

October 17, 2019

Hi,

Our flight over and first three days in New Zealand...

Flight

I highly recommend Premium Economy! We had a really good flight to New Zealand. It was 12 hours and 15 minutes vs. the 14 hours we expected. The seating was worth the expense; more space between seats, wider seats and more reclining. The food, dinner and breakfast, were very good and there was all kinds of entertainment on the screen right in front of us; movies, music, games and flight information. All-in-all, it was a good flight and all three of us arrived in good shape. I believe Joyce had the hardest time getting any sleep. She sat behind me and every time I got up to go to the bathroom I walked past her and she was awake. .

Day 1 (10/14/2019) – We arrive in New Zealand about 7:30 am and were taken by limo to our hotel; the Millennium in Auckland. The trip was about 30 minutes and Auckland is like any USA city....TRAFFIC! After checking in, we went for a walk looking for a place to have lunch. We obviously walked the wrong way. The only place we could find to have lunch was a typical New Zealand restaurant; a Subway. We walked back to the hotel, just beating the rain, Had a coffee, went to our rooms to rest and at 6:00pm went down for a glass of wine and dinner. We met for the first time the rest of our travel mates. All but five of us were from Australia. It looks like Grand Pacific Tours markets, about 42 in total and mostly in Australia. The other couple from the USA is from Michigan, just south of Detroit. That was our first day!

Day 2 (10/15/2019) - Today was our first real adventurist day in New Zealand and we spent most of it on a bus. We travelled north, that is once we got out of Auckland, which took a while; Los Angeles and Charlotte have nothing on Auckland when it comes to traffic. Other than comfort stops, our two main stops were Kauri Museum and Waitangi Treaty Grounds, the birthplace of New Zealand.

New Zealand has a tree that we never heard of. One of the largest trees in the world, the kauri tree is New Zealand's most famous native tree and ranks third in the world in size after the sequoiadendron and the sequoia. The museum was all about the lumbering, near extinction and products the tree was used for. Although I am not high on museums, we all enjoyed the museum and learning about the Kauri tree. These trees live to thousands of years in age and unfortunately were harvested such that only 4 percent of them remain. Obviously, they can no longer be lumbered. If you are interested in learning more, click on <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-plants/kauri/> or just search on Kauri Tree.

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Waitangi Treaty Grounds, New Zealand's most important historic site, is where the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between the British Crown and the indigenous Maori in February 1840. Set on a stunning site overlooking the Bay of Islands. Attractions include the historic Treaty House, a giant flagstaff, a unique fully carved Maori meeting house and the world's largest single-hulled canoe (waka). Unfortunately, we were there in the rain. We visited the home of the first

British resident, James Busby, was built in 1833, the carved meeting house at Waitangi Treaty Grounds and the visitor center. We decided not to walk down to the single-hulled canoe because of the weather. Joyce and Esther enjoyed the visit, although it was okay, it really wasn't my thing. If you are interested in learning more, click on <https://www.newzealand.com/int/feature/treaty-of-waitangi/> or just search on Waitangi Treaty Grounds.

Day 3 (10/16/2019) – This morning we had a **GREAT** time, but, unfortunately, it was **NOT GOOD** for you kids. We spent a significant amount of your inheritance. We signed up for a plane ride to Cape Reinga; nearly, but not quite, the most northern point in New Zealand. The trip included a small bus ride to the airport, a 45 minute flight to a grass strip and a 20 minute drive to the light house reception area. The pilot was a young fellow and the co-pilot a young girl. The plane held eight passengers and was built in Australia; a Gippsland Aeronautics GA8 Airvan. From there it was about a mile walk out to the light house. Unfortunately, it was very windy and we all received upchuck bags before taking off. Fortunately, none of us had to use them; however, Mom\Esther cheated by taking Dramamine! Also, it had rained a lot the day before and the pilot wasn't sure he would be able to land on the grass landing strip. He did and we walked out to the light house, took too many pictures along the way, and walked back.

ON the way back to the plane the driver stopped at a park along the way and we all got out and they treated us to coffee or tea and muffins. That wasn't the end of it. Further along the way back the driver got off on a dirt road and took us to sand dunes. These sand dunes were enormous and were the result of the wind blowing the sand from the beach. After driving through what appeared to be a steam at the foot of the sand dunes we stopped. They proceeded to unload three boogie boards from the rear of the van. We each proceeded to walk up the sand dune, pretty high, and with some instructions, road the boogie board back to the van. It was lots fun; felt like being a kid again! I haven't done anything like that since I was a kid. If it weren't for having to climb the sand dune again, we all probably would have tried it a second time.

Finally, we were back to the plane for our one hour flight back to the airport. Our flight up was on the west side of the land and our return on the east side. We actually had to put life preservers on for the return because we were flying over more water, being a flight requirement. It was a little bumpy going up but a little worse as we approached the airport on our return. It was a GREAT morning.

After all that, we were not done yet. We spent even more of your inheritance for a dinner on Darryl's Dinner Cruise! There were eighteen of us on the cruise. The boat was set up to draw little water so it could go up the river. We sailed up the river, introduced ourselves in camouflage (funny fake glasses and a sailor or captain's hat), had too much to wine to drink and had a very good meal. We socialized with everyone on board and had a really good time. It was a ball!

Today was a GREAT day!