

Sidney, Australia



Sydney Opera House

The Australian/New Zealand trip began with a three– day extension in **Sydney**. Many activities can be jammed into a short time. We enjoyed a performance at the Sydney Opera House by a prodigy jazz pianist. We roamed the city, enjoying museums, gardens, the eye tower, Bondi Beach, the fish market and much more.

We definitely enjoyed the ferry system, taking a trip to Cockatoo Island which had been a penial colony. (Not a home for Cockatoo's)

We ate extremely well, great meals, good wine, and George would say **“don’t forget the beer!”**

Ambassadors: Judy Frascht-Miner, *Ambassador Coordinator*, George and Stephanie Schulte, Jo Hanken, Marilyn Benge, Don Johnson, Sue Evens, and Carol and Jerry Burke, (Cedar Rapids-Iowa City) Rachel and Joe Brabeck (Spokane, WA), Sharre Jahde and Judy Kettle (Lincoln, NE), Randy and Beth Tetzlaff (Dallas, TX)



Wading on Bondi Beach



Enjoying the Ferry System



Outdoor dining in Sydney



Adelaide, South Australia

The journey to Adelaide began March 19, 2023 which was in fall in Australia. We all had a tough time realizing it was fall in Australia. Our body clocks were set for Spring in Iowa. Adelaide was a beautiful place to begin. The city forefathers had great vision and planned a park around the outside of the whole city. We had a walking tour with, Rob Harris, guiding us. What a great overview!

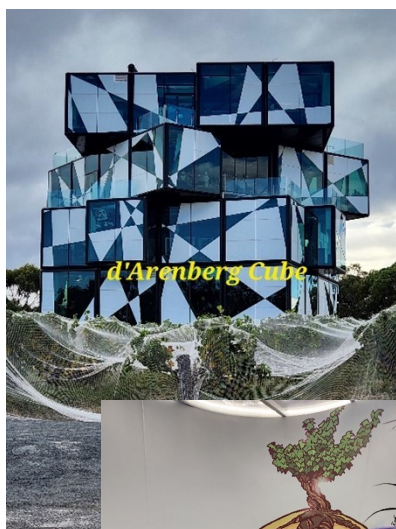
We also got to drive south along the coast and stopped for lunch and a view of the Southern Ocean.



*Southern ocean
looking toward
Antarctica*



*park surrounding
Adelaide city area*



d'Arenberg Cube

The next day was completely different as we started testing wine early in the morning at the d'Arenberg Cube. This winery had unusual exterior and interior architecture including the men's restroom.

At The Cleveland Wildlife Park, we fed the kangaroos and watched the koalas.



koala



Judy feeding the kangaroo



plain



Jan, Lorraine, George

Other points of interest, included seeing Adelaide from Mount Lofty Summit, going to the whispering wall, visiting the David Roche Museum, having meals (including Vegemite) with Adelaide club members. We had a chance to catch up with Lorraine who visited Cedar Rapids after the Colorado conference.

Tamworth Australia by Sue Evans



Great Dividing Range

Our second journey in Australia was to Tamworth, northwest of Sydney in the Great Dividing Range. It is inland hilly country. But a canceled flight sent us beyond to Armsdale for the first night instead, where seven of us were taken into the rambling home of Deb and David Creed high on the top of the mountain range, with deep valleys on both sides. The view and hosts were amazing, including the mob of kangaroos visiting their west pasture pond at dusk, the endless projects in their outbuildings and the fog

filled valley to the east at sunrise.

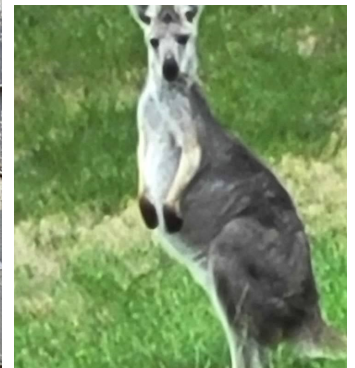
Day 1: The Armsdale City Tour bus took us to their university of medical research historic buildings and gardens as well as the art center where an aboriginal artist of kangaroo hides played his didgeridoo. After lunch it was on to Tamworth.

Tamworth fed us! We had breakfast with our hosts, toured the historic Powerstation Museum after



Country Music Museum

morning tea, then lunch before the wildlife park and the Australian Country Music Museum that Tamworth is famous for, followed by afternoon tea before viewing the skylab that evening. Supper followed with our hosts.



Wildlife Park

Three of our days were filled with extreme downpours, making driving on twisting curving roads quite the hold-your-breath adventure. But the small towns,



shops and historic restaurants, woolen mills and painted silos as well as the hosts/people we met along the way were interesting and welcoming.

Our final photo along the Peel River after a delightful farewell meal.



Overnight stay with Deb & David Creed



Tauranga – Western Bay of Plenty, New Zealand

The third and final part of the Journey to the Lands Down Under took us to Tauranga, New Zealand in the Western Bay of Plenty March 31, 2023.

An interesting fact about New Zealand, and a huge contrast with Australia, is there are no poisonous snakes, spiders, or even dangerous animals. In fact, there were no native mammals, other than bats, and marine life. Just lizards and birds were there when the Maori arrived. There are now cattle, sheep, and deer. The kiwi (bird) is well known, and sometimes refers to New Zealanders themselves.



