Journey #14212 - Des Moines to Perth and Auckland

Daily Journal – Part 8

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| **Day 1 Itinerary** - After leaving Christchurch airport, we cross the fertile Canterbury Plains to the Southern Alps. We travel over Porters Pass (960m), through the mountains to our lunch stop at Arthurs Pass.  After lunch, we travel through the spectacular Otira Gorge, climbing to 900m and then on down to the West Coast. Our next stop is Punakaiki pancake rocks. A 45min walk takes you past amazing stacks of limestone formations forming blow holes and swirl pools as the Tasman Sea rolls in.  We then follow the coast down to Hokitika. We will visit a factory where they create jewelry etc out of greenstone (jade).  We usually dine at Stumpers, a pub with excellent meals.  We stay the night at Jade Motel in Hokitika. | | | | | |
| **October 29 - Janette**  Left our Host’s home in Auckland at 5:05 a.m. to catch a shuttle that would take us to the airport in Christchurch where we would be met by Peter, our driver and historian who would accompany us during this journey. He was waiting for us when we arrived at 8:00 and we were off. We drove over Porters Pass (960m) through the beautiful Southern Alps. There was still snow on the tips. We then climbed to 900m and down to the West Coast. Visited Punakaiki pancake rocks, stacks of limestone formations forming flow holes and swirl pools as the Tasman Sea rolls in. Drove to Hokitika where we briefly visited a greenstone (jade) factory for a little education and an opportunity to shop. Then to dinner and an overnight stay. | | | | | |
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| **Day 2 Itinerary** - We travel through rain forest and pass by several bush clad lakes to get to the Franz then Fox Glacier. They are both receding fast. Over the last 20 yrs, they have changed from an hour return easy walk to within 50m of the terminal face, to a 1hr 30 mins, more challenging walk, and 300m from the face. However still worth it observing nature happening while you watch. Currently the glacier at Fox is more accessible than Franz, but this can change. We will walk to the easier one.  We will have lunch in Fox Glacier township. We continue on through more forest to Haast, a short walk to look at a water fall, then over the Haast Pass.  We break out of the forest into open country and then travel along side the large lakes, Wanaka and Hawea, a real contrast with what we have already seen. We have a look at beautiful town of Wanaka, then over the Crown Range to Queenstown, in time for us to go up the Gondola (cable car) for the outstanding views and a wonderful **buffet meal** – our team dinner. This is the only meal paid for as part of your tour.  We then go out to Cromwell for our accommodation at Colonial Manor Motel. | | | | | |
| **October 30 - Jane**  This day found us at the Franz Joseph glacier in New Zealand, walking to the closest viewing point. The color of the run-off water is such a distinctive blue from the glacier and so beautiful.  Mary Marshall and Dean and Jean Thomas (Cedar Rapids FF club) took some photos in front of the glacier. We made our way to Queenstown on a road that has 365 switchback curves, although I lost count!  That evening we rode the gondola to dinner at the top of the mountain in Queenstown. | | | | | |
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| Inline image | | |  | | |
| Jane, Mary, Dean, and Jean with glacier in the background | | | Peter and dean checking out a boat | | |
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| **Day 3 Itinerary** – We have an easier day on the way back into Queenstown we will stop and watch (participate!!!??) bungy jumping.  In Queenstown, there will be opportunities for some activities both adrenaline pumping such as jet boating, or more passive like a cruise across Lake Whakatipu in an old steam boat called the ‘Earnslaw’.  Queenstown is the gateway to the Central Otago region where you’ll find 200 vineyards within a 40 minute drive of the town centre. The Central Otago wine region is made up of six sub-regions; Gibbston, Cromwell/Pisa/Lowburn, Bannockburn, Bendigo, Wanaka and Alexandra, all producing world-class wines. Many Queenstown wineries have cellar door tasting, and several have excellent winery restaurants on site, meaning you can drop in for a taste, a chat to the staff or a delicious meal with a glass of your favourite local wine.  At approx 4pm we will leave Queenstown and travel 2 hours to Te Anau for our evening meal (several choices) and then accommodation at Parklands Motel. | | | | | |
| **October 31 - Mary**    We had a wonderful hotel room in the Colonial Manor Hotel in Cromwell. Cromwell is considered the fruit bowl of Southern New Zealand. As we left Cromwell to drove back to Queenstown and stopped at Jones Family Fruit Stand outside of Cromwell. They are considered the stone fruit capital of the country with lots of apricots grown in the area. There were lots of samples, many bought items for snacks and breakfasts.  We stopped at AJ Hackett Bungee Jump. It was very exciting to see the people jump from the bridge, disappointed that no one from our group took the challenge to jump! The cord is 200 strands of rubber, Peter told us that the jumpers were asked how far they wanted to drop, then they custom the length of the rope to how far the person wants to go down. They can go to the water or be dunked at different levels. I felt sorry for the men in the row boat that picked the jumpers up it looked like a very hard job!  We then drove towards Queenstown, on the way we learned they still find some gold in the Arrow river.  We went our separate ways once in town. Some more adventurous went on a jet boat, some explored the city others went on the TSS Earnslaw Steamship for a quiet ride on the lake. We did not get off the ship but did see the beautiful farm where we could have gone to see another sheep shearing.  After leaving Queenstown we drove though lots of fertile land and many sheep. We stopped at a small cafe for afternoon tea. It was much bigger inside and had great food and drink and for those who needed retail therapy there was a beautiful gift shop. We learned about deer farming and that lamb is very popular for their meat. Wool is not very profitable at this time, but they still much be sheered for comfort and health of the sheep.  We drove along the Te Anau Lake, which is the largest in the South Island and the second largest in all New Zealand. We spent the night in Te Anau at the Parklands Motel. | | | | | |
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| AJ Hackett Bungee Jump | Wild little penquins at Lake Whakatipu | | | Jane and Janette in their jet boat gear | |

