

Mini Run 2011

CONGRATULATIONS!!! YOU ARE ALL EXCEPTIONAL PEOPLE!!!

OVER \$134,000 RAISED FOR STARSHIP NATIONAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

FOUR STRETCHERS CAN NOW BE PURCHASED – DISCOUNT FOR NUMBERS!!

The sound of thirty-nine Mini engines reverberating in the main street of Kaitaia on Good Friday morning at 7.30am was probably not what the sacred holiday is best recognized for. To the eighty participants the coinciding sounding hooter meant their six-day driving adventure had begun and over 2500km of road stretched ahead of them.

The second running of the Porkpie Charity Run for Starship Children's Hospital was officially under way. 32 classic Minis, 3 BMW Mini Cooper S's, 2 BMW Mini Clubmans, one BMW Mini Cooper and one new Mini Countryman headed for Invercargill. Tailing them all the way was one film period Holden Police car - equipped with blue lights and siren.

The Minis had gathered in Kaitaia from places as far south as Wellington the day before all decked out with graphics, flags, enormous truck horns, even two surf boards and spare wheels strapped to their roofs. Enthusiastic owners chatted, swapped Mini stories, gobbled food and drink, tinkered with final mechanical adjustments to their precious babies, adjusted their GPS's and lovingly stuck the decals and team numbers to the sides of their Minis. The evening briefing brought familiar faces together from 2009 and new adventurers seeking that adrenalin buzz that only six days in a Mini can give you!!!

Down over the newly sealed Mangamukas the Minis sped twisting and turning up and down on road almost designed by accident for these amazing little machines. The smiles from the drivers said it all. On to Auckland and Ponsonby Rd for lunch thanks to the 'Mini Pop Up Shop' and an awaiting public. Hampton Downs Motor racing circuit beckoned by mid afternoon as we were let loose on the track for two laps and then off to Taupo and a well deserved rest.

Horopito National Park, Whanganui and Wellington were all ticked off by the end of the second day although it didn't stop the 'stayers' of the group from ten pin bowling their night away in downtown Wellywood!!! The rest crashed early, exhausted from two long days of being locked inside a bone shaking tin can.

As organizers it was pleasing to get the North Island part of the trip out of the way with next to no dramas. There are always schedules to meet and sponsors and press commitments to satisfy plus to make sure everyone gets to the bottom of the island in one piece. One team exchanged their classic Mini Clubman for a new BMW version thanks to the generous husband and wife team of Jason and Amy and they continued on to the

finish in style and comfort. One other team had their bonnet up an hour out of Kaitaia but with their engine sounding more like a chaff cutter the further south they went and with no oil pressure registering on their gauge, they soldiered on. Once on board that ferry to the 'Mainland' we started to relax. Those beautiful South Island roads beckoned.

Highlights of the South began at the air show just out of Blenheim. An afternoon of aviation aerobatics, mock battles, vintage and classic cars drew much admiration from all in sundry but the road called and we were soon cruising those amazing east coast curves, corners and straights heading for Kaikoura. A night in the Irish Pub, Donegal House, refreshed the weary travelers and the next morning it was off over Arthur's Pass heading for Greymouth for some and for others there was the longer drive to Christchurch to support Porkpie Constable Terry as he wanted to pay tribute to his friends who tragically died in the CTV building.

As the second wave of Minis headed through Porter's Pass to Arthur's Pass on their way to Greymouth an organizers worst nightmare happened. A phone call came from the top of a hill, in the rain, in Porters Pass to say one of the Minis was involved in a head on collision with a 4x4. Our hearts sank as we all waited for the news to filter through on how the father and daughter team of Grant and Janelle Rouse had fared. Miraculously they were not seriously injured, if you could call cracked ribs, cuts, bruises and a badly sprained arm not serious. After a night in Christchurch Hospital they caught a flight to Queenstown and then a bus to Invercargill to attend the award ceremony and 'Black Tie Dinner'. They received a standing ovation from their fellow Mini travelers.

Oh the West Coast!!! What a beautiful drive. One can only appreciate the beauty of this coastline by driving the length of it. Words cannot express adequately the descriptions of the colours, the mountains, the rivers, the wild coastline, the West Coast hospitality. The whole package is a revelation and I never tire of driving these roads. Life seems so relaxed, the anxiety levels of the busy north island life style and driving pressures melt away and you feel as though you want to stay there forever... until it rains... and rains!!!

At Haast Pass the 'chaff cutter' died – never to go again. It rode on the back of a truck to Dunedin to await the other Minis being transported home after the event. For the rest of us it was on to Alexandra on the worlds best roads of Central Otago. A frost greeted us in the morning and the combination of water and a car heater on full caused one Mini's windscreen to smash into a million pieces. We pushed on to Dunedin where we were the focal point for lunchtime shoppers in the 'Octagon' thanks to the local Mini Club who escorted us into their city in an eye-catching convoy.

From Kaitaia to Invercargill in six days!! The mission was complete. The highlight for me had to be the people. Why would over eighty human beings of all ages, shapes and sizes and from all walks of life spend six days and many dollars at their own expense to drive a Mini from end of New Zealand to the other? On top of that they were then asked to raise more money for a charity!! The only thing these people had in common was their car yet by the end of the first night a small community had been established – built on

conversations, humour, food and a common desire for a bit of adventure through a road trip. These wonderful people are not just participants they are a devoted group of people who want to make a difference and have fun doing it. As an organizer I salute you all for you are all exceptional people.

I must pay tribute to my fellow organizers. Rod has skills second to none in the travel industry. His organizational skills are superb resulting in a pretty smooth operation. His sense of humour and friendship is greatly appreciated. Annie is the mistress of time management. She loves people and she loves being busy. It is also great to have a nurse on hand. Callum - ah the man with the dry wit! You were the 'fetch it' man who filled in and did all those jobs we forgot about or that needed doing in a hurry. Thanks team for your tireless energy and enthusiasm.

Until Easter 2013 when we shall meet again.

Regards
Muzza