

Alpinism & Ski is based in Wanaka, an outstanding place surrounded by beautiful nature. Minimising the environmental impact, taking care of the environment and living as sustainably as possible have been of highest importance since our establishment during the Millennium year and continue to be so in both, business and private lives.

It's been busy, rendering our home and base as sustainable as we could while a local as much as global, wild craze about eco stuff became extremely fashionable. It will come to the point where an official sustainability statement or policy is a must to be in business and therefore what follows has officially started during 2011, though a [blog](#) and paragraph on our [website](#) about our environmental direction have existed for a while already. My friend Florence Micoud chose Alpinism & Ski as her subject for her sustainability study with the Otago Polytechnic and I jumped happily at the opportunity to find out where we are at in this sustainability politic. Thank you Florence for all the help and inspiration!  
Iris, November 2011

### **Sustainability is at the heart of mountain guiding practice:**

- Mountaineering is essentially a low-carbon activity. Walking, skiing and climbing, leaving only footprints in this natural wilderness is deeply connecting to what is essential in life, and doing this as sustainably as possible is fundamental to the experience. Pristine mountains are the resource and therefore must remain pristine. All mountain guides are well informed about environmentally sound practices as 5 to 7 years (in NZ) of training as a mountain guide includes this in all aspects.
- In New Zealand, mountain and nature preservation is an essential part of the agreement to obtain a concession from Department of Conservation to operate as a mountain & ski guiding company.
- We celebrate the fact that we are able to tick all the boxes (and often do better) of the Good Practice Sustainability Guide "Land activities on the move" developed by the [Ministry of Tourism](#).

### **Sustainability is also a core ethical choice of Way of Life for Gary and Iris**

We prefer low consumption, carbon free leisure & pleasure (climbing, tramping, biking, sailing, fishing...), a simple life. The same goes for our Alpinism & Ski enterprise and a German motto describes it nicely "Klein aber Fein" (small but with style). It is important for us to have a life style, be content and happy; it is a bonus to be able to transmit this, to motivate and inspire our guests and clients.

**We cannot be totally sustainable because we fly!** But we have been, are and will continue to do our very best to make up for it. Sustainability is an on-going quest and we have also worked with the [Centre for Sustainable Practice](#) to improve our performance.

### **Optimising what we use**

#### **ENERGY**

Although transport (hence fuel consumption) represents maybe only 10 % of the activity, flying is most often essential to access the mountains, to enjoy the best weather window. We always try to optimise the flight cost by using the best combination of aircraft/location and number of participants to access the mountains, by sharing whenever possible with other climbing parties.

Trying to compensate somewhat for this energy use of flying, also to Europe for our climbing season in the Northern Hemisphere, we have

- insulated the main house between 2000 and 2010: pink bats, woollen bats, double glazing, roof, underneath
- actively reduced the energy consumption of the business base and home by diversifying with gas



*Insulating the base*

*Gary fixing a water tank at a mountain hut*



installations, heating with a log fire and solar panels for hot water (installed in February 2006)

- during 2011 further insulated the [Alpinism studio](#) and in April 2012 double glazed windows were installed.

This resulted in a "low user of energy" plan with Meridian energy since 2006. We have a variety of easy practices to save energy – have you checked the [blog](#)?

### Minimising what we generate

We have been recycling since [Wanaka Wastebusters](#) exists: glass, paper, cardboard, cans and plastic bottles are systematically recycled, used batteries can now also be taken to Wastebusters. We avoid buying altogether if we can, always asking ourselves if we really need a particular item before buying it. We choose long lasting, recyclable materials wherever possible.

We buy by bulk to reduce packaging and create mountain rations. Plastic waste is minimised, resulting in one 60 litre blue bag sent to the landfill every 2 to 3 weeks, depending on the number of clients and trips.

All food and garden waste is composted on the property. We have 2-3 composts going at all times.

Old gear is reused or transformed for various needs, or decoration and art!

All waste is carried down the mountain, even rubbish that we find. For human waste, we have the option of biodegradable poobags to be used when necessary which can be disposed of the nearest toilet.



### Restoring more than we damage

We practice and teach zero impact in the wilderness. No fire is ever lit in the open. We liaise with DoC, [Department of Conservation](#) – our concession: OT-28084-GUI

We have been supporting with member ships those who protect plants, animals, land and water

- [Fish and Game](#) – since 1998
- [Kea Conservation Trust](#) we are a supporter for a number of years and member since Nov. 2011
- [Forest & Bird](#) – member since Nov. 2011

We have taken care of nature around the base by planting natives which attract many native birds. We hope to also support [Te Kakano Aotearoa Trust](#), a hands on community land care project, in the near future.

We like to choose products that give back to nature (Example: Kea Point wine gives 20cts per bottle to the [Threatened Species Trust Programme](#))

We chose recycled paper for our printing needs where possible and prefer not to print at all, limiting paper documents to the minimum.



### Sharing our wealth (it is not all about the \$)

Gary the chief has put his skills to the service of the people by volunteering in Search and Rescue operations ([LANDSAR](#) Wanaka team leader). He also contributes to the mountain guiding community and industry as president of the [New Zealand Mountain Guides Association](#)



More boasting another time – our sustainability improvements are an ongoing project, so,

THANKS for your interest and patience and via the blog you can find out when anything has been changed, added, renewed, updated etc. or just [sign up](#) for the next newsletter. You are also welcome to give us tips for further improvements.



Yours truly  here at the IFMGA / UIAGM meeting in Tignes/Vald'Isère, May 2012