

## New Zealand 2014

We got up at 3:20 instead of 3:30 AM because we couldn't set the alarm clock accurately that early.

That gave us lots of time to take a look out the door and realize that the weather was just fine for a walk to Evans. I finished the orange juice and we headed up the street to get on our 4:15 AM bus to Oakland airport. At that hour, on a Thursday, the traffic was very light and we got to the airport even before the Hawaiian Airlines counter opened. They're supposed to open at 6:00 AM, but it took them a while to get their computers going, and even longer to get the printers properly attached to their terminals. They really don't know how to run the computers very well. But soon we got our bags checked and our FIRST CLASS boarding passes. We are flying on a Boeing 767-300 with 2-2-2 seats in the front of the plane, and that's just where we were in seats 1H and 1J. We wandered around the airport until boarding time (as usual) and found the seats very comfortable in the B767. We were a bit anxious if we were going to get enough to eat during the day, but we need not have been. They fed us really well, coming along with more food of one sort or another just before we noticed a need. The five hour flight was over before we knew it and we were landing in Honolulu.

We picked up a car at Thrifty for only about 45 bux and proceeded to get lost. We decided against renting a GPS for \$14 for less than a day, but perhaps that was not such a good idea. We had more than one map, but we still needed to find ourselves on one of them. So I pulled out the iPhone David loaned us for the trip and turned on the Map App. Oops. Without a SIM card, it couldn't download a map to put under the blue dot which was our location. So the phone knew exactly where we were, but could not tell us because it had no map. Oh, well.... We soon found a main road, and then the cross island highway and were on our way to the East side of Oahu. After leaving Honolulu the traffic became much less congested and we drove through many little towns on the east side of the island with a minimum of trouble. It did rain a bit on us, and the clouds were certainly seriously preventing us from seeing a full view of the hills.

On the way back, we drove around the bottom end of the island and found our hotel without trouble. Evelyn really is a good navigator when she has some idea which way is north. Unfortunately, our hotel didn't have any place for us to park, so suggested we park at the pay lot at the zoo. Well, this was actually just down the block and across the street, and would have cost less than the cost charged by the hotel for one night of parking. BUT before we got our things out of the car, the hotel guy, John, found us a place to park at the hotel so we just parked it. After getting settled in our room, we walked up Waikiki to find a place to eat. I decided on fish and chips, even before we picked out the place to eat, which ended up being Jimmy Buffet's diner. Loud music, no place to avoid a TV showing olympics but quite HUGE servings of fish and chips. We each ate about half our order so decided to have fish for breakfast and took the rest back to our room. Oh, yes.... since they didn't have a regular room for us, we got a family suite with 3 beds (2 twin + queen), much of a kitchen and two balconies. Very nice for the kind of hotel it was. Which was a bit funky and older than many along the famous beach, but perfectly serviceable. No breakfast, though, so the extra fish and chips were perfect the next morning. We did get to bed fairly early, since it was already two hours time change later and we did get up at 3:20 AM. I'm reading the Westar report of the Acts Seminar, which says that Luke used Paul's letters to write acts and has no added historical value. In other words, get your history from Paul's letters and NOT Acts of the Apostles.

So, the next morning we arose at the regular time and ate the rest of our fish and chips. Then we went out for a walk, and passed Myrtle's apartment just before returning to our hotel. We needed to get gas in the car near the airport, so Evelyn mapped out an interesting route to get us off the freeway and into a gas station just before we turned the car in. Again we had plenty of time at the airport so walked all over the Honolulu airport. We finally got on the shuttle to go to the inter-island half to the Hawaiian Lounge to see what first class would get us at the airport. Not much, it turns out. They did have free juice of the type they poured on the plane, so we drank quite a bit of that as the airport is more than half outdoors, and very hot. The gate we left from is in the new part, and very well designed and pretty. This time we boarded an Airbus 330, and found the same seats as before. But the seats were not nearly as comfortable as the Boeing seats. The pillow was absolutely necessary for back support the whole ride. Again, they fed us just before we could get hungry, so when we arrived at Auckland at 10:15 PM we didn't need anything to eat.

It did take us quite a while to get out of the airport, though. First, they sprayed the hand luggage. That took about an extra 20 minutes. Then we had to go through customs. Quick and easy, but another line to stand in. Oh, yes. When we got into Honolulu, our bags with their First Class tags were the first off the plane and we were out of the airport in a flash. Not so in Auckland. It took quite a while to get the bags, and after we did clear customs, we had to pass the food inspection station. They allowed us to keep the mini-salt and peppers that we had collected on each plane ride, but they sanitized our hiking shoes which took about 20 minutes. Finally we called for our hotel shuttle and got a ride to the hotel. The Jet Park Hotel is out in the middle of nowhere, so walking from here is not practical. Check in was quick at midnight, but when we got to our room we didn't know how to turn the lights on. The trick is to put your room key FIRMLY into the electrical key slot inside the room. That activates all the electrical. The hotel man had to come up and show us how it worked. We did get to bed before 1:00 AM, though. So I didn't really get enough sleep, but did get us going by 7:30 the next morning.

OK, now I (Evelyn) get to take over and type for awhile. Peter did get us up early, but we slept well for the few hours we were in our comfortable bed. Our room was small, but had everything we needed and we didn't plan to spend much time there anyway. We were on an early shuttle from the hotel back to the airport (about 7 minutes) to buy roundtrip tickets for the Airport-Auckland Shuttle. Since it was Sunday morning, the traffic was not bad and we got to the Ferry dock in about 35 minutes. It was an absolutely beautiful day, a bit warm, but we had our sunscreen on, but did forget our hats. We stopped at McDonalds for a very quick breakfast and then walked through Auckland, all the way to the Auckland Museum – about an hour's walk. We bought our Museum tickets, checked our backpacks and enjoyed this wonderful museum for about 5 hours! We did stop and listen to a concert for an hour. There was a large group of Chinese singers, celebrating Chinese New Year. They had been invited to the museum to sing mostly western songs translated into Chinese. They were quite good, but it was a bit strange to hear the blend of east and west. Since we didn't want to walk all the way back to the ferry dock, we caught the shuttle closer to the museum for our ride back to the airport, where we just caught the hotel shuttle about to leave. We quickly got on and were back in our room by 6:00pm. After a little rest, we went down to the hotel restaurant and had a lovely dinner. It was a perfect end to our first full day in New Zealand. Throughout the day we met lots of very nice people – just like we expected! Just carry a map around and you get help from passersby. After dinner Peter spent some time writing up the first two days of

the trip before it was bed time.

Peter again....

We got up at 6:30 after a good, long night's sleep, checked the e-mail and packed up to head for the airport again. This time we were flying from Auckland to Christchurch aboard Jetstar, a less expensive way to travel. But they got us there just as fast. I'm sure glad we had higher class tickets for the long flights, as it would have been difficult to fly 6 – 9 hours in those small seats. At noon we arrived in Christchurch and called to get our car. They came right over to pick up two couples and we filled out all the paper work for 25 days of car rental. We did get the extra insurance since there are many uninsured motorists in NZ. Now it's time to try driving on the left side of the road again. Last time was about 12 years ago in England/Scotland. It still works, but the first few km were in the wrong direction, back toward the airport and we almost got into a spot with no exit. Then we got on main roads and drove for a couple of hours before turning up at our B&B, Garden View in Rolleston just outside Christchurch. It's a beautiful place with a huge manicured yard. The grass is a bit brown because it's midsummer, but the rest is really beautiful and it's all well manicured. We walked into town and went through the shopping center one store at a time. We bought some food and a 240 volt hair roller for Evelyn so now she won't be fuzzy headed all the time. We had dinner by ourselves at the Rock. Yes, we got there when the doors opened and were the only ones there until we left an hour later. I guess the local clients come in later? Evelyn had BBQ ribs and I had a Caesar salad and a rib plus a few of her fries. And we had two pints of Speights Old Dark beer which was good but not very high in alcohol. On our walk we stopped at the local community center and perused the library. They have three Lloyd Geering books which are all on my shelf, although the ones here are not published by Polebridge. After our walk back home we spent some time chatting with our hosts before retiring to our room to write, read and prepare for tomorrow's trip to Arthur's Pass. We're hoping for good weather, but will probably see some clouds. Of course the best ones will add to the pictures.

