

10/22/2019

Hi,

Our seventh through ninth day in New Zealand....

Day 7 (10/20/2019) – Today, for the most part, was a traveling day from Rotorua to Wellington. We did make two stops along the way. First we stopped at Huka Falls where we walked out to the various lookout points and took our share of photos. The falls didn't have a high drop, but large amount of water went through the river leading to the falls with many rapids throughout the viewing areas.

Our next stop was at the Kapiti Coastal Electric Tramway which is a site where they restore and operate old electric trams. They had two trams ready to take us for a short ride. It was a short distance to the end of the track where we got off and walked down to the shore line of the sea that lies between New Zealand and Australia; the Tasman Sea. Upon our return they had coffee or tea and crumpets ready for us. After enjoying the snacks, we toured their small museum. They had seven or eight trams in the museum of which four were operational. The workers that operated the trams and were at the museum were all volunteers and were very informative.

We made a few other stop for lunch and restroom breaks and arrived at our hotel in Wellington about 5:30 pm.

Day 8 (10/21/2019) – Today was sort of a rest day. We got up later and left the hotel on our bus at 8:30 am for a tour of Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, and a visit to the Museum of New Zealand. At the museum we toured the section about the Gallipoli War which it turns out was a massacre. The battle took place during World War I. The story was interesting, but the workmanship was amazing. They had reconstructions of the military men scaled 2.4 to 1 that except for the size looked authentic. Following our time at the museum, we toured the Wellington some more and went up to Mt Victoria which is high point in the city from which you can view the city in all directions. Camera time again!

The bus returned us to the hotel and our afternoon was free. We found a hole in the wall for a sandwich; the first place we have come to that did not accept credit cards. Thankfully, we had just got some New Zealand money form an ATM. After our sandwich, we took the cable car up the entrance to the botanical gardens. We started walking around, but fairly soon gave up; were going down to the rose garden, but it was so steep to get back to the cable car that we gave up. Once back at the bottom, we decided to take a walk to look for a place for dinner. After that Esther went back to the hotel to nap as she had trouble sleeping last night. Joyce and I found Mrs. Higgins's cookie place where we got a coffee and cookie and sat for a while on a street bench talking and people watching. Most of those passing us were school girls in a couple different types on uniforms. From there it was back to the hotel until dinner time.

At 5:30 pm we walked down to the water front and had a really good crab and clam fettuccine. Following dinner we took an hour walk and returned to our hotel for the evening. Actually, it was the nicest part of the day; less clouds and wind.

North Island Observations

Tomorrow we leave the North Island for the South Island. This is probably a good time to make a few observations.

- (1) We expected to see nothing but sheep in New Zealand. Instead we have seen that cows significantly outnumber sheep. Actually, milk export is New Zealand's number two industry after tourism; they are close. Most of that milk goes to China.
- (2) The New Zealand terrain is as rough as I have seen anywhere and all of it is green. In talking with an older New Zealander, he said he has only seen the hillsides brown three times in his life. It is really quite beautiful to drive through and look at.
- (3) New Zealand is sitting on a time bomb. Every place we go is either volcanic or subject to earthquakes. Parts of Wellington actually rose up 1.5 meters during an earthquake years ago. Where there was no land, all of a sudden there was land.

Day 9 (10/22/2019) – Moving Day! Today was the day we traveled from New Zealand's North Island to their South Island, and it was a very full day. We left the hotel in Wellington for the Interislander ferry, a small ship that held some 200 cars and trucks, which left at about 9:00 am. It sailed for three hours to Picton. About half of the trip was getting to the ocean from Wellington and getting to Picton on the South Island. We were about an hour traveling through the island into the port at Picton. Seating on the ship was good and we had a second cup of coffee for the day.

From the ferry it was to the train. We had about an hour and fifteen minutes which we occupied having lunch with two other traveling couples. From lunch it was onto the train for our six hour trip to Christchurch. The train was not as comfortable as the ferry, at least for me; much less space. We sat at a table, two on each side. Esther and I got to see where we were going and Joyce could tell us what we missed.

The scenery changed as we travelled south. A long portion of the trip was along the coast; mountains on one side and water on the other. You may recall that there was an earthquake that devastated Christchurch a few years ago. Along the coast we could see all the work still being done to clean up and repair. The train just started running again last December.

We saw field after field on vineyards. And further along, yes, we actually saw sheep that outnumbered cows for the first time. It is spring in New Zealand and there were lambs galore. It was funny; as the train passed the field the lambs would run from the train. They even had their mother's running with them. They must have thought; "what a big animal we were".

We finally arrived at the hotel in Christchurch about 9:30pm, had a quick dinner and off to bed. Fortunately, a later start this morning!