can take a mountain summit you've experienced away from you, it is always deep inside.



When you climb Everest you only partly climb it for the view looking out. The real view is the FEELING of being on the highest mountain in the world. It's really really high! It's really really amazing.

It's the feeling of being human and alive and yet walking (scrambling, climbing...) up a monolith that you have grown up knowing about in theory. You say to yourself - I said to myself on Wednesday the 22nd, "I'm on the highest mountain in the world! This is what being high-up is like..."

Up a mountain ingrained in our psyche as HIGH; up to a point so recognised, that should you buy a cheap plastic globe for a child, it is probably defined by a dot and a name, and you are on that dot; up a mountain that is described as a concept in motivation psychology "... everyone has an Everest..."



Mingma leading out on the main ridge to the summit

Getting it right, getting the view, sharing the experience, coming back with all fingers and toes, and those of your Sherpa guides of course is part of the excellence of the journey. Having the skills and opportunity to lead others in this journey is a joy and a privilege. As a female mountain guide, seeing younger female guides come through (Carla Perez (Alpenglow Expeditions), Pachi (Maria) Ibarra (Kobler & Partner Expeditions) for example is super inspiring (#sistahood).

Standing with your small team alone on the summit of the world's highest mountain is still possible to achieve, and that is an experience I shall always carry in my heart.

New Section Website for easy trip booking

Sign-up now to get fast and simple trip information, booking and info.

Just a reminder to section members that the Otago section has introduced a new trip planning system at our section website www.ozonzac.org.nz. On the website, you can organize and join section events and events organized privately by members, and you can subscribe to email notifications when certain types of events (rock climbing, mountaineering, etc.) are posted to the site. Our aim with this site is to increase the number of trips organized by the section and improve our members' ability to connect with each other. To sign up for an account, please visit <https://www.ozonzac.org.nz/SigningUp.php>. Non-members are also welcome. **For those who have already signed up:** please check your email preferences. The default setting is that you will receive **no** notifications. A number of people have requested accounts but not changed their email settings from the default.

Process for PLB hire

The Otago Section has two PLBs for Section members to use when heading outdoors. Rental is free for NZAC members but \$5 per day for non-members. So that we can track the rentals, and respond if something goes wrong, the Section has created an online booking form at <https://goo.gl/forms/TQJrhMZxacHf30qP2>

When the form is completed online the results are automatically loaded into a spreadsheet in the Section's Google Drive, so we have a record of your rental and planned trip details. All that you do then is to arrange to collect a unit from either Keith Moffat Moffat.k172@gmail.com or Riley Smith rileychallis@gmail.com. Further contact details in the newsletter.

Section Safety Gear Rental

Our eight sets of avalanche equipment and eight sets of snowshoes are now available for rent from the new Hunting and Fishing shop, now at 141 Crawford Street, in Dunedin. The new shop is open seven days till 5.30 weekdays, 5pm Saturday and 4pm Sunday. More details at www.huntingandfishing.co.nz.

The rental costs are \$5 per day for an avalanche set of transceiver, probe and shovel and \$5 per day for snowshoes for all Alpine Club members. You **MUST** show your current membership card to receive that rate. Not a member, or don't have your card? Then the fee is \$10 per day and you will be required to pay a \$20 deposit.



Members are welcome to collect gear on Friday and return Monday and two day's rental will apply. If you wish to make other arrangements, please contact Keith or any of the committee and we will sort things out **BEFORE** you go into the shop. If you have any issues with the gear or rentals, please don't hassle the staff at Hunting and Fishing as they are doing us a huge favour by running the rental scheme for us

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