After a good but not excellent night's sleep on an excellent bed, we arose for our morning bath. The bathroom in this place is almost as big as the bedroom, having a shower room with one wash basin and a tub room with another wash basin. There are heat lamps in both rooms and so many switches to turn on lights, fans, heat, you name it. The bedroom is furnished with all antique wood cabinets that are beautiful. The only marginal thing is the WiFi. It works, but we're a bit too far down the hall for best results. As you saw, however, e-mail does work. Breakfast is the standard two course English affair. We started with cereal, fruit and yogurt (well, Evelyn skipped the yogurt) and then followed by one or two eggs, sausages, bacon (what we call Canadian), fresh home grown tomatoes, toast and whatever you wanted to spread on it and finally coffee or tea. We had to be really careful to avoid eating ourselves sick. We talked to John, our host, about which trip to do today, and he strongly recommended the coast so we headed over toward Akaroa. I wanted to see the town that was so good to Evelyn when she was there last with family. We got there just in time to board a small sailboat to go out into the harbor (and ocean) to watch the wildlife. Mostly we were entertained by Hector dolphins who liked to swim alongside the boat's bow wave. The captain said they were attracted by music, too, so he had a stereo in the bow and played some interesting music. Sure enough, we got dolphins and I got LOTS of pictures. We spent part of our time sailing but probably more of it motoring around the bay. At least while we were sailing, I got to man the helm. I was the only one aboard who seemed more interested in running the boat than watching the wildlife. The boat was named the Fox II and rigged as a ketch with a roll up jib, top main, main and mizzen. There may have been other

sails available, but I think we used everything I saw.

After the boat ride, we ate nut bread and drank tea provided for us by Beth from the B&B. Each day she handed us a shopping bag with three thermos bottles, cups and a small towel and a tin of goodies. If you are looking for an excellent B&B near Christchurch, Garden View at Rolleston can't be beat. We asked at the info station about getting up on the rim of the crater, and found that Long Bay road went pretty much straight up to the rim. We drove up and hiked up toward the antennas at the top. We didn't get all the way as the trail was just a bit of a track through very smooth, slippery tall grass. But we did get excellent views of the harbor and ocean. When we got back to the car, we drove all around the NE rim on Summit road back to HW 75 which we took back to Rolleston. When we got back we decided to drive the few blocks downtown to the Indian restaurant. We had mild chicken and medium spicy lamb and some interesting Nan. The menu was as large as I have ever seen in an Indian restaurant. After dinner it was reading and bed.

Next morning we had breakfast at 8:00 so we could enjoy the company of an English foot doctor and his wife. We had chatted with them the night before, also. They were going to a wedding and were off after breakfast. This day we decided to go up Arthur Pass and see what the hiking would be like in a high pass on a road over to the west coast. It rained on us as we drove, but stopped before we headed up into the hills. Our first stop was a waterfall up one side of the canyon, fairly dramatic. The weather was cloudy and foggy, but quite warm. It is summer, after all. We drove a bit further up the road to do the Dobson nature walk, and just kept going along the Lake Misery track north of the pass summit and then up the Otira river valley towards the bridge. After we'd been hiking quite a while, I asked Evelyn if she wanted to turn around yet. Yep! So she agreed to wait while I went up a bit further, but the country didn't change any so I came back and we headed back to the car. On the way we passed a couple whose picture I had taken at the waterfall. We recommended that they go at least over the power line ridge so they could look down into the river valley. They agreed that that might be just about as far as they wanted to go.

We drove back down from the mountains and stopped at Castle Hill to look at the huge boulder field. I decided to climb up to where I could get a really good look but Evelyn wanted to wait in the car. It took me about 1.5 hours to do the 4-5 km loop through what would have been cow pasture if it wasn't a closed natural area. I did have to walk half way around the farm to get to the first rocks, then it was a couple switch backs and straight up over fields where I could tell others had walked before. The rocks are very interesting. I was moving pretty slowly by the time I got back to the car. On the way home, we stopped at the store and Evelyn picked up a roasted chicken and a pair of salads for our dinner. We ate only the legs off the chicken, as the salads were quite large. And we finished our first bottle of wine, a Syrah/Cab blend that was worth the \$10 we paid for it. We chatted with our hosts again and then went to bed. I read for quite a while, but when we turned the light off, my legs hurt. I had an ibuprofen and that seemed to help me get to sleep. So far, we have had aspirin for sunburn, calcium carbonate as a stomach soother after the Indian food, and Evelyn had a cold pill for sneezing/sniffles. That's pretty good for travelers.

We got up this morning and packed up our stuff. Well, we moved it from the room to the car, and didn't bother to put it all back into the suitcases. We will save that for later. As we were driving down toward Mt. Cook, Evelyn was playing with the GPS and managed to get it to a point where it would not route. We could see where we were, but the GO button was grayed

out on one screen and just did nothing from another screen. We stopped at an electrical shop in Geraldine to see if they a clue about how to fix it. Nope, but when we turned it back on for the third time, it was working again. We'll never know what happened..... We pointed it to Mt. Cook and headed out. The GPS must be set for scenic routing, because it wanted to take us along the canal road for a while. Unfortunately that road was closed for a rebuild so we had to go around on the main HWY. We drove along the shore of Lake Pukaki looking right up the valley to Mt. Cook and others in the range. It was beautiful, but the pictures won't be great because they are shot into the sun. When we got to the National Park, we checked into our motel and walked up to the visitor center. It has an excellent display of climbing equipment from many years, including ice axes that look even older than mine. We talked to the help and decided to climb up the Red Tarn track. After changing shoes and picking up our packs, we headed UP and UP and UP. The trail is a little bit of gravel and mostly stairs going very steeply up the hillside. It was very hot, and Evelyn got over cooked. We didn't make it all the way, but did get some great pictures and enough exercise to make up for five hours of driving. After getting back to our room a cool shower helped us both feel more like normal. I think it is unusually hot today, even for the middle of summer. Dinner was more of the chicken from last night and a rice pilaf. Delicious and SIMPLE. Now I'm caught up.

This morning we got up at 6:30 so we could be on the trail early. Breakfast was a bit meager, amounting to a cup of coffee/chocolate and a granola bar. Good, but not nearly the amount of calories (or kilo joules) we have had for the last three days at the B&B. We drove the car up to where we could park it, but where we could have parked it. We drove to the top of the village but not the campground, so our walk was an hour longer than we thought it would be. Oh, well. We headed up towards Aoraki Mt. Cook on the trail through Hooker Valley. This trail crosses three great suspension bridges and is mostly flat, as opposed to yesterday's walk which didn't have a flat spot in it. The guide book says this is the most spectacular hike in NZ, and we certainly agree it's in our top spot so far. Around each corner was another great view of mountains, glacial lakes, glaciers – all the mountain stuff you expect. Because of the weather here, the snow level is lower and the glaciers very dramatic, The Canadian ice fields are similar and larger, but not so vertical. The Olympic Mountains are also similar but a bit flatter. Lots of pictures made their way into the camera(s). Evelyn actually got a few of me.

As we returned from our hike, I was feeling very hungry (remember that ONE granola bar) so we stopped at the Hermitage and got a soda and two bags of chips for \$10. They must be trying to discourage soda drinking by charging \$5 for less than a quart. But we brought them back to our room and added orange juice and cheese and crackers for a good lunch. Then we took our daily showers, partly to wash off any residue from the poisonous plants we were warned about in the park literature. Then we went back to the Hermitage to do the Hillary exhibit. They have quite a collection of information and a large number of video programs and a planetarium that shows good programs. After three of those, we decided on an early dinner at the Mountaineers Cafe where we had a pizza and an apple crumble with ice cream for dessert. We noticed that the table next to us ordered two huge burgers and two pizzas for the four of them, but our pizza was big enough for two (with dessert). We also managed to down a total of 3 beers with our pizza. Then we went back to the Hillary center to watch their film on Mountain Rescue which is always helicopter driven in Mt. Cook. As we came out, it was starting to rain, so we probably spent a few minutes too many in the gift shop. We made it back to our room without getting very wet and now I'm recharging, storing pictures, writing while Evelyn is reading as we take turns peaking out into the increasing rain. We will see what tomorrow brings.

