



My place

Mountaineer, Paralympian and motivational speaker Mark Inglis, ONZM, has lived in North Canterbury’s Hurunui region for 22 years.

I WAS BORN and raised in the foothills of South Canterbury, which could explain my love of mountains. I also sucked at rugby so instead I got involved with climbing and turned that into a career as a mountain ranger and later with the search and rescue team at Aoraki Mt Cook. It’s where I met my wife Anne 43 years ago when she worked at The Hermitage Hotel.

In 1982 I was doing a training climb on Aoraki Mt Cook with Phil Doole when we got trapped in a blizzard for 13 days, the longest spell of bad weather in New Zealand history at the time. We both lost our legs.

As a double amputee, I wasn’t able to continue with my job in search and rescue so I hit the reset button and did a first class honours degree in human biochemistry and started a part-time PhD. In 1992 I became a trainee winemaker at Montana Wines in Marlborough and was there for 15 years. I also discovered the para-cycling movement and brought back a silver medal, New



Zealand’s first-ever medal in Paralympic cycling, from Sydney in 2000. I carry that medal with me everywhere because it reminds me of how hard I had to train and how much more I can achieve.

In 2006 I climbed Everest from the north side, the first double amputee to do so. It was a relatively quick climb – 47 days, from arriving at base camp to standing on the

summit. I lead climbing expeditions to Nepal every few years and in 2006 I started a charity called Limbs4All. We’re involved in Nepal, providing rough-terrain wheelchairs for people, as well as Cambodia where our work includes a prosthetics school.

I’ve been going to Hanmer Springs with Anne and our three children for years because it’s a great place to recharge the batteries. But every time we drove home we’d think, how can we live here? When I finished making wine to follow the Everest dream, I started motivational speaking and realised we could live wherever we wanted. Whenever I’ve been away working, I drive over the Ferry Bridge and as soon I drop down into the Hanmer Basin all the pressure lifts off and I feel a sense of calm. One of the best things about this region is the trails. I was a trustee of the Hanmer Heritage Forest Trust for many years, and mountain bikers like me love the forest for its world-class cycle trails.



These days my focus is on the St James Cycle Trail, which opened in 2010, and is the first of 23 Ngā Haerenga/Great Rides through New Zealand. It’s a magic ride that runs from near Lake Tennyson in the Clarence Valley over into the Waiau Uwha Valley, following the river all the way down to Charles Saddle before heading back to the historic St James Homestead. From start to finish it’s 60km, but if you want to do it as a loop and ride up to Tophouse Road it’s 83km. If you’re lucky, you’ll see the iconic St James horses grazing on high country tussock.

I often say that every winemaker, including former winemakers, are frustrated chefs. I love good food and love cooking. But when I can’t be bothered, we have some great cafes and restaurants in Hurunui. A Hanmer institution is Powerhouse Cafe. Mary (Holloway) and her team not only make a great long black, they also have a great attitude. And you get to enjoy mountain views while you sip your coffee. For award-winning fine dining, it has to be Number 31 Restaurant & Bar. I can’t pick a favourite from their menu because I like trying new things, especially anything with fusion in its title. But I can never go past their venison backstrap with truffle jus.

The hot pools are really the heart and soul of Hanmer Springs. People have always come to this region for the thermal pools. Anne visits a few times a week but I only learned how to swim six years ago. I travel a lot, and before the pandemic was flying to India five or six times a year. It’s hard to get out on a bike ride in those big cities. But there’s always a pool at the hotel so I taught myself how to swim.

I’m not really a shopper, but my family is, and they tell me there are some amazing fashion and homeware stores in Hanmer. Anne particularly likes Mhor, a fashion



- 1. Tiromoana Bush Walkway.
- 2. St James Cycle Trail.
- 3, 4. Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa.
- 5. Powerhouse Cafe's French toast with black cherry compote.
- 6. Number 31 Restaurant & Bar.



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boutique, and Homestead of Hanmer is her go-to homewares shop. Whenever I walk into that shop they say, “Is someone’s birthday coming up?” It really is a great place for presents. 🍷

Air New Zealand operates non-stop flights to Christchurch from Auckland, Wellington, Queenstown and Dunedin, with connections across the domestic network.

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