Even though Tauranga was our base, several of us stayed in nearby towns. No matter where we were with our hosts, the North Island was a beautiful and cultural experience.



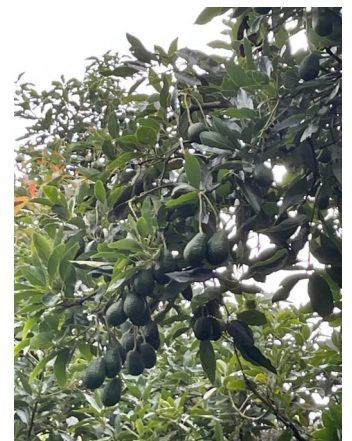
Dragon sculpture in quarry

First stop: TePuna Quarry. This was originally a quarry, but the community turned it into Puna Park. Various clubs (Rotary, garden, etc.) have certain quarry sections they developed and maintain. Sculptors added their work, including a dragon.

The Bay of Plenty is known for its horticulture, especially avocados and kiwi. In fact, Captain Cook found the area so plentiful with produce, people, and fishing, he gave it the name. We were fortunate enough to visit a private avocado farm and learn about growing this delicious fruit.



Next we visited The Elms, a historic site where the earliest known contact occurred between the Indigenous Maori and the Pakeha (NZ Europeans). This is particularly known for its iconic Mission House and heritage gardens. The site's rich history dates to pre-European times. We went to an authentic fish and chips shop on the Strand.



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Almost any of our days on the North Island provided an opportunity to walk on the beach or in the ocean. Every day provided gorgeous sunrises and sunsets.

For those wanting to mine gold (and take a turn at running a mine drill) we toured the Waihi Gold Discovery Museum. That afternoon, we went to Wahi Beach, toured the Katikati murals, and/or the Haiku walk.

We couldn't leave Katikati without spending a bit of time with Barry (a bronze sculpture) and his newspaper. The sculpture is honor of a resident who was a significant part of downtown, spending every day reading a newspaper on a bench. Now he will never leave. It was a perfect day, beginning to end.

We were fortunate to visit a wood-carver, with products which looked like they were anything but wood.

We learned about the Sand Dunes at Papamoa Surf Club, hiked around Mount Maunganui and closed out the afternoon with a swim in the hot mineral pools which

were both hot and relaxing.

Our last day was a busy one! We started the day with a visit to Rotorua and Whakarewarewa-The Living Maori Village. We learned about the geothermal pools used for energy, cooking and warming the baths. Our hangi lunch was prepared by geothermal heat and we watched the Pohutu geyser expel her energy and force.



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We attended the traditional Maori song and dance performances, and were entranced with their talent and coordination.



Then we boarded a bus to Hobbiton. If you have seen any of the movies, or read the book, *The Lord of the Rings*, you will recognize the shire created by the film company and director, Peter Jackson. Visiting the 12-acre movie set ended with an ale, hard cider or ginger beer in the iconic Green Dragon Inn, which was tasty and needed after the journey through the shire. We learned about forced perspective as friends sat in gigantic chairs and became Hobbit-sized.



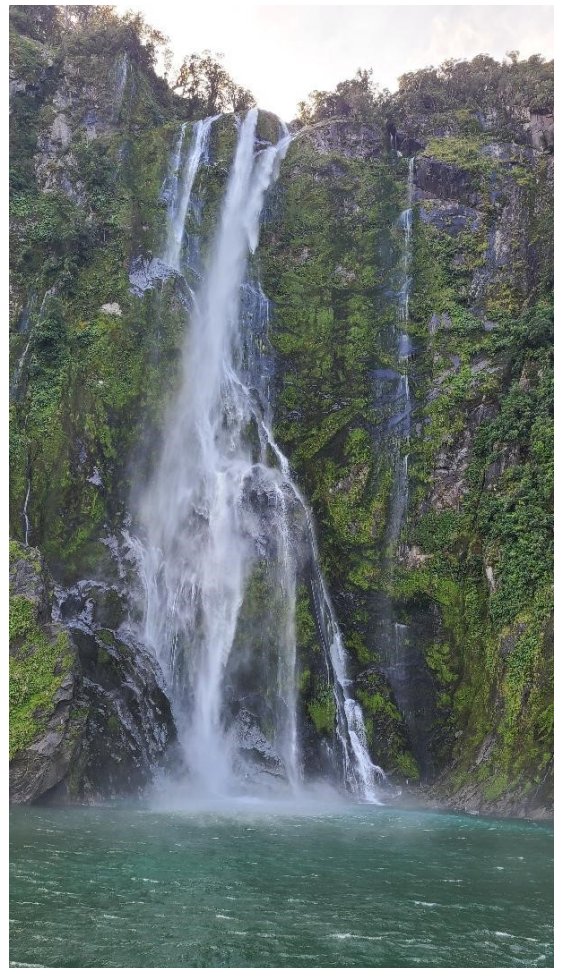
Our farewell dinner provided an incredible view. We could see for miles, and enjoy the company of our group, our hosts

South Island, New Zealand Tour

Next stop, the South Island..



Eleven of us continued on a five-day tour of the South Island. We experienced the Hokitika Area with its river gorge Milford Sound which is breath taking and gave us a glimpse of Glo Worms.



Milford Sound



Mirror Lake

Queenstown provided adventures. Then to fruit orchards on the way to Alexandra and our way home. BEAUTIFUL!!!



Queenstown



Fruit Orchards and Gardens