Tomorrow brings the end of the overnight rain storm. It was still spitting a bit when we loaded the car after our two granola bar breakfast. They seem to put very little sugar into their chocolate packets, so when we use two coffee and one chocolate packet to make our breakfast drink, it doesn't come out quite the same as one teaspoon and one Swiss Miss as we might use at home. But we found that adding a sugar packet fixes it just fine. After checking out of our room, we went back up to the Hermitage to see the last show in their planetarium, the one on black holes. They had great pictures, but I don't think I learned anything new. There is still a lot we don't know about black holes. Then we got on the road and headed for Arrowtown and our next few nights lodging. On the way, we took a short detour to Wanaka to hike up Iron Mountain. It's a circular 1.5 hour walk which we did clockwise which turned out to be the right direction for today. There is a lot of wind out, and we had a strong breeze cooling us as we climbed up one side of the Mountain (hill) and we had shade and only a little breeze as we walked down the other side of the hill. It was a bit steep going down, though as the up side was evenly graded and the down side was down and then flat back to the car. Before the walk we stopped in Wanaka at the Info stop to pick up maps and a book about the North Island so we would be able to pick our lodging for the nights we may have to sleep in our car (Evelyn says we won't have to....). We also got a sandwich for lunch and the girl seemed surprised we wanted only one. We're not over-eating on this trip. After the walk, we headed southwest to Arrowtown and our next stop. We're staying in the "barn" (well, a beautiful room that looks a bit like a barn from outside). It's a separate building, so we will only have wind and cows and a small bit of traffic noise to contend with. After checking in, we went to the store and got supplies to last us for the few days we will be here. Steak and potatoes for dinner tonight, as I noticed a gas grill on our patio and asked if we could use it. I did have to get help lighting it, as I missed the little lightening symbol that showed that the burner I didn't want to use must be lit first. Oh, yes. I forgot to mention that we stopped at Swallow's Crossing winery on the way here and picked up two bottles of wine to go with our dinner. So a couple of rib eye steaks for the grill and potatoes and onions on the cooktop provided us with an excellent dinner that we thoroughly enjoyed while looking out across the wide lawn between the B&B and our "barn". We enjoyed the Swallow's Crossing Pinot Noir with our steak. Beyond the house is a wooded hillside that Evelyn thinks was planted. Now she is planning our next couple of days as I write this.

We had granola for breakfast and hopped in the car for a drive up to Glenorchy for a possible hike. We were concerned about the weather, so did not do a long walk, but just strolled through the Lagoon at the edge of town for about 1.5 hours. On the way back we were behind a little red car that was doing just fine. Soon, however, a car caught us and wanted to go faster. I let him pass, but he never did get around the little red car. That's because the drive was beautiful and very "interesting". Evelyn watched the scenery while I drove, very carefully. We got back to Willowbrook B&B in the early afternoon under cloudy skies that looked like rain. We decided to veg out and read as the afternoon got grayer and grayer. I even turned the heater on about 4:30. I didn't think that would happen, since ALL the earlier part of the trip we were warm to hot. But, New Zealand has serious weather. We had chicken salad and bread and butter for dinner, using the remaining parts of our chicken dinner from Rolleston. Evelyn had frozen it there, and it was still frozen solid in the morning. We had the Swallow's Crossing Pinot Gris with the chicken salad. After dinner we read our kindle's until bed time.

This morning we had toast for breakfast and then headed for Lake Hayes for our morning hike. We had to scrape the ice off the windshield of the car. I suspect it was about 30F or -1

C. The car warmed up just fine and off we went. The "round the lake" hike reminded me of hiking into YMCA camp at Spirit Lake, although the trail was a bit better built and flatter. We did the loop in 1:45 which was supposed to take 2 to 3 hours. Trails here have times rather than distances on the signs, so we're not exactly sure how far we went. Then we drove back into Arrowtown and walked the Arrowtown Millennium Walk before stopping at the bakery for something to augment our cheese and bread lunch. Evelyn picked out three delicious pastries that we brought back to the B&B for lunch. Since it was a beautiful, clear, windy day, we decided to do some wash. One load is free at the B&B. Unfortunately, Trish and Tony were both out and would not be back until 3:00 PM. Although Evelyn had talked about going back into town to eat at a restaurant for dinner, I easily persuaded her to cook another dinner "at home". We drove into Queenstown again to get more supplies at the store and decided on another steak with rice and beans and exotic beer. We mixed an MOA stout (10+% alcohol) with a Speights ale (4%). We read and waited for our hosts return, all the while watching the skies as the clouds gathered. At 3:00 we put in the wash which took 45 minutes to finish. Then we hung it on the line and watched it dry. I said it's a lot like watching bread rise or paint dry, but it was a beautiful, windy afternoon and very enjoyable just sitting out on our deck. As I went over to check how the clothes were doing one time, I came across a small hedge hog in the middle of the lawn. Since it didn't run, I was a bit concerned, but eventually it ambled across the wide lawn and disappeared. We got the wash in just before 6:00 and started dinner. I already knew the grill, and Evelyn had no problem with the rice and beans and we had dinner on the table in no time. The steaks were slightly less done this time, which we both appreciated. Now Evelyn is washing dishes as I type. The only thing odd at this point is that we didn't get all the clothes completely dry, so some of the heavy stuff is laid out on the rack in the middle of the room. Evelyn says we will pack it in the morning but we have to move it to the side so we don't trip over everything in the middle of the night. One thing I figured out is that by leaving the computer on charge overnight, the annoying little light on the power supply makes a great night light here. The first night it was completely black. We are out in the country. Tomorrow we are packing up and heading off to Te Anau.

We slept well another night on the fairly hard bed in the barn and arose at daylight to another cold day. At least this time it was barely frosty and the ice on the car came right off. We had more granola and packed up all our clean (and some that didn't get washed) clothes before hitting the road for Te Anau. The drive was again beautiful and we got into town about noon. We had talked to our hostess in Arrowtown about things to do in Te Anau before we could check in, and she suggested the hiking up Kepler Track. We drove through town first, going right past our lodgings and then went out past the golf course to the "control gates". We didn't know what was being controlled until we got there, but it's the water flow out of Lake Te Anau. One gate was at 20%, one 18% and one zero (closed). The hike around the edge of the lake to Brod Bay was beautiful, mostly flat, passing through rain forest this is mostly ferns of many different types. Most interesting is the tree fern, which grows a tall trunk about 6" to 12" in diameter and sprouting ferns off the top. Everything is covered with moss. It reminds me of the Olympic Peninsula. Evelyn stopped at Brod Bay, but I continued up the trail a bit further. Nothing changed except it went up, so I turned around. When we got back to the trail head, we saw an aerial photo indicating that the trail didn't break out of the rain forest until much higher up. It wouldn't have done me any good to go as far as I had time for, even if Evelyn hadn't been waiting. After the hike we came back into town and checked in to our very cute little cottage. It has living/dining room, bedroom, kitchen area and bath. We had a choice of standard or handicapped unit, and since the Arrowtown Barn had a handicapped bath, we chose the standard for this stay. It does make some difference to get there first. Before our

hike, we had wandered up and down the cute main street, and knew a bit about the offerings there. Evelyn really wanted dinner out, so we chose Bailiez Bar & Grill. Evelyn had BBQ ribs again and I had a lite meal of brasied lamb shank. Well, that's one shank rather than two and was plenty. Plus I got some of her fries. They were as good as French fries get. In addition she had a glass of local Shiraz and I had a dark brew. After dinner we stopped in at the market and added to our store of cookable food. When we got home, we laid out everything we needed for the next day and settled in to read our kindles before retiring fairly early. The alarm was set for 6:00 AM. That doesn't seem very early, but even this time of year the sun doesn't come up until about 6:45. I will try to figure out how much later the sun is here than in Napa when I get home.

