

Darramy on tour No 21: Land Travelling New Zealand. November 2012 – February 2013

Tena Koutou
(Hello in Maori),

For your recap, we left Darramy in Raiteaa and boarded the plane for Auckland, New Zealand. We departed Tahiti on a Wednesday morning for a 4 hour flight arriving on Thursday at midday (It's a time zone thing if you are scratching your head)!

Weird, we hadn't been there long, we were speaking our native language, people understood us, and even the humour was generally understood by nearly all, and so it continued, we felt quite at home within the first hour, and a quick pint of Guinness in the pub confirmed that.

We stayed in an apartment for a week, enjoying the culture of a first world city, restaurants, theatre, sightseeing the city



Waiheke Island Auckland Harbour

off heading to the North of the North Island, we had originally planned on using hostels, but soon discovered that motels were very good value with the bonus of being able to do your own cooking etc. We went up the East coast, and called at Opuha which is the port of entry for most cruising vessels entering NZ from the Pacific, here we met up with quite a few boats whom we had last met during our own Pacific voyaging. Many had had a pretty lousy trip down from Tonga, so we were quite pleased with our decision to keep Darramy in the tropics. It, as always was good to catch up with fellow cruisers. This area of NZ is where the original peace treaty was signed by the



Auckland City harbour skyline

and outlying islands, we did it all including a visit to the dentist who turned out to be a really nice Russian lady! The down side was too many shops, but only 50% of the crew found that a problem! We met up with my cousin Graham and his wife Marian who emigrated here about 3 years ago, and they gave us a good insight of what to expect as we toured the country (and stayed illegally in our apartment)!

Car hire was negotiated, and we then set



Sue with the NZ Silver Fern

British and the Maori's at a place called Waitangi, we did find that every place



Reconstructed Maori Hut

Slowly we made our way up to the furthest point in the North, Cape Reinga. Here we got our first glimpse of the Tasman Sea, another landmark for us because on the other side of the Tasman is Australia. (This, made us realise we have really done a few miles since leaving home). Abel Tasman (a Dutchman) is believed to be the first European to discover Tasmania and NZ in 1642. Just think if he had claimed the country for Holland, the Kiwis could all be wearing clogs which would certainly have affected their ability to field such a good rugby team!

seemed to have a claim to fame of some sort, although for the white man the NZ history is short, great efforts have been made to re-establish the rights of the Maori people, more so than in other countries that we have visited where the original population was treated badly and their land stolen from them.



Cape Reinga



Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean Meet

were an incredible sight when we saw them in various museums. We saw some wonderful places all the way down the East coast, and then went South of Auckland to see Graham and Marian in Morrisville where he is farming. A few days with them and then it was up to the Coromandel Peninsular. Here we drove along a road which was right by the waters edge for about 60 miles it was pretty spectacular, we also were able to

The scenery was absolutely superb, when the sun shone the blue sea sparkled, and the contrast with the green land was something we hadn't really seen for quite a while.

From the Cape we headed down the west coast along 90 mile beach down to the Waipoua Forest, where we saw the giant Kauri trees some 60m high and 5m diameter. These trees were used by the Maori's to build their giant canoes, and



Kauri Tree Hugging

do some walking on empty beaches which is always a joy.

From the Coromandel we headed down the East coast to Tauranga, here we stayed in the town, a busy place, from where we set off to see the Hobbit film location/set. The new Hobbit film had been released and people were raving about it. Well, the set in my opinion was the biggest rip off in NZ history, so yours truly as you can imagine was pretty peeved, but to be fair Sue seemed to enjoy it, and even looked tall among the Hobbit houses! We also met up with Trevor and Jo (S/V Malarkey) who were also land travelling in NZ, gypsy style living in a cute Hobbit sized caravan they picked up on the internet.



Hobbit House with resident. (Ouch Sue)!

