



WHITE WILDERNESS:
Our snowshoe prints across frozen
Lake Alta below the summit of the
Remarkables.

PICTURE © Justine Tyerman

The TBs have a 'remarkable' change of heart

Justine Tyerman does a deal with her old tramping mates . . .

The TBs had a hissy fit — literally — at the prospect of being shackled to a pair of rectangular trays with spiked bottoms.

It was not a pretty sight, steam pouring from their mouths, laces in disarray, hooks glowing red hot and lots of theatrical sole-

stamping.

I was eager to try new experiences, blaze new trails and get out of my comfort zone but the TBs (tramping boots) were stuck in the mud with conservative blinkers on. For them, tramping was tramping and no self-respecting TB would accept a tack-on to aid

ambulation. The idea of being harnessed to snowshoes was the ultimate insult.

Their petulance was becoming tiresome but I had to remember they were over 60 in boot-years and I needed to indulge them a little.

I said I was worried for their welfare - that they might suffocate in the deep snow at the top of the Remarkables. And that "raquettes à neige" — to give snowshoes their fancy French name — were a practical form of winter footwear with a fascinating history dating back five or six thousand years. I thought this might appeal to both their snobbery and strong sense of tradition and history.

A flicker of interest.

"You know, when Similaun Man (aka Ötzi the Iceman) who lived 3300 years ago was discovered in the Ötztal Alps on the border between Austria and Italy, he was wearing what archaeologists actually believe were snowshoes," I said as casually as I could.

Quick as a flash they pointed out that they were well-versed in deep snow having hiked in the European Alps last winter.

Then I played my ace card, a blatant bribe — in return for co-operation and goodwill, I would treat them to a wilderness hike up their favourite river, the Dart, with lashings of mud AND a ride in a jet boat.

Hallelujah! A deal.

I wasn't sure how they would react when the time came for them to be strapped into said snowshoes but I knew in their soul of

soles, like me, they would relish being up in the mountains all day, at one or in their case at two, with the Great Outdoors.

And believe it or not, our snowshoeing expedition up to Lake Alta near the summit of the Remarkables was one of the best days of their lives, they confided in me . . . much later.

As we climbed, the entire Wakatipu Basin unfolded below us like a 3D map, and across the valley, row upon row of mountains came into view, dwarfing Coronet Peak in the foreground. It was breath-taking.

With the TBs and their new snowshoe mates bonding surprisingly well, we soon left the chairlifts, skiers and snowboarders of the Remarkables Ski Field far behind and entered the white wilderness of the Lake Alta glacial cirque, where the sound of silence was absolute . . . apart from the muffled shuffle of



The TBs (tramping boots) 'shackled' to the snowshoes.

FRACS Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

Peter Stiven MBChB, FRACS
GENERAL, LAPAROSCOPIC & UPPER GI SURGEON

CONTACT 06 867 7411
Three Rivers Medical Centre
75 Customhouse St
Gisborne

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