Of course I didn't wait for the alarm and was in the shower 10 minutes before, just like I do at home. We had our granola, juice and coffee/chocolate breakfast and were all ready for the bus at 6:55. We went out front to see when he would come by, and saw a bus waiting about two blocks down the road. It took Sean, the driver, about two minutes to realize that we were supposed to be his second pickup, so he came up and got us before circling back to pick up the two he was waiting for at first. We got the first seats on the bus, and managed to hold on to them (mostly) for the whole day. At one point, there was a young German family with two children, ages 5 years and 9 months, were in the front seats for us to watch from our second row seats. It was fun. Anyway, we picked up people all the way to the boat dock on Lake Manapouri. We were booked on Go Orange, but their boat had a broken drive shaft seal, so we all joined Real Journeys for the day, except for the bus rides. That meant a Real Journeys boat ride across Lake Manapouri and a ride on the big Real Journeys boat out on the sound. Fortunately, we had 99 passengers and the boat holds at least 150, so there was plenty of room. The scenery started immediately as we got on the boat across the lake, as it was a beautiful clear day where we could see everything. We had some fog blowing around the peaks early, but that burned off early. We crossed the lake quickly and landed at the Power Station, which we would visit on the way back. First, though, we boarded the second bus and drove over the Wilmot Pass road to the Deep Cove finger of Doubtful Sound. It's quite a climb over the pass and the bus was having a hard time in a few spots. Back down at sea level, we embarked on the big RJ boat and headed out into the sound. Although the forecast temperature was about 23 (74F) we were greatly cooled by the 22 knot speed of the boat. And that temperature was for mid afternoon. It was really cold in the morning. Early on in the trip I could enjoy being out on the foredeck in the wind, but later I could only go out there for short periods of photography. The geography is spectacular, and I got pictures of penguins and dolphins. Lots of pictures. We made it all the way out to the mouth of Doubtful Sound, where the sea was rough enough to catch our interest. Evelyn said it was nothing like some of the rough seas she has see on cruises, though. On the way back from the Tasman Sea, we went up another arm of the sound for some more different kinds of geology and flora. There is no topsoil in this part of the world, so the rocks are covered with moss which other things grow in. Big trees can grow in the moss, holding on to the very vertical countryside by interweaving their root systems over the rocks. Unfortunately, sometimes a big storm comes through that blows out a tree at the top of the cliffs. This can cause a ribbon of trees to be stripped off the hillside leaving a wide swath of bare rock and the sound full of floating debris. We saw several such ribbon spaces on the hillsides, but no serious weather occurred for some time, so the sound was clear. Another interesting feature is that the top 10 meters (33 feet) of water are fresh, as the sound is filled with rain runoff. This fresh water floats on top of the salt water from the sea beneath it. The rain water collects a lot of tannins from the rocks and bushes, though, and makes the fresh water very dark, almost black. It looks different



from the way the water looks from other boat trips. After we landed at the head of the sound, we boarded our buses for the trip back to the power house. Up and over Wilmot Pass again. Actually, the sea side is the steep side, so the bus worked very hard but we made it. We had to telephone HQ before we could drive down a 2 km spiral tunnel into the power house holding the turbines just above sea level. The spiral tunnel is barely wide enough for two buses to pass, and they drive on the right side of the road so the driver knows exactly where his bus is in relation to the tunnel. It's very expensive to run even a cm off the road here. The power house contains 7 big turbines that can generate 850 MW of power. They were running at only 450 MW today because of end of summer water and less demand. They usually run about 750 MW, mostly to smelt aluminum. The power plant was originally built by a zinc refiner for the purposes of adding the aluminum operation. The power station produces about 15% of New Zealand's power, about enough to run Auckland. The drive back to town was uneventful but warm and lovely. We were the last ones dropped off, right at 4:30, the expected time. I was concerned about our booking for Milford Sound tomorrow, so I went directly to the office to make sure we were set to go. Leonie was out, but she came over and we discussed our wishes before Evelyn started cooking dinner. But, about an hour later, she came back and asked if we would mind moving from Thursday to Friday. She had a weather forecast print out to show that the weather would be better Friday, anyway. It seems her husband had booked an extra couple for the bus and didn't have room for us on Thursday. We agreed, although I still don't know what the weather will do. I don't think anyone around here does. So, tomorrow we spend around town and then we go to Milford Sound. Evelyn cooked us another excellent dinner, and cooked up all the meat we had purchased for the next few days. It really smelled good in here for an hour. We did have all the windows open, however, after reading a sign at a previous lodging which said that they charged extra if your cooking smelled up the place. To me it just smelled good. Evelyn has now finished washing the dishes and is reading her kindle as I get to the end of another day of Tour New Zealand, Evelyn style.

We slept in this morning until almost 7:00. Well, I always awake with the sun, but Evelyn can sleep a long time. We had quiche and yogurt for breakfast this morning. It was also left over from our lunches on Doubtful Sound. We hopped into the car and headed for Rainbow Reach, where we started toward Lake Manapouri in the Kepler Trek. We weren't planning on going all the way, but did make it to Moturau Hut which has 40 bunks. These bunks are upstairs, above the common eating/cooking area. One side of the bunk room is a bed height platform with about a dozen mattresses lined up in a row. Everyone sleeps together. The other side of the room is over and under bunks that are slightly more separated from each other. I think you can walk (sideways) between the bunks. The guy who was still there suggested (strongly) that you have earplugs if you want to sleep there. We talked to the park ranger for a while. She was out trimming the grass among the outdoor picnic tables (half a dozen or so) when we arrived. She was glad to take a break when I asked her about the radios she had. I noticed a VHF yagi and a small HF dipole above her more luxurious cabin that was separate from the Hut. She had a two bunk bedroom, a bigger bed in the main room, a bathroom with flush potty and shower and a kitchen (gas powered) in one corner. It was a very nice cabin. She works 8 days on and six days off, and it takes her 1.5 walking hours plus driving time to get to work. But she only has to do it once every two weeks, not a bad commute. There are two radios with which she can communicate with trekkers. When we got back to town after our 3+ hour walk, I asked about radios at the visitor center. They said I should talk to the guy in town who provides the hikers radios. They weigh 2 Kg, not bad for direct comms to the rangers. I suspect only people going on long treks would use the

radios. The huts are booked in advance, so you know you will have a pad to sleep out of the rain when you get there. It costs \$55 a night, but I don't know if that's for one or two, as we got the number from a pair of fairly serious photographers just leaving the hut. They both had Nikon 800's, a bunch of lenses, and a tripod. And she was limping a bit going down the stairs. We passed them even though we left after looking around the hut. They weren't moving very fast. We did pass many others on the trail, both while we were coming in and they were going out with full packs, and those going in while we were coming out (with day packs or less). When we got to the visitor center we did find out that super site # were for school groups and that the rather rectangular holes we saw in the ground were where the trail builders got material they needed for building the trail. After our walk, we came back to our cottage for lunch and then gathered up almost all our dirty clothes to take to the laundromat. Unfortunately, I missed my only pair of jeans that were several layers deep in the suitcase. We spent an hour and 10 bux doing our laundry, 5 bux less than it would cost here at Birchwood cottages. I guess it was worth it. Then we went across the street to see the Shadowland film of the Fiordlands taken from a helicopter. The film shows what everything looks like when the weather is perfect, including much you can only see from the air. It's really very good. The brochure says, "Shadowland will take you on an unforgettable journey through the most awe inspiring landscapes on earth." Pretty close. After the movie, we split up. First time we did that since leaving home. Evelyn wanted to stay in town to shop and I didn't (they don't sell the kinds of things I buy in small NZ towns). I brought the laundry home in the car and laid it all out on the bed to make sure they were dry enough to pack. Then I did computer and picture stuff until it started to rain. Sure enough, Evelyn got home about 10 minutes later, not even looking like a drowned rat. She said it really wasn't raining that hard (yet). The rain picked up and was fairly fierce for a bit. Now it's just off and on rain, and will stay this way until some time tomorrow. The question for us is "What time tomorrow?" as we will be on another coach/boat tour of Milford Sound. At least this one leaves right from here at 7:57 AM so we don't have to wait for the bus. We just get on with the driver and go. He's the host of our B&B Cottage Now Evelyn is planning our future as I type and we will shortly settle in to read our kindles. They have certainly been an excellent addition to our luggage. I don't think I would travel without one again.

We arose at the 6:30 alarm this morning to prepare for our Milford Sound tour today. Breakfast included granola and yogurt from our Doubtful tour lunch for Peter. We're still trying to eat all the food that was in that lunch. We packed the apples, chocolate bars and the cheese and cracker packets from that lunch for today, adding a couple of granola bars, just in case. We met our driver, Dave, right outside our backdoor. Ray was not feeling well, so he called Dave in to drive for the day. We had only 5 on our 16 passenger bus, so we each had at least a pair of seats. I ended up sitting in the front passenger seat most of the way, even though that seat must be entered by crawling over the engine housing. I got some exercise every time we stopped just getting in and out of my seat. We started out in light rain, going in to town to pick up Rebecca, a Cantonese girl from Hong Kong. I still don't know how she got that name even though I asked. Our other travelers were a couple from Camron Park up on HWY 50. Rebecca has worked here for most of a year and is doing some touring before returning home. Dennis and Sharon go from here to Australia and return to CA in June. Right out of town the rain started pretty heavily, and the first place we stopped Dave got out umbrellas for those who wanted them. Our first excursion got everyone quite damp, and I thought we were in for a wet day. Fortunately the weather improved all day. After a couple more stops, we got into a hut where we had tea and scones that Dave prepared for us all. It had a warm fireplace in the corner where we all dried out. And we didn't really get wet again.

