

10/17/2019

Hi,

Our fourth through sixth day in New Zealand....

Day 4 (10/17/2019) – Today was not as exciting as the last couple days. We started the day with a ride on the Great Sights catamaran to Hole in the Rock. It was three hour ride throughout the Bay of Islands with history description of many of them. We finally got to the end of the islands to where there was a giant rock and I mean big; sticking out of the Pacific Ocean with a sixty foot high hole through it. We spent quite a bit of time circling the hole and even pulling the catamaran into it as far as possible. Although the ride was interesting, a lot of the commentary was not. Most of the islands looked much alike and the three hours of boat ride was too long.

From Paihia where we spent two nights and took the catamaran ride, we headed back to Auckland on the bus; making two stops. First we stopped in Whangarei for lunch. It appeared to be a nice place, but we only had 45 minutes and spent the time eating. Our next stop was Parry Kauri Park where there are two very old Kauri trees; one 600 years old and the other 800 years old. We used the stop for a toilet break and to view the Kauri trees.

From Parry Kauri Park, it was on to Auckland and the same hotel we stayed at our first night in New Zealand. We arrived about 5:30 pm, checked into the hotel, went to the cocktail lounge at 6:30 pm for free drinks and on to dinner at 7:00 pm. From there it was back to our rooms for an early evening.

Day 5 (10/18/2019) – A lot of bus riding today, but a couple interesting stops along the way to Rotorua. Rotorua is the city with hot springs, but more about that tomorrow. We were back on the bus at 8:00 am this morning with two very interesting stops; Glenbrook Vintage Railroad and Paradise Valley Springs.

At the railroad we took a short train ride in old reconditioned train pulled by a steam engine. Along the way, we stopped for photos of the train and to tour the buildings where they work on reconditioning the trains. Most of the work for the railroad was done by volunteers. Back at the station, we had coffee or tea, with crumpets. Nicely done!

After a stop for lunch and toilets, in that order, in Watawata, we headed for our next stop at Paradise Valley Springs. Both the ride to the Springs and the tour through were very interesting. They had all kinds of animals and birds in a very authentic setting. They also had a spring where the water is 99.999% pure. Needless to say, we all drank some of the water and refilled our empty containers to take with us. We took lots of photos of the setting and the animals; never being able to tell you, with few exceptions, what they are as too many to remember!

Day 6 (10/19/2019) – If you thought our Boogie Boarding on the Sand Dunes was the ultimate, we tried to top that off today. We left our hotel this morning for a gondola ride up to a restaurant for breakfast. It was quite a spread! Unfortunately, the weather was rainy and gray. Following breakfast we were provided tickets to ride a luge. Being the adventurers we are, we couldn't turn that offer down! So off to the luge track we went. After selecting helmets that fit, we got on our respective luges and headed down the track. Mom/Esther and Mom/Aunt Joyce took the scenic trail and I took the intermediate trail. I went first so I could take their photos as they approached the bottom. Although Mom/Esther

went before Mom/Aunt Joyce, her luge completely stopped a couple times; also having stopped to help another woman along the way which allowed Joyce to pass and finish before her along with two other women. Although it drizzled during our luge ride, we had to take a chair lift back up the mountain side and the rain wasn't as kind for that ride; arriving at the top quite wet for our gondola ride to the bottom. All and all, it was loads of fun!

Following our gondola, breakfast, luge experience, we next went to Agrodome for a sheep dog demonstration and a sheep show. Did you know there are 19 different varieties of sheep? Neither did we. We saw all 19 varieties along with an entertaining show.

Following the Agrodome and an ice cream cone for lunch it was on to a World War II landing craft, "the DUCK", for a tour of the city and a cruise on two lakes. From my stand point there was nothing all that exciting about the ride, land or water, but the driver was extremely entertaining.

After all that, we weren't done yet! Next we were off to Te Pula to see boiling mud pots and an awesome geyser. We learned that there are only three major geysers in the world; Yellowstone, Iceland and this one. We also attended an entertaining Maori Hangi followed by a concert. Following the concert we had our dinner there; best dessert bar yet! The Maori's are the native Polynesian population of New Zealand. Prior to the concert and dinner, we toured their learning centers and learned a little about their culture.

Needless to say, today was a full day and we got back to our hotel about 7:00 pm.