We headed inland to Rotorua, which is home to spurting geysers, steaming hot springs and exploding mud pools, but the place stinks of sulphur. It is a busy tourist



Bubbly Hot Mud

attraction, and you could see loads of thermal activity in the parks of the town. We moved down to Lake Taupo in the centre of the island; this had far more appeal for us than the smelly muddy place. A lot of NZ tourism is based on extreme sports, and Taupo is one of these places Bungee jumping , Sky Diving , and white water rafting to name a few. We moved on to Napier in the Hawkes Bay area. A town decimated in the 1930s by earthquakes, but the rebuild was in an Art Deco style, so the architecture displayed plenty of character from those

times, once again walking in the surrounding district was good, and we visited a fabulous farmers market. We had been to a couple of farmers markets further north, and found it a great way to meet the local people. The farmers were really enthusiastic about their produce, and it was always a good tasty morning spent sampling, and naturally washing down the food with some of the local wine. In NZ there are vineyards everywhere. We sampled many wines, but the vineyard visits are over priced and poor value (in my tight fisted opinion) better to buy a few bottles yourself and do your own tastings!

From Napier we headed to the capital city Wellington, known as the windy



Blue Takake Bird Zeelandia Reserve

city. Here we met up with Megan and Paul. We had met Megan on our Antarctic trip in 2010, and shock of shocks not only had she now become mother to Zoe, they offered us their house to stay in over Christmas whilst they went away. Wow! What a great offer, which we gratefully accepted. So we returned on Christmas Eve to see them off, then went to Zeelandia to a bird reserve in the city after making ourselves at home in their superb hi tech house. Christmas was spent in luxury and we enjoyed every day in the city and managed to catch up with Katie B the Aussie (and new man Glen) whom we met on the Antarctic trip as well. New Years Eve saw us boarding the ferry to South Island, crossing the Cook Straits in calm conditions.



Marlborough Sound

heading south west to Greymouth we encountered floods and land slides on the roads due to extreme weather conditions, (hmm, it is now summer)!

We headed further down the coast to Westland national park and the Franz Josef glacier, only to discover the road down the west coast had been closed as a bridge had been damaged in the bad weather. No problem we thought, we will go round (just as you would at home). However, to go round, once we had studied the maps, turned out to be a 400km diversion! We had no option but to change our plans. So diversion it was; back to the east coast

The Marlborough Sounds were pretty spectacular, intricate bays and inlets, it looked a great cruising area, but for us wimps a bit cold. We planned to do an anti clockwise tour of the Island, and set off to the Abel Tasman National Park,

which again was quite spectacular,



Amazing Rock Formations. Punakaiki

through some spectacular scenery over Arthurs Pass. Of course, due to the wild weather conditions all accommodation was full so we ended up driving even further to find somewhere to stay (this incidentally was the only time we had a problem finding accommodation). We drove on to Timaru, for the night, then,



Beautiful Victorian Tea room

the next day proceeding further south to Oamaru. Here, we discovered every Sunday was Victorian day, a large part of the old town and residents were all in costume, Tea Rooms, Penny Farthings being ridden down the street; the full Victorian extravaganza. Although a cold and damp day, it was wonderful to wander the streets and visit the old shops etc. and enjoy a really happy atmosphere.



A Penny for them

Reluctant to leave we headed for Dunedin which has strong Scottish links, some lovely architecture, and a pub that sold good Guinness. The coastal scenery was magnificent, but we were in for an even better surprise. We chose to explore the Catlin region, which is not well noted for tourism, but here we got spectacular scenery, few tourists, wonderful wildlife and loved it. We went down to Slope point which is the most Southerly point on South Island. Here you could see trees that were permanently bent with the strong winds from the Southern ocean.