The rain let up, and the stops were shorter photo ops, or we stayed in the bus and shot out through the windows. When we got to the tunnel, we had to wait about 8 minutes for our turn. It's one way, controlled on a clock with a remote override from a person in Te Anau. Through the tunnel we dropped right down into Milford Sound to the boat terminal. There are several slips for multiple tour company boats, and we were fortunate to be on a Mitre tour. The boat held 75 but had only 25 today. We met a couple from Israel. I asked when I heard a totally different language than I've heard before on this trip. Sand flies are supposed to be a big problem here, but I have one bite I can't find. They seemed to like sweet Evelyn much better, and she has several itchy little bites. And she used a bit of DEET which I skipped. By time we boarded the boat, the weather was mostly sunny and warming. The clouds still clung to the mountain tops, making great photo ops. There are so many boats and people in Milford Sound that the boat route is carefully controlled. We did a clockwise trip around the sound, stopping to watch seals a couple of times. The left over heavy weather made the seas a bit rough and our boat was smaller than the Doubtful boat, so it was fun. Our speed was 12 knots, so I had no trouble spending most of my time standing in the bow. Also up front was a student from Oregon State spending a semester learning to be a farmer in NZ. The waterfalls were much better than Doubtful since it had been raining for 12 hours before we got there. The scenery is similar with Milford being somewhat more vertical right into the water but smaller than Doubtful. Last night's rain had left snow on many of the high peaks which added to the pictures. After our boat ride, we re-boarded our bus and headed back down the long road to Te Anau. I think most of the passengers slept some, but Evelyn says she was just resting her eyes. Since I was again in the front seat, I didn't watch passengers but kept my eyes on the beautiful countryside. We were dropped off at our doorstep where we came in and made dinner. Well, Evelyn made dinner and I helped toast the rolls that went with our chicken salad. Evelyn cleaned up and I'm writing this while she plans our next few days in Dunedin. I'm not sure we will have wifi there so we may be out of touch for a few days. Did I say last night that we are staying at the Portobello Motel for THREE nights, using one of our UNPLANNED nights. No sleeping in the car, YET. We will see what tomorrow brings.

We checked out of Birchwood Cottages before 9:00 AM and headed down the road to Dunedin. The first part of the ride was on lightly traveled country roads (good, 100Kph paved roads) but not HWY 1. These roads are great. There is very little traffic and we zipped right along. At Balclutha we got on HWY 1 north to Dunedin. This meant the same (or slightly better road) with a lot more cars. Still, it was not a difficult drive. Only I had a bit of a headache, I think left over from yesterday's tour. Evelyn and I seemed a bit out of phase when we got into our very nice room with kitchenette. We just couldn't seem to decide what to do for the afternoon. Finally we walked around Portobello, a very small town, and stopped at the store for supplies. These included a bottle of wine so we popped the cork (well, actually all the New Zealand wine is screw top, so we just unscrewed it) and had a couple of small glasses. That and an ibuprofen improved the afternoon. And we booked a couple of nights at another place near a national park on the north island. Now we're down to only one night of possibly sleeping in the car. We walked half a block to the pub for dinner, where Evelyn had salmon and I had lamb which was delicious. Now we're back in our room where Evelyn has everything ready for breakfast and is looking for our last night's stay. It looks very homey. As I look out, I see that it's raining. Good thing we're done with dinner. The whole day has been cloudy with sun poking through, but I didn't think it would actually rain. And now it has stopped. Fickle weather! This is the place where the WiFi is \$20 / 200 Mbytes, so we won't be sending any pictures (not that we have, anyway). I'll try to figure out how this works. We got up Sunday morning and after breakfast of granola, coffee/chocolate and orange (juice

– but more like fruit punch), we headed for the hills. Well, just behind us on the Otago peninsula are some walking trails. They are not really hikes, as we think of in California, because they are pretty short. We started with the walk around Sandymount, which started along a road through a Cypress tunnel. It looks like the trees were planted, because you can see them from all over the area. We went clockwise, first to the Chasm, which is really a big fissure in the shoreline. Pretty impressive. Then the trail continues to Lover's Leap, another cliff overlooking a tunnel to the sea. Finally, we climbed to the top of the hill and looked at what may be called a trig. It's a circular brass plate with lines showing the direction to everything you can see from there. We've seen several of these on hilltops. It's a good thing we went clockwise, as the hike was much better that way. Then we drove out to the end of Beach road and walked a short way out to Allen's Beach where we saw a couple of fur seals sunning themselves. Finally we drove out Dick's road and walked between the Pyramids via the Loop trail to the beach and back. On the way out along the shore we saw a group of 8 – 12 yellow-eyed penguins out on the marsh. We stopped off to climb the small pyramid and have a look around from the top. It's straight up but short. We returned to our room/cottage about 2:00 PM for a lunch of soda/orange drink and potato chips. Who says we're not eating healthy on this trip? After a couple of hour rest, we put on nicer clothes and drove back into Dunedin. On the way out, we went over the hill on Highcliff road. That was narrow and winery so we took the main shore road back into town. Well, it's also narrow and winery, but one side is inches from the water. It's not that much fun to drive. Speaking of driving, I should mention that I drove off the road into the high side ditch as we encountered another car rounding the curve on the narrow gravel roads between hikes. Fortunately I didn't get stuck, but it was close. Our momentum and bit of traction allowed us to get back on the road. We could not have done that on the Portobello road, as dropping a wheel off would have meant a very cold swim or worse. At least this road is paved and striped, although things like buses ignore the stripes when they choose (or must, to stay out of the water). When we got into Dunedin late on a Sunday afternoon, we had to find a place to park. Fortunately the iSite recommended a free spot (on Sunday) half a block from the Anglican Cathedral. We found a place to have a pizza for dinner that was quite fancy and ornate. The pizza was good, the service excellent and we got there at 5:45 just before the rush. A 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party was growing rapidly in size just behind us as we left (28 and counting). Then we went over to the Cathedral for the main feature of the evening, an Evensong Service. We were plenty early, and of course sat in the second row. That meant we couldn't watch what everyone else did (stand, sing, sit, kneel?) as the service went along. But they had generic instruction books as well as a program for the individual music that was being presented by choir and organ. Both were impressive. The organ is huge and really filled the space with sound. The music was modern, and not something we knew. I believe the whole service was based on music by Kenneth Leighton whom we had never heard of. But it was beautiful, none the less. Part of the service was a dedication of a new play by the three people sitting just behind us, and they were called to the front for a special blessing near the end of the service. Leading the service was The Very Rev'd Dr Trevor James BA BD PhD (Lond). He was pretty good, although didn't get to do much. The music director was Mr George Chittenden MA (Aberd) ARCO but I don't know if he came with the choir (who may have been a touring choir on a stop there, or the regular choir) or whether he came with the possible touring choir. The hymnals are of the English variety, which have the music first and the words in verses second. It's impossible to sing them on the first try. Even by the fourth or fifth verse, I still had trouble, although Evelyn did quite well at the end. The drive back out Portobello road in the descending darkness was no more fun than the drive in. We decided to book a train ride for the next day, and were successful doing so over the internet. Our confirmation was e-mailed to Sonic.net, and we

had no way to print it, but we didn't need it to pick up our tickets. Then to bed.

The weather looks bleak this morning so we will see what happens. We drove back into Dunedin about 9:00 on a Monday morning and sure enough, there's a lot more traffic than on Sunday evening. We found a space to park all day for only \$5 right next to the train and then walked to the free Otago Museum. This is a beautiful 5 story museum that was very modern and easy to navigate. It had rooms for much of the interesting stuff in this part of the world. We spent about 2.5 hours there before our train ride. We did manage to get a bit wet getting from the train station to the Museum, but were very lucky for the rest of the day. We were dry walking back to the train after the Museum and then watch and listened to it pour and hail from the train platform. We had a while to wait, as the train was a bit late. The seating on the train was small tables between front and rear facing seats, with singles on our side and doubles across the aisle. The foursome across the aisle from us were Australian, although one of the women had grown up in Dunedin. It rained and shined at about 12 minute intervals all throughout the ride. I did manage to get out between the cars and take lots of pictures, even while it was raining some times. They stopped the train for photos several times while it was sunny. I guess we did miss a couple of possible stops as we went by in the rain. The train got to Pukerangi on time after climbing up the gorge. Then the engine changed ends and we headed back down the gorge. This time I just looked and left the camera turned off. The sun was out when we got back to our car (one of 4 left in the lot) and headed back to Portobello. Of course it started raining just before we pulled into our cottage. Evelyn cooked dinner while I checked e-mail only to find that none of our travel group is responding any longer to our barrage of lengthy e-mail attachments. Jeannie continues to add bits and pieces to the Scandinavian cruise in September. For dinner we had chicken with beans and rice again, along with the second half bottle of a local Pinot Noir. It didn't get any better setting a day, but it wasn't expensive to start with. Now Evelyn is planning as I write.

