

On The Farm



Glampers tramp to the hut half way around the farm walk and enjoy the view.

Glampers enjoy luxury on the farm

A new farm walk has got the thumbs up from "glampers". Jill Galloway talks to founder Sarah Gilbertson.

Farm walks have become a busy part of outings by "glampers" seeking a glamorous alternative to camping, says Manawatu farm owner and glamping host Sarah Gilbertson.

The glampers are attracted to luxury camping – a cross between camping and glamorous – at the Gilbertsons' sheep and beef farm at Waituna West.

Visitors set up camp at a tent site with a bed, a fire and a flushing toilet as well as the modern conveniences of a shower and barbecue.

Visitors and their children get to feed a pet lamb, toboggan through long grass and run. They see hens, bulls, sheep and lambs, cows and calves.

Most people love glamping, says Gilbertson. "It has taken off. We started in January 2014 and we went all year, including winter. I was surprised at the number of people who came in winter. So we're two years on, and it has been really popular."

Gilbertson says 80 per cent of

the property. Gilbertson says there is a hut on the way around the walk and she takes lunch there for her tramping guests.

Then there is a 5km walk on the south side of the farm where people get to take a picnic lunch with them.

"We have families, couples and women who do the walks. And some people who tramped through bush a lot said they really enjoyed the walk across paddocks."

At one site the view is 500 metres above sea level and there is a chair part-way up a hill from where visitors can see the sun go down over the ocean.

The outlook extends to Kapiti Island to the south, and Ruapehu to the north.

At night, Gilbertson says visitors can see the lights of Feilding and Palmerston North, but they are a long way off.

All is quiet apart from birdsong and sometimes the mooing of cattle.

"The quietness is something that people who come glamping like. You might hear a possum at night. A wild deer or goat might come up from the nearby creek. It's really peaceful."

There are two gas-heated baths outside, side by side, where people can enjoy the stars.

"My husband and I tried them to see how they were. It was nice just looking at the night sky. There are no city lights to take away from the view."

Gilbertson says glamping is a fulltime job for her during the summer season from November to April.

Gilbertson checks the wood for the fire and gas for the barbecue and hot water. She gardens to keep the flax and agapanthus weed free.

And then many visitors choose the catered option.

That means cooking for Gilbertson, which she enjoys.

Gilbertson says eggs and bacon for breakfast are popular and she puts together something like bacon and egg pie or quiche for lunch, and the evening meal can be steak or lamb.

"We have to mow the glamping site now – it used to be the bull paddock. But we can't put stock in here now so we have to mow it. Imagine the sheep and cow poo if we didn't."

Sleeping under canvas is about all camping has in common with glamping. However, there are no televisions, iPads, smartphones or technology. There are also no lights or technology needing to be charged once it goes flat.

Most adults like that so their kids have to talk, play games and play in the great outdoors.

Gilbertson says all campers have to do, is arrive at the farm. They take the people down to the site. As they park above the site she takes their bags down on the quad bike.

Then peace and quiet reigns.



Waituna West glamping organiser Sarah Gilbertson in the glamping site's main tent.

now 18 sites in New Zealand including one on Kapiti Island. The idea came from Britain where many people go glamping.

The most recent places soon to join the glamping circuit are in Hawke's Bay at the Tukituki River and in Central Hawke's Bay.

At the Gilbertsons' site visitors can try shearing and claybird shooting.

Visitors can take a seven or 10 kilometre walk through bush and across farmland to the north of

there are



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