

10/31/2019

Hi,

Our sixteenth through nineteenth day in New Zealand....

Day 16 (10/29/2019) – Not that exciting a day! Today we drove from Te Anau, on the west coast, to Dunedin, on the east coast; the Tasman Sea to the Pacific Ocean. It was a long day of driving with stops for toilet and lunch breaks. Upon arrival in Dunedin, we boarded a train, the Taieri Gorge Limited for a couple hour ride through the Taieri Gorge. After finally getting out of the city and into the gorge it was enjoyable and as usual, I found an open location between train cars to take pictures. Unfortunately, after some of the sites we had seen like Milford Sound and Skippers Canyon, this just didn't compare. Had we seen the gorge first, it would have been a different story. From the train it was to the hotel for wine and dinner and as usual early to bed.

Day 17 (10/30/2019) – Today we did a couple very interesting things; the Larnach Castle and the Awesome Tours NZ Wildlife Tour. As with most castles it sat high up overlooking the Pacific Ocean and inlet to Dunedin. The drive up to the Castle was very scenic and beautiful. For me, the inside of the castle was nothing special; I believe Esther and Joyce enjoyed it. I got outside as soon as possible and roamed the grounds. The gardens and landscaping were absolutely beautiful. They offered us tea or coffee, so I went back in and enjoyed them. Then it was right back outside.

In the afternoon Joyce and I took an optional tour; Awesome Tours NZ Wildlife Tour. Esther felt she had seen wildlife before and wanted to re-pack and rest. It was a drive past the castle we had visited earlier all the way to the coast to see sea lions, seals, penquins and albatross. Unfortunately, the weather didn't cooperate. It poured rain on the way out so bad you could hardly see where we were going. Fortunately, by the time we got where we were going the rain had stopped. We stopped first at the location where we should have been able to see the albatross; some say they saw them, but Joyce and I didn't. Next we drove dirt paths to see the sea lions and seals. First we were given heavy rubber jackets; probably because of the weather. Then we walked on some muddy trails, but when we got there we saw a lot of both seals and sea lions in the water, on the rocks and even up on a hillside; we didn't know they could climb up a slope like they did. It turns out that sea lions in the southern hemisphere are different than those in the northern hemisphere. The southern sea lions have a split tail, swim like turtles and can actually climb using their four flippers. Northern sea lions have a single tail, swim like dolphins and don't climb as well; they are three legged.

Next we looked for penquins. We did see a couple small ones, but that was it. On the way back we stopped again to see the albatross. This time we were able to spot them. They have a nine foot wing span, but because of the distance they were from us they didn't look much bigger than the sea gulls that were much closer. Their wing shape is different so you could definitely tell them from the sea gulls. From there it was back to our hotel for wine and dinner with the rest of the group.

Day 18 (10/31/2019) –Back to Christchurch near the airport for flight tomorrow to Australia. The day was comprised of a short visit to Olveston Historic Home leaving Dunedin, a long bus ride to Christchurch and our farewell dinner. The highlight of the day was our farewell dinner. One of the travelers created and sang a song based on "The Twelve Days of Christmas". It was funny and enjoyable. That was followed by a young singer that sang mostly songs that our age group could relate to. Okay, but not great! The evening concluded with everyone hugging everyone else (not men to men however)

saying our farewells. Of all our travel groups over the years, this was the most together group we have traveled with; we were all good friends by the end of our trip. From the farewell dinner it was off our rooms, somehow get the suitcases to all weigh less than 50 pounds and to bed for our long next day.

New Zealand as fabulous!

Day 19 (11/01/2019) –We got up at 3:00 am for a 3:40 am pick up, a 6:10 am, 3 ½ hour flight to Sydney, a five hour layover in Sydney, a 2 hour and 10 minute flight to Adelaide and a 30 minute drive to our hotel. We arrived at the hotel about 3:30 pm with a 2 ½ hour time change, checked in, found a place to exchange our New Zealand dollars to Australian dollars, had a glass of wine at the hotel, ate at an Italian restaurant (very good meal) went back to the hotel and went to bed. Had to get up for 6:15 am pickup the next day to go to Kangaroo Island. A long, long travel day!