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| **Day 4 Itinerary** – We depart a little earlier, 7.30am, for our trip to Milford Sound. We travel a very scenic mountain road, through the Homer Tunnel then drop down into Milford. Our spectacular cruise (paid for) takes us out into the fiord for 1hr 45mins, out to the Tasman Sea, past 3 water falls if it is fine and countless numbers if it is wet, and if we are lucky we will see NZ fur seals, possibly dolphins, and possible penguins. Lunch is on the boat. You can buy a box or have a buffet or take your own sandwiches. Tea and coffee are complimentary.  After Milford we travel back to Te Anau, then across the very fertile Southland Plains to Gore, then up to Dunedin for our accommodation, Motel On York, and evening meal (several choices within a few hundred meters of our motel). | | |
| **November 1 - Mary**  We left at 7:30 this morning as we needed to be at Milford Sound for our boat ride. We went through Fiordland National Park where everything is protected, nothing is to be touched. There are 2 kinds of forest within the park, Beech and Pine. The beech forest can be walked through easier than the pine forest. The pine forest cannot be walked through as there is too much undergrowth. It was very foggy early in the morning. We stopped by Mirror Lake and I was very surprised how well the mirror effect showed up even though it was foggy. We were half way between the Antarctica and the equator at 45-degree latitude. We stopped at the divide where water now goes to the Tasmin Sea rather than the Pacific Ocean. We went through a tunnel that was started in the 30's during the depression and then WWII happened, and it was not finished until the 50's. We made it to Milford Sound, the 8th wonder of the world. We had a beautiful sunny day which is good considering it is one of the wettest inhabited places on Earth with 6,412mm, (252") of rainfall in an average year.  On our way back, we saw where an accident had happened, there were a couple of cars stopped and they were helping so we went on. Sometime later we saw an ambulance heading to the accident. It had been about 30 minutes from the time we saw the accident. As narrow and curvy the roads are, I think it is lucky that we only saw one.  When we returned to Te Anau I was met by Les and Janet Gibbs, whom I had hosted them when they came to Des Moines in 2015. It was great to meet up with them again, I spent the night in their home. The next day they drove me to Christchurch to meet up with the rest of the group. Les and our driver Peter knew each other. Peter will be taking an FF group that is coming to their Southland club on a similar tour that we took. | | |
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