Furthest Point South



Queenstown

you had not seen fiords etc previously it would be quite good, but with dull and wet weather, for us though, a bit disappointing. Next we headed to Queenstown, a busy centre for adventure stuff, here the scenery was indeed spectacular, based around a lake, this area offered everything to fill the dreams of every adrenaline junkie. In addition good pubs and restaurants helped to complete ones enjoyment of

Now, heading North West, into the area that had previously been denied to us because of the diversion. Our first stop being Te Anau, the gateway to the famous Milford Sound and the whole of the Fiordland area. It was quite a busy place, tourism being its bread and butter. We drove down to Milford, and although

the scenery was pretty good we felt the place to have been oversold, granted if



Free Fall, always have loved FREE!



Awesome!

the place. Here I decided that I had to fulfil a long awaited ambition. I jumped out of a plane at 15000 feet. Yep, I went skydiving, albeit with an instructor attached to me. A great experience, a full 65 seconds of free fall, enough time to realise exactly what was going on and

enjoy the experience in the spectacular surroundings. Once safely back on the ground I could justify using the much overused word in its correct context AWESOME!

Now it was real mountain time we headed to snow covered Mount Cook, the highest mountain in NZ, and enjoyed some pleasant walking around its base and the Sir Edmund Hilary museum and centre, it felt good to walk on a glacier again, from there we headed south to Wanaka, probably the nicest place for us in South Island, not as busy as Queenstown, but just our sort of place. A few days there, then we were North



Mount Cook

bound up the west coast to the Fox and Franz Josef glaciers, then over the repaired bridge and off to meet Malarkeys in Reefton, A real wild west type of town, with a history of mining. Here Sue and Jo went panning for gold, had fly fishing lessons and a good laugh, whilst Trevor and I did some walking



Wanaka

and sunk a few beers together. Time was marching on, we had a ferry back to

North Island booked so we headed off and made our way back to Wellington, a reunion with all our Antarctic friends again then a long drive up towards Auckland calling in for a family party with Graham and Marian, more walking on Graham's home turf, and finally off to Auckland for the plane back to cold old England.



Wallace's on walkabout

We covered over 10,000 kilometres, travelling from the far North to the furthest South of a wonderful country, we spent 11 weeks and only managed to go on water twice, It is said that NZ is like going back 40 years in time, well it is for all the good things we remember. Traffic was no problem, once we got in a queue of 6 cars! The roads were adequate for the traffic, people were friendly and welcoming with a population of just 5 million people and 40 million sheep, we can thoroughly recommend it. We did not visit Christchurch which in recent years has been devastated by many earthquakes, and it is not our style to go and see devastation and hardship for the sake of it. We understand that the population of Christchurch are rising to the rebuilding challenge.

Now we are back in the UK for a few more weeks Sue has been recuperating after some medical stuff, before we head back to Tahiti to resume some more warm weather cruising with a vague plan to end this year in Fiji. We shall see.

I have just read the following in the Flying Fish (OCC publication) about Ian Nicholson who sailed across the Atlantic in 1949 in "Mollyhawk" a 70 foot Schooner. Quote: "Whilst in Gibraltar the formalities and police regulations are quite futile, as you had to give one's wife written authority to be allowed ashore." I mentioned this to Sue for the possibility of doing this during our future cruising.—I just got that look!! (You know the one)!

So as usual it's TTFN
(Delete as applicable)

Best Wishes *Kindest Regards* *Love and Hugs* *Cheers* *E noho ra*
(goodbye Maori)

Brian and Sue

You can view this number 21 and all our previous travelogues of the last eight years on our OCC site

<http://www.oceancruisingclub.org/index.php/forum/links-to-members-blog-sites/882-brian-wallace-publishes-his-accounts-of-darramy-on>

You will have to negotiate a log on page! Click on "Visitors". Click on "I agree terms and conditions" (There is a link to read the terms and conditions if you like.) Click on "Browse". You will then be taken to the index page for "Darramy on Tour".

*Once we are back on board, you can check our position on the Pangolin site. Click on this link http://www.pangolin.co.nz/yotreps_reporting_boat_list We are listed under DARRAMY so click and see where we may be, we try to update each week, but on passage we update our position each day. **Please note this is a different address than previously.***