Today's portion will be short. We were awakened during the night by high wind and rain on the roof. It was truly foul weather. But, being New Zealand, the weather changes rapidly. It was raining just a bit as we drove away from Portobello Motel, but the wind was driving the bay water over the road in spots. The road is only about four feet above the bay. I think the tide does not go up – down very much here, as the water level never seemed much different. Most of the day was spent on HWY 1 driving from Dunedin to Christchurch. We did get into Rolleston about 1:30 PM, so dropped off our stuff and then continued into the big city of Christchurch itself. We were aiming at the Museum in the middle of town, but the wind, rain, traffic, and construction were so bad that we didn't make it to the Museum. We decided to drive out to the Antarctic Experience center and find out what was going on there. It costs quite a bit, so we didn't want to go in mid afternoon. We will save it for tomorrow morning and hope the weather dries up by then (it should). There were many tree branches and a few whole trees down all over the place. We ignored our GPS going back to Rolleston and just stayed on HWY 1. Easier, but there was still a lot of construction. For the main highway, we expected something like I-5 in California. Not so. Most of it is 2 lane, with small bits of four lane around big cities. Even those tend to degrade instantly to 2 lanes just when you are least expecting it. I probably spent six hours driving in zero to heavy rain and winds up to 50 MPH. Fortunately the wind was mostly at our back or we may have run out of gas getting all the way here. We put almost \$95 into the tank when we did get to a gas station. We had another Indian dinner, which was a variation on the last one. Very good. Then we spent a little time in stores at the shopping center and then came back to Garden View B&B to rest, write, and read. Oh, yes. And try another kind of NZ Pinot Noir. This one cost more, and is much better. It will be an early night.

We had another one of Beth and John's excellent full breakfasts this morning, during which we met a couple who came in after everyone was in bed last night. Our hosts, who usually stay up quite late, were in bed by 9:00 PM, as were we. A couple who had never stayed at a B&B arrived late, after booking on line. I guess John got up and let them in as they were turning around to leave. He got them back. They have only two weeks, and have made NO arrangements. Oh, well..... After breakfast I "fixed" Beth's computer. It just needed a restart, but I did plug in my mouse and suggested that she have one for emergencies. We didn't get off until 10:00 AM, after looking at the weather on the telly. Last night was a 100 year storm in Christchurch. It was blowing and raining fiercely all night and many roads were flooded and land "slips" were common. Some houses were sliding down hillsides. Many suburbs were flooded. So, rather than go out into the country, we spent the day at the Antarctic Center very near the airport. This was a great way to spend the day, and we know a whole lot more about Antarctica than we did yesterday. The most interesting feature was what happened when I started reading the Fire Drill instructions. The alarm went off. They evacuated the building, fire vehicles came and the whole bit. We were out standing in the rain for 25 minutes. It turned out to be water in the alarm system, which they said had been quite common this morning. We got back in just in time for our Haagland (vehicle) tour. These are the kind of things they drive around Antarctica. It was a very bumpy ride. The vehicles float, too, so we went across a big puddle floating. No propeller, they just use the tracks to make it go in water as well as land. When we left, we decided to drive around the Ring Road around Christchurch to see what some other parts looked like. One corner was open farm land while another was totally industrialized. It was barely raining, and the sun came out at times near the coast, but when we got closer to Rolleston, the rain started again. Now it actually appears to be clearing. We had dinner at The Rock again. Evelyn had ribs again, but I had Pork Schnitzel which was quite good. The portions made up for our granola bar lunch. Now I'm writing and Evelyn is sipping the last of our bottle of Pinot Noir. We should make it to the ferry in time for our 2:00 PM sailing tomorrow.

I awoke just before the 6:30 alarm, so we turned it off and got going. Breakfast was granola, fruit and for me yogurt, plus coffee. John and Beth were extremely good to us and wished us well as we headed out at 7:45 for our 1:00 PM appointment with the Interislander ferry in Picton. Right off, we got mixed up in Christchurch and had to go around a extra mile or so before we got going north on SH 1, the main highway. That cost us six minutes of the 40 we had, according to the GPS. We were lucky that all the workers lived north and we were south because although the traffic was heavy from Rolleston to downtown, it was moving fast. After we got through town and were watching the traffic coming down from the north, we passed miles of slow moving cars. It's only one lane, and not much in the way of alternative routes, so I guess people just get used to long commutes. The weather was mostly sunny and beautiful, although everything was still wet. We continued north, watching the scenery change from plains to seashore to rolling hills with mountains near the coastline. It was all very beautiful, but we were keeping an eye on the ETA on the GPS. We ended up losing only another 5 minutes and arriving about 12:30. Even though there are lots of slow drivers, there are also passing sections and the traffic really does flow quite well. OK, so we got to the Picton ferry terminal in plenty of time, only to find that our 2:00 PM sailing was delayed by 1.5 to 2 hours by recent weather and backups for missed ferry runs. They still wanted us at our cars by 2:00 instead of 1:00, which I thought was a bit strange. We walked all around the Picton Marina, compliments of a beautiful bridge at one point, and then stopped at a little store to see about lunch. Great – potato chips and Sprite, again. This makes our second high quality lunch. We usually have cheese, crackers and apples. So at 2:00 we're at our

car, waiting to load the ferry. But loading doesn't start until 3:00 and it took an hour to load the ferry. It's not very efficient, but it is an ocean going vessel, so it only loads from the stern. And it has many sizes of passenger, from small people walk on's to tractor-trailer rigs. Many of the latter were carrying sheep and cows. I bet those guys didn't enjoy the trip. I immediately headed for the top deck and staked out a front corner position for pictures. It still took 20 minutes before we pulled away from the dock, leaving an expensive looking cruise ship still loading passengers. Heading out the strait the breeze was just fine, but I didn't last long out on point after we got into stronger winds. I had left my fleece in the car (black on black, and I didn't notice) so I only had a dress shirt and parka and that's not enough! But as I was taking pictures, Evelyn was exploring the decks below. Some were for passengers, and some NOT. We found each other again, and she showed me around the decks she had explored, and then we found the children's section together. Not a person in sight, except the crew man at the refreshment counter. All the kids were with their families on the lounge decks, including one young teen girl who was having a bad time with the heavy seas. Well, they weren't that heavy, especially compared to the previous couple of days when the canceled about 24 hours worth of runs. They were working as fast as possible to make up the loss, however, and we saw a smaller ferry circling in the strait waiting for us to clear the dock. It looked like a spare. While we were eating our actual packed lunch (at about 6:00 PM) we started talking to another passenger who was born in NZ, lived for 30 years in the US and was back for some serious trekking. They were supposed to cross during the storm, but decided to just do another hike instead. They had 10 minutes of rain on a several hour outing the day before. He was quite interesting to talk to since he knew both cultures and could make comparisons. Finally we docked and were asked to return to our cars, where we sat for another long time before we finally drove directly off the boat. Although we loaded early, we were among the last to depart, I think. Our Best Western motel was only 5 Km from the terminal, but it took us an extra pass to get to it. I missed the roundabout exit and ended up back on the highway going out of town, so had to turn around and try again. You can imagine a very hilly area with a freeway going through older areas and how the roads had been blocked, rebuilt and generally messed up. Yep, that's where we were. Right next to the fire station. But it was a nice room when we finally got checked in at 8:30. We immediately walked down to the Countdown (grocery) store and got salads, chicken pieces, and ham to make a very nice dinner. Oh, yes... the standard bottle of NZ wine, too. We ate at 9:00 and I was in bed very shortly.

