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In February, the new boardwalk to the start of the Three Mile Track opened, and the official opening of the project's community nursery at Ökärīto was held. To mark the occasion there was a boat cruise on the Ökärīto Lagoon with the Bug Man, followed by drinks and nibbles at the Ökärīto wharf.

Hiking up the Whataroa Valley

Hiking up the **Whataroa Valley**, especially to **Ice Lake**, is an adventure into "splendid isolation". It is one of the larger valleys on the West Coast and has a rich **agricultural** and **mining history**. The signpost for the car park is on the southern side of the **Whataroa River**, and a four wheel drive track will take you through the Friend's farm to the **Waitangi Forest Conservation Area**.

There were once well defined cattle tracks, used by prospectors and stockmen to get their pack horses to **Barrowmen's Flat** and **Scone Creek**. Today, the track network extends to the upper regions of the **Perth** and **Butler Valleys**, and the **Whymper Glacier**. The tracks are well marked, however, in some places little more than one boot width wide. **Hunters, hikers, climbers, and whitewater enthusiasts** enjoy this wild area; however, it is not a realm for the inexperienced.

The Whataroa catchment area is prone to flooding, and in any season, you may have to kick steps across avalanche debris to reach your destination. **Big Creek** is your first opportunity to get your feet wet and it acts as a natural barometer for the valley. If you find it

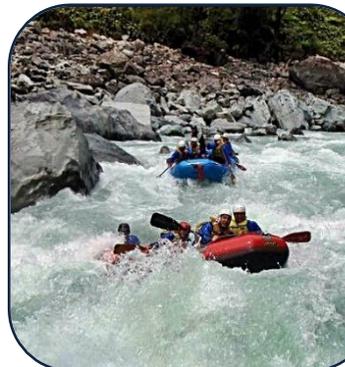
in flood the best decision is to turn back.

Gold miners scoured the creeks and beaches of the lower valley in the 1860s and during the 1930's and the depression years. From the swing bridge at the **Perth confluence**, you can look up river into New Zealand's '**Grand Canyon**', which like the Perth River; it is a mecca for white water rafters and kayakers.

Scone, Top Butler, Butler Junction and **Whymper Hut** were all built in the 1970's by the forestry service; the Nolan family of Whataroa erected **Nolan's Hut**, and the **Stan Peterson Hut** on Gunn Ridge is managed by the New Zealand Safari Club. If you plan to explore the Valley talking to the staff at the **Department of Conservation Visitor Information Centre** in Franz Josef Glacier village is strongly recommended. They will be able to give you information on the current **weather** conditions, **maps** of the area and informative **track guides**.

Cheers,
The Glacier Country team

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Eco Rafting – Sweet As!

The Whataroa is easily the best white water rafting day trip in New Zealand, with the perfect balance of **mind-blowing scenery** and lots of **white water**. Fly in by helicopter, and enjoy the **Eco Rafting** experience as Josh and his team take you through the heart of the West Coast wilderness. It is not all about the **rafting**, and the **scenic flight**, however, the **bucket cuisine** and **waterfall jump** at lunchtime are an experience in their own right.

Eco Rafting is family owned and operated, based on the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island. **Josh** has **fourteen years** of **raft guiding** experience, and an intimate knowledge of the **West Coast Rivers**. When you spend time with his **highly skilled** and **certified team** you get the feeling that they are not only the best of the best, they truly love their job.

The trips range from **family oriented** easy class 2 paddles, through to **extreme class 5** whitewater rafting. The **multi-day combination** trips, where you can enjoy the white water, and stop at remote locations for **hunting and fishing sessions** are also proving popular. For more information call **Josh and Kristen** on 0508 669 675 or go to www.ecorafting.co.nz.

Terrace Motel



The **Terrace Motel** is **family owned** and operated. **Tom** and **Rosemary Skinner** are former sheep farmers and have been in the region longer than any other motelier. Quite simply, there is not much that they do not know about hospitality and the Glacier region.

The **Terrace** is in the **heart** of the **village**, yet off the main road. A **two minute** walk will take you to the **shops**, **tourist operators**, and several **restaurants** and the **hot pools**. You can choose from a range of **Studio** (with cooking facilities), **One** or **Two Bedroom Units**, and **hotel styled rooms**, one even has a **double spa** bath. Rooms are generously proportioned and single storied with good car parking (some have **under cover car** parks – ideal for a rainforest location). **WIFI** is available in all rooms.

The Motel is within a **3 minute walk** of native **Glow-worms**.

As a member of the **Host Accommodation Group**, with a **4star Qualmark** rating, you know that standards are high. Travellers who stay at a Host Accommodation Motel earn a \$100 discount on their twelfth night accommodation with in the New Zealand wide group. Call **Tom** and **Rosemary** on **0800 837 722**, or www.terracemotel.co.nz.

Montrose Accommodation & Backpackers



Named after a small town on the East Coast of Scotland, **Montrose Accommodation & Backpackers** is THE lodge for independent travellers visiting Franz Josef Glacier village. There are **115 beds** set in the original King family homestead, which through modern renovations has doubled in size; and Molly's is a totally separate, purpose built backpacker building.

Most of the **dorm rooms** have only **4 beds** and plenty of space; however, there is an **8 bed dorm** which is perfect for large groups. There are also rooms for **couples**, **doubles**, and **families**, with or without **ensuite** bathrooms. The communal areas have **fully equipped kitchens**; there is **off street parking**, an onsite booking office, and **FREE Internet**. All your linen is provided; and the **other** added bonuses are a **sauna**, onsite **herb garden**, and free **DVD library**.

In summer, the **BBQ** area is ideal for dining alfresco, and the friendly receptionists are always happy to have a chat and share some **Glacier Country** secrets. Especially if you get talking to **Ray**, the site manager, he is a true West Coaster and knows exactly where the best **fishing**, **hunting** and **hiking** spots are. Call **0800 666 876**, or email montrosebackpackers@xtra.co.nz.

Fern Grove Food Centre



Look for the iconic **4 Square Supermarket** sign, in the heart of **Franz Josef Glacier village**, and you will find the only West Coast supermarket between Hokitika and Haast. As part of the **Foodstuffs Co-Operative** group, it is one of the 282 4 Square stores that can be found throughout New Zealand.

Chris originally moved to Franz Josef to manage a farm, and **Cushla** soon followed. Already experienced in supermarket management, Cushla started working at the store. When they were offered the opportunity to take over the ownership of the store they had to say yes!

Chris and **Cushla** both love the challenge of running a rural grocery store: '**Always Looking after the Locals**', providing for tourists, and being a great place for their employee's to work. Everyone loves the **bread baked on site**, **fresh produce**, and the selection of **beer** and **wine**.

The tourists appreciate the products available in **smaller quantities** and meals that are **easy to prepare**. The most popular items are **bananas**, pies, and those **lucky lotto tickets**. Cushla assures me that it is not just the Glacier Guides who enjoy the meaty pastry treats. For more information call **03 752 0177**, or email ferngrove@foursquare-si.co.nz.