

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.

How this started: 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 quite 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! Here is [Flo's website](#) 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 and even 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.

All 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 in toilets.

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-GUJ](#) (Sept. 2015: we abandoned our concession because of ongoing unprofessionalism and incompetence, it is official: DoC is wasting everybody's time and money)

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

- [Fish and Game](#) – since 1998 – still the most environment friendly of many of those groups
- [Kea Conservation Trust](#) we are a supporter for a number of years and member since Nov. 2011 - as they are 'under' DoC Iris decided not to continue her support at least not financially.
- [Forest & Bird](#) – member since Nov. 2011 – no longer from 2016 onwards as Iris found out that they support 1080, a poison banned on other continents but widely used in NZ

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 contributed to the mountain guiding community and industry as [president](#) of the [New Zealand Mountain Guides Association](#) (from May 2010 until Oct. 2016)

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: Gary & Iris

here at the

IFMGA / UIAGM meeting

in Tignes/Vald'Isère, France, May 2012



More boasting and updates also below – our sustainability improvements and looking after our beautiful environment are an ongoing project and we hope that you enjoy yours as much as we do ours.

An achievement in February 2013: finishing the insulation of the last wall at our base. There is a log burner with a fine looking rock wall behind it, built by Gaz of course. It was impossible to install pink bats there as we did not want to destroy the wall. The solution was another rock wall but on the outside with appropriate insulation underneath - et voilà.



Top handyman Gaz finished installing the veranda door which diminished the draft further. In the meantime, the worms have been multiplying in the compost heaps and best practices of self-sufficiency and waste management stay our concern..

March 2014 press release: we are extremely happy to announce that Solar is on the roof, 16 panels and power is being created since earlier this month. It's been a long time dream and finally a ticked off item on our

Environmental Projects

Another task is being accomplished presently: the glass veranda door is single glazed with the prevailing wind and cold air very noticeable. The space will be enclosed in the future to keep out the cold from our base instead of spending more on double glazing.



updated 8th April 2014 by Iris



Solar panels on the roof, installed by handyman Gaz during Feb/March 2014

October 2016

A few more composts have gone through the system of our garden in the meantime, turning one of them this week, the amount of worms was proof that something is working right there. All the large silver birch trees are gone, replaced with fruit trees. Some were rotten and threatening the neighbours especially during those crazily windy spring days.

The front veranda upgrade is finished and the installation of two recycled doors from the local Wanaka Wastebusters, fixed by handyman Gaz of course, has been incredibly efficient to keep the cold out. So much so, we decided that we do not need to completely close in the space with more windows. The studio-cottage, for winter 2015, had a second floor put in for extra insulation.

The winter tenants have been appreciating our efforts. We also want to bring your attention to the fact that we 'do' something very sustainable in renting out our places reasonably cheap to winter staff in Wanaka instead of 'making' more money on short term rentals.



As we are nearing the end of 2016, our ambitions to live life as sustainably as possible are as high as ever, however, these wonderful ambitions get battered about a bit by the powers in charge. Imagine the world trying to become more "green and clean" and there is the New Zealand government who for one uses those words for marketing purposes but then is distributing 1080 all over this beautiful nature and puts diquat into our pristine lakes from where we take our drinking water. Hypocritical to use such poisons here today when they have been banned around the world for decades!

During this year, they – yes that is the New Zealanders in charge with John Key at the helm right now – are working on imposing a new tax on us, us that is the people who have installed solar power. So for anybody out there wanting to invest well earned dollars to make the world a better place with diversification into solar power, beware, the New Zealand Government will make you pay more for being sustainable! Anywhere else in the world, governments support solar and even subsidises it to help with sustainability but not here in NZ, go figure this clean green bullshit.

Can you hear my sarcasm? Gary's cynicism is rubbing off, too much maybe; I've come to a point of complete disillusionment about the NZ sustainability credibility: it's complete and utter rubbish. DoC distributing poison, government taxing us more for solar power, a tremendous waste of money and time with so called audit ticks for adventure tourism operators with a process so unprofessional it's depressing I'm giving up and continue to do my little bit of recycling and composting in my little corner of this world.

There won't be any further updates of this sustainability statement.

good luck to you if you got this far...