I awoke about 6:30 again and we started another day. I make us coffee/chocolate in the mornings, using the available resources. In this case, they provided: (per cup) two coffee packets (columbian blend), one drinking chocolate packet and one white sugar packet. The chocolate here is not sweet at all, so the extra sugar makes it taste like at home. Granola is the standard breakfast if we have any dishes and a fridge to keep the milk cold. Sometimes I even get orange juice if we have managed to acquire any. After breakfast, we checked out of the rather expensive Best Western and immediately hopped onto SH 1 North. In fact we were so close to the freeway that the car wouldn't shift into 4<sup>th</sup> gear until it warmed up. That's the first anomaly I've seen with the car. We drove up SH 1 for about half our trip, a secondary road for the next 40% and then a bit on an even smaller road right into Ohakune. This is a town on the edge of the Tongariro National Park. We were watching the high peak of the park as we drove towards it. The summit is 2797 meters high and covered with snow. We did stop for lunch about 10 Km before we got here. There was lovely roadside rest so we stopped. Most places here just have a picnic table, but this one had a waste bin, too. Most don't have toilets, but every town has well signed public toilets. We are 700 meters above sea level

here. My altimeter said 3100 ft, so it is reading high. The barometer in the motel office has not been recalibrated for the altitude, so it's reading STORM. We checked in early, about 1:30 and headed up for an afternoon hike at 2:00. Unfortunately I managed to bang my head quite hard on a tree and jam my neck a bit, too. I was a bit dizzy at time the rest of the afternoon, but I think things will be fine for tomorrow. I took ibuprofen when we got back which helped. We hiked to Waitonga falls first, and were planning to continue up the trail to a hut or two but Evelyn didn't think she could cross the stream. It meant serious rock hopping, as the fun little suspension bridges we were used to were not here. We returned to our car and made our way further up the mountain to the ski lodge. No snow, because it's summer, but the road up was steep. We were entirely above timberline. About 1 Km below the lodge is where another piece of the "round the mountain" trail takes off, heading down towards Surprise Lake. We may try this trail tomorrow, depending on how I feel. It's entirely exposed and would be similar to climbing any big volcano, except that the destination is around rather than up. The trail is marginal. On the way back into town, we stopped and walked two nature trails for another 75 minutes of trail time. Then we went into town to the store and picked up supplies for another "home cooked" meal. We had steak, potatoes and salad: delicious. This time instead of grilling the steaks on the BBQ, Evelyn pan fried them. Different but very good. I took out the recycle, which includes everything we can recycle but it has to be sorted. The bins were full, so I just added my plastic, bottles, and paper to the stack. Now she has the kitchen cleaned up, I'm writing and we will soon try the internet here. There are so many different systems. If you get this, I made it work.

We managed to use 3.5 minutes of our 30 minute internet credit last night, so have lots left. We had our standard breakfast this morning, using the little packets I end up opening 8 of them for our morning coffee. But it's good coffee, so OK. After granola, we headed up to the visitor center in the center of Tongariro National Park. We asked for recommended hikes, and just across the road was the first one, up to Silica Rapids. It's called that, because of the silica in the water which turns the rocks white. But going up the water was clear but the banks and rocks very brown from iron oxide. I mentioned to Evelyn that this looks like the kind of stream we have flowing from mines in the US. Yep, it is. We broke out above timberline and managed to get some pictures of the back side of the mountain we saw yesterday. Above the rapids we walked through a couple of canyons back to Bruce road. We were supposed to walk back down a heavily trafficed road back to our car, but just before we got to the road there was a sign saying STOP for a special event. This weekend in the park is Gravity weekend, and what we stopped for were a couple dozen people (fools???) on skateboards zooming down the mountainside. This was a steep road, but they had it closed for about 15 minutes while these people rolled down the road. Only one crashed, and not badly. Actually, we got there just a few minutes ahead of the pack, so the event monitor told us we could cross the road to where his van was in a pull out. We did, and in a couple of minutes they all came by. I got a bunch of pictures. Then he offered to drive us back down the road to the start which was 50 meters from our car. Perfect. We didn't have to walk back down the road. Even before we got to our car, Evelyn noticed another sign pointing to a 1 hour trail up to the ridge. Anything UP is good, so we continued up this trail. It went for about 15 minutes the trail changed completely from wide, gravel with steps set in to deep ruts across the open heath. We continued up over the ridge and got some excellent pictures of the mountain. I thought it was the middle mountain (of the three in the park), but actually it was the back side of the biggest one that we had been on yesterday. Now I realize that down here, the SOUTH side of the mountain is the snowy side. Yesterday – south and snowy: today north and much less snow. After returning from the ridge we had our classic cheese,



crackers and apple lunch. We were a bit tired. But on the way out of the park for the day, we did walk out to another waterfall and to the Mounds, volcanic dump sites from when the last time the mountain erupted. Back in our room, we went to town for more supplies for tomorrow's dinner and then walked up the stream across from the Motel. Now we were really ready to read, plan and relax before dinner. We decided on the nicest place in town and found that our hostess (who I think owns the place) was from the Okanogan valley in Canada. The symbol for the restaurant was an inukshuk from Canada. We had an excellent meal, salmon for Evelyn and venison for Peter. We split a delicious apple cheesecake and brought some of our wine home so as not to drink too much before our six block drive home. It was a lovely dinner and made up somewhat for all the dinners Evelyn has cooked on this trip. I'm finishing the last of the wine as I type.

First, I must mention that Evelyn has driven on the OTHER side of the road. Yesterday she went out driving around town, several blocks in each direction just to get the experience. Yep, she turned the wipers on instead of signaling for a turn or two. But she did just fine and I would have no problem riding along if necessary.

Up at 6:50 so we can get on the road early. Granola, coffee, juice – you know, the regular stuff. We hit the road and started a long day of driving. After about 2 hours, we got to the turn off to the glow worm caves. This is a must-see in NZ. Evelyn had a 10% of coupon, but we got the senior price which was even better. Our guide spoke very carefully, so that even though he was speaking NZ, we could understand him easily. The limestone caves themselves are interesting, but the glow worms on the ceiling were unique. They didn't really light up the place, but were very easy to see. Unfortunately my neck is still stiff and sore from running into the tree two days ago so I had a bit of a problem looking up. We stopped at a place to look at the sticky strings the glow worms drop from the ceilings. I think I picked up some sticky string on my fingers from one of the hand rails. Then we got into a boat and really got to see the worms glowing on the ceiling. We figured out that there is a cable stretched around the area where the boat goes and our guide pulls us along the cable to propel us through the cave on the river. At first I couldn't figure out what made us move, as there was no sound. We left the caves and headed north again, stopping at a little park for lunch. When we were finished and driving on, we found the picnic area where we could actually have had a table instead of a grassy spot under a nice tree. After lunch, the driving got a lot more intense. We drove through Auckland on the freeway. It's a good thing it was a Sunday afternoon (remember, we're a day ahead) as the traffic was bad enough. North of Auckland, we were still on SH1 (State Highway 1), but it was single lane with passing strips at about 5 Km intervals. And mostly full of traffic moving at near the speed limit. Think about driving home on I-80 through Vacaville/Fairfield when it's moving well but solid. We did get into our little motel in Wellsford about 3:45. This place has 8 rooms, but ours has a main room, bath, and bedroom for the adults. The TV shares space with the main room containing the single bed, fold out bed and a corner kitchenette. Of course we went out to walk the town immediately after we unloaded all our stuff. Wellsford is not doing very well. There are too many vacant store fronts (like Napa) and too many liquor stores. We did get off the main street into some assorted housing, ranging from run down to fairly nice and this by just going around the block of which the motel sits on one corner. We sat out on our patio enjoying a glass of Sprite (the ubiquitous drink) for a while and then came in to discuss tomorrow's plans. We will go first to the Mauri Museum and then the route is open, either going up the west coast or crossing more directly to the east to get to our next stop. Evelyn managed another delicious dinner of simply a salad box and a piece of chicken. These dinners are so much

less stress than going to a restaurant and I really enjoy them. Evelyn is keeping track, and so far we are even: home made and restaurant. This will change a bit as we have no more cooking possibilities on the trip. Now I'm writing and she is finished with the dishes.

Again we had a handicapped bathroom, with a corner shower and wrap around curtain but no real way to keep water off the floor of the whole bathroom while showering. Just another thing to get used to here. We finished our milk with our cereal, special coffee and juice this morning. This is the last time we will have any kitchen facilities, so we're starting to finish supplies. We were on the road by 8:30 and drove 40 minutes to the Kauri museum. This is a museum dedicated to the big trees that grow wild only in New Zealand. They're BIG, second only to Giant Sequoias. Plus, they seem to disappear into swamps and last for thousands of years before being dug up. One would think fossil, but they have not changed. The wood is still usable and it's fine wood that makes beautiful furniture. The museum was full of it. The trees also produce a gum or amber material that is collected, polished and carved into all kinds of things. The museum has exhibits on harvesting the trees throughout history, the things made with the wood, the tools used for both and some general info about the people who were involved. It took us 2:20 to give it a serious once-over but there is much more there that could be learned and appreciated if we had more time. After leaving the museum we drove up through the kauri forests, stopping for a picture of the largest known tree. It's BIG. The road through the forest was extremely twisty, and it did take longer than I thought it would to get back to the coastline. The kauri forest is on the west coast, so after looking at the trees, we crossed the north island over to our B&B on the East coast. That only took about an hour. We arrived in the town most like tourist country we have seen. The main street is sea (or bay) on one side and motels on the other side. We're staying in a beautiful (striking, actually) B&B on the hillside above town. Our patio looks out over the south end of town and we can see Russel across the bay. That's where we will be starting our sailing trip tomorrow. After settling in, we walked all the way through town to Shippers for fish and chips for dinner. The place is actually the remains of an old three masted schooner pulled ashore at the water's edge. The food was very good and view of the sun through the clouds was great. This is looking inland, over another piece of the bay. Bay of Islands has a gazillion little inlets and islands all over the place. We walked back to our room in 45 minutes, stopping to inspect the little Anglican stone church. It's just over the hill from the part of town we can see from our room. Evelyn didn't have to make dinner tonight. Inge, our hostess brought us up a couple of welcome drinks after dinner. We think they contain some sparkling wine and some fruit juice, but not exactly sure. Now the sun has set as I finish this and we prepare for bed. Tomorrow we will spend the day sailing on the Thomas R Tucker schooner.

Breakfast at Chalet Romantica is everything you might imagine. Cold cereal, yogurt with plum jam, fruit cup, orange juice, coffee (or tea), eggs, toast and other fancy breads, bacon (what we call Canadian, not streaky), a selection of spreads and cheeses and probably other things I forgot. And way more than we can eat. We met another couple at our 8:00 AM seating who were going out on one of the power boat trips today. There are lots of them here in B. O. I. But we wanted sailing, and we got it. We wandered down to the dock about 9:20 and took the ferry across the bay from Paihia to Russel. Russel is the home of the first British government here so has some old churches, houses, and other buildings. The ferries are cute little boats that go back and forth at about 10 minute intervals all day, slowing to hourly after 6:00 PM. We did have to go over on the approved ferry for our sail, however. We boarded the R Tucker Thompson (above is wrong) at 10:00 and had our safety briefing and then headed out from the dock. While the boat is a schooner with lots of sail, it also has a

John Deere V6 turbo diesel that moves it right along. We put up the sails immediately, and I mean we. Everyone who wanted to could help but some, mainly women didn't want to. There was a group of four women that may have been mother and daughters (and friends?) who didn't sail. There was a family with a 2 year old and an older single man, Tom, who like me did everything possible. As soon as we got out a ways, we started sailing with six sails. I don't know how to describe the way the boat was rigged. There were two sails rigged like the main and foresail of the L.R. French. There were two sails above the main that were rigged from yard arms, one over the other. There were two jibs. Finally there was a coarse sail which we didn't put up until we were coming back with a following wind. So as soon as we got going, Tom and I started up the rigging. This is the only thing we couldn't do on the L. R. French. Here, we could go as high as we wanted, which for me was to stand on the top of the mast joint about half way up the sail above the main. That's as high as second mate Yani got as she was showing Tom and me how. We did have to use a safety harness that had a pair of caribiner clips that had to be moved up the safety line with us. Well, it's a LOT of work getting old guys up the rigging. And the boat motion is greatly magnified up that high, such that I was just a bit sea sick when I got back down. While aloft, they started serving refreshments of tea, coffee and scones but when I got down I didn't feel much like eating anything. I waited for lunch. I thought surely others would go up the rigging, but only one other guy did, after we both went out on the bowsprit, again with safety harness. The bow is easy, however since the safety line is continuous and you don't have to keep clipping in higher and higher as you move. Just clip on once and go all the way out to the front. We were both out there when they decided to come about, however, and the jibs could have knocked us off. Lunch was grilled chicken, potato and green salad, and bread and butter. There was plenty. Drinks were from a cash bar and Evelyn and I had ale. Oh, yes. Lunch was after our shore excursion. We sailed up near a beautiful beach, dropped the anchor and the yawl boat took us ashore. All except for two guys who swam ashore after jumping in as close to the yawl boat as possible to splash us dry ones. They were marginally successful as we didn't get very wet. We took our shoes and the bottoms of our travel pants off to wade ashore from the yawl boat. On shore we walked up to the top of the island on a trail about half a Km. Some thought it was a difficult walk, but it was so much like what we had been doing for the last three weeks it felt just right. The view was beautiful, but I had already put my camera away as I couldn't sail and photo at the same time. Evelyn did bring her camera, so we got some pictures. We got back on the boat the same way, except that this time two of the German (Munich) girls swam back to the boat. One of them was wearing a very minimal bathing suit. Unfortunately, I fell as I got out of the yawl boat and did a bit more damage to my back. It will be good to get home where I won't have these problems to deal with and I can completely recover. When we got in from sailing we walked around Russel for a bit, along with two other sailing couples from Winnapeg, CA. We got dinner at the local grocery again, milk and potato chips. We hauled these back across on the ferry and then up to our castle on the hill. We were both tired, but I especially so from the work of sailing. It's harder than it looks. Oh, yes. I had the helm for the last half hour, too. That's not hard work, but the wind in B. O. I. Is extremely fickle so keeping us on course was constant back and forth corrections. Once back at our castle, we decided my back would feel better if we sat in the hot tub for a while. This was European style, no suits, but the room was closed off on the house side. Fortunately no one walked by the front of the house which was all glass and could see into the gym/pool room easily. After our soak, we rested and napped before diving into our dinner of milk, soda, granola bars, apples, cookies, potato chips and now chocolate. It's now time for bed, so I'll send this. We really enjoyed today, especially me, I think. Evelyn planned a perfect day and that's what we got.

We had another delicious breakfast prepared by Inge and help. Then we drove to the Waitangi Treaty grounds to see the place and learn the history of how the British took over New Zealand. We took a guided tour where our guide told us the story. It seemed that the Maori side of the conflict was downplayed considerably. We did look at the largest war canoe ever built, even bigger than the one in the Auckland Museum. There were three other canoes here as well, showing different bow and stern decorations. There are four spirits represented in the bow piece of the big canoe, war, weather, sea and ????. We also looked through the house of the first British governor, seeing how it grew as time went on. They also had the oldest camilia buses on the island, coming from England and Australia. After our guided tour, we saw a Mauri welcoming ceremony, in which one of the guys we sailed with the previous day was volunteered to be the king of the visiting tribe. The ceremony was fun to watch, including singing, dancing, and weapons demonstrations. I think the entertainers were quite involved in their work and stories. After leaving the treaty grounds, we drove up the coast, looking at several small beaches with far fewer people than we had in Paihia. I think the population goes down rapidly as you go north from Auckland. We stopped in Kerikeri and bought a double CD of Mauri music. I hope it turns out as well as it might, as we were only able to preview a few of the tracks. What I was particularly interested in was Mauri group singing, a choral sound rather than solos. We got back in the late afternoon and prepared to walk down to our final (fancy) dinner. Rack of lamb and salmon with a bottle of Australian Shiraz. Then we both had dessert. It was 9:00 by the time we got back to our room so we fell into bed. About 10:00 we both woke up and realized that we had fallen asleep over our Kindles. Lights out.

Breakfast on our last morning was by ourselves, as the other guests had asked for baskets so they could get out early. We chatted with Inge and learned that they had had a motel and a restaurant before opening the B&B. In fact, I think they still own the place where we had dinner the night before, but others are running it. It was a delicious meal, and we had the best seats in the house, thanks to Inge's making our reservation. We also found out the the four women (three 20's girls and their mother) had left some things behind when they checked out the day before. Including, it seems, Mom's cancer medicine. Inge asked us if we would mind delivering it when we left. I was imagining a shoebox size parcel, but it turned out to be bigger than our large suitcase. We could not imagine how they got all the stuff to the B&B in the tiny car they had. No wonder they left it behind, as I'm sure it wouldn't go in the car with four people. So we had a mission. I insisted that we have a delivery address, rather than trying to meet someone somewhere. I asked for their home address, saying we would leave it on the porch if no one was home, but we compromised on the only gas station in town. Sure enough, they were expecting us and I just dropped the package in the corner of the little deli. On the way to the airport, we stopped in Whangarei to see the fernery. Yep, they have LOTS of ferns and other plants. While the silver fern is the national symbol of NZ, there are more other kinds of ferns than I have ever seen. We continued down the highway and stopped at a little beach park for lunch. We watched a guy with a parasail try to figure out how it worked. He may just have been tuning it up, as he never did go anywhