

New Zealand - 'The land of the long white cloud'

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Friday 21st October, we all met up at the Rydges Hotel in Auckland for a 'Welcome' dinner. This was a great opportunity for us all to catch up and to welcome four new members to the Club, Sarah and Austin, Gill and Roger. Also, Jim and Helen Board from ICA NZ joined us, which was lovely. We are going to meet up with them and fellow members later.



Saturday 22nd October - We picked up our motorhomes, now the adventure really begins.



Sunday 23rd October - Kaihu

In the morning, we all left to make our way to our next site in Kaihu. However, most of us met up at some point at the Kauri museum, which gives an insight into Northland's pioneer past and the use of the Kauri timber and gum. The Kauri tree is going to feature a lot in the next few days of our tour.

Monday 24th October was a free day and some chose to go to either the Trounson Kauri Park track to walk through the forest and see the mighty Kauri trees or to Dargaville or to some nearby lakes.

Tuesday 25th October we headed off to our next site via The Waipoua forest, where we all stopped to view Tane Mahuta, the oldest Kauri tree which is estimated to be between 1,500-2,500 years old. Enroute to Paihia, the Bay of Islands, some stopped at beautiful Hokianga Harbour.



Wednesday 26th October - Christine Gambrell's birthday.

We were up early today getting a coach to take us on a big adventure. We first headed to the Puketi Kauri forest.



After this, we stopped off briefly for refreshments and then headed north to Cape Regina, where the Tasman and Pacific oceans meet.



Just a bit further down the road, we stopped for some fun. Sandboarding. A new experience I think for most of us and such fun.



After this, yes there was more to come, we travelled further down the coast to the 90 mile beach, which actually isn't 90 miles, it's a bit shorter than that. Here the coach went onto the beach, where we stopped and had a paddle in the sea. We then boarded the coach and travelled a few miles on the beach. Whilst doing this we saw a herd of wild horses, with a couple of foals with them.



Thursday 27th October - A free day where we had the opportunity to go to the Waitangi Treaty Grounds, take a boat trip around the islands or catch the ferry to Russell. A quaint town which back in the early 18th century was a thriving trading hub and apparently quite a lawless town, which ended up with it getting the name 'Hell Hole of the Pacific'.



Early evening, we all met up for a glass of fizz and cake to celebrate Christine's birthday.

Friday 28th October - Orewa

We travelled back to Orewa. It is Jo Sinner's birthday today and we celebrated with a glass of fizz and a BBQ, ok an indoor BBQ



Saturday 29th October - Whitianga

We travelled to Whitianga via the Coromandel Peninsula along the coastal road which was a beautiful scenic route. Most stopped in Coromandel and took the narrow gauge train up to the view point which afforded lovely views around the peninsula.



That evening we all met up for drinks and a social chitchat.

Sunday 30th October

A total wipe out it rained continually. So we met up and went to the sports bar and watched the ladies rugby match. England thrashed the Aussies.



Monday 31st October -Whakatane

Some got up very early and headed off to the Hot Water Beach. Basically you dig a hole in the sand, let the hot water springs naturally fill your hole and just relax in it. The water was rather hot, but everyone enjoyed it.



When we arrived at Whakatane, we met up with a number of ICA NZ members. They provided a wonderful meal for us, whilst we provided the wine. There were a good 20+ of them and it was a real good social event.



Wednesday 2nd November - Gisborne

A very early start for us. Up at 5.45 . Gisborne is the most easterly point and therefore the first place to see the sun rise. And it didn't disappoint. We had bacon sandwiches and fresh orange juice to celebrate. Today was going to be a very long day for us. After this we travelled to Napier.



Thursday 3rd November - Napier

Today we took a walking tour around Napier, following a video showing the earthquake and subsequent fire that took place back in 1931. The town is now famous for its art deco buildings, that were the fashion at that time.



Friday 4th & Saturday 5th November - Rotorua

On our way here a number of us stopped off at Lake Taupo and the Huka falls. Once we got to Rotorua, we all met up for drinks and nibbles to celebrate Debs birthday. Helen & Jim Broad joined us for these 2 days. However, Gill and Roger were otherwise engaged.



On the Saturday we had a guided tour which included Maori hand crafts such as weaving and carving. A tour of their Kiwi conservation program and then their mud baths, thermal pools and geysers. Followed by a steambox lunch.



Sunday 6th November - New Plymouth

Today we travelled to New Plymouth but stopped for the Glow worm and cave tour. This we all enjoyed, especially those that fed the eels.



Monday 7th November - Whanganui

We had a brief stop over here and most of us took the opportunity to go up the 1930's Underground elevator up Durie Hill where at the top there was a WW1 Memorial tower. The tower had some 170+ steps to reach the top that gave beautiful views all around.

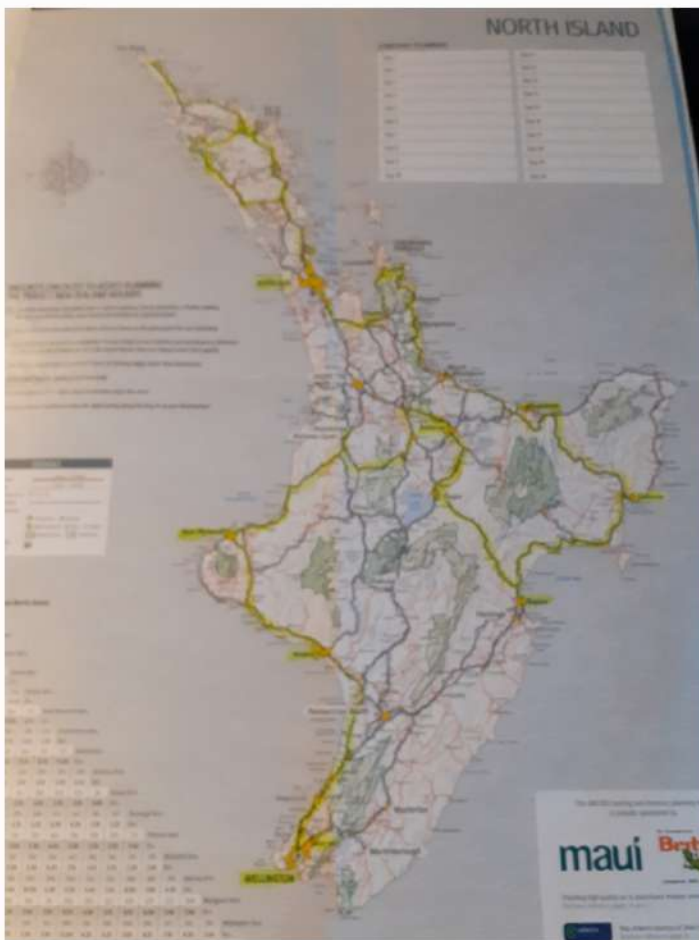


Tuesday 8th & Wednesday 9th November - Wellington

Arriving Tuesday afternoon, we all met up for a BBQ. Bill & Val from ICA New Zealand also joined us, for our 2 night stay. On the Wednesday, we all went into Wellington, doing our own thing, but mainly visiting the harbour, government buildings, cable car, Botanic gardens and museums.



Thursday 10th November we said goodbye to the North Island as we caught the ferry to the South Island.



Friday 11th November - Kaiteriteri

The rain was due in the afternoon, so most of us went for walks from the site around the bays and up into the hills. However, the rain did come in the afternoon, but that didn't stop us. BBQ & drinks at 5



Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th November - Blenheim

We travelled to Blenheim today, some taking the opportunity to stop off and visit Nelson or other locations on the way. In the evening we all met up at the local pub across the road to watch the Womens World Rugby

Final. Sunday, we had a wine tour booked. Not just one winery, but 5 in all. We stopped off at one for wine tasting, whilst enjoying a very pleasant lunch. After the last wine tasting session, we went to a chocolate outlet, where they make and package delicious chocolates. What a day !



Monday 14th & 15th November - Kaikoura

We took the coastal road which was very scenic to Kaikoura. Here we had the opportunity to do some walking, whale watching or kayaking to see the seals. This is the backdrop to Kaikoura taken from the sea.



Wednesday 16th November - Hanmer Springs

A lovely drive across country to Hanmer Springs, where naturally, we all took a dip in the lovely thermal pools and some took a ride on the two water tubes. We are getting used to these lovely warm pools.



Thursday 17th November - Greymouth

A tour of the local brewery with dinner and we all left with a 6 pack of beer



Friday 18th November - Franz Josef

Land of the glaciers. Some took the opportunity of taking the helicopter to the glacier. In the evening we all went out for dinner



Sunday 20th November - Wanaka

Saturday was a washout, it just rained all day. Today we made our way to Wanaka, famous for the tree in the lake. In the evening, we all met up for a BBQ.



Monday 21st November - Arrowtown

Famous for gold mining in the past and bungee jumping now. Not one of us even considered doing this. Gill did the zip wire though. Arrowhead has retained its beautiful buildings.



Tuesday 22nd November - Queenstown

Bit of a wet day today, most of us went into Queenstown for a look around, either going up the Gondola, or not doing very much!

Wednesday 23rd November Te Anua

We spent a couple of days at Te Anua, which is the gateway to Fiordland. On the Thursday we had a cruise on Milford Sound, which was a lovely day. We were very fortunate as the weather held for us despite having heavy rain the day before. We saw seals and numerous waterfalls. A most enjoyable day.



On the Friday a number of us went on a walk around the lake, having taken a ferry across to walk back to Te Anua.



Saturday 26th November - Dunedin

We had a couple of days here, exploring the peninsula, the city of Dunedin and some stayed up for the Blue Penguin tour, where approximately 200 penguins came ashore having been out fishing all day, to tend to their nests. Thanks to Gill and Roger, we all enjoyed this.

Monday 28th November - Mount Cook

A beautiful scenic drive to Mount Cook. This has got to be the highlight of the tour. A most stunning location. The sky was blue, the mountains were topped with snow and the glacial lake was the most turquoise colour. It certainly was a WOW moment. Early evening, we all met up for a BBQ.



Tuesday 29th November - Mount Cook

Sadly a rather wet day. However, some still decided to brave the weather and do the Hooker Valley trek. Whilst the rest of us stayed dry and walked along the lake.



Wednesday 30th November - Christchurch

Today was Gordon's birthday, so we met up once we had all settled in for drinks to celebrate his birthday.



Thursdsy 1st December - Christchurch

A trip into Christchurch today for most people. An interesting City, still being rebuilt after the earthquake back in 2012. In the evening, we all met up for a feast of 'left overs'. Gordon managed to get his Whisky finished.

Friday 2nd December - Christchurch

What a fitting end to a lovely trip. Pre-dinner drinks at 6pm followed by dinner on the sight seeing tram. A great way to finish our holiday.



Finally, a big thank you to all those involved in making this trip such a success. Mike & Pat Potter, Mike & Helen Vipond, Steve & Marina Harvey. Also ICA New Zealand for their friendship and kind generosity. Also to Mike Newman who took on the role of BBQ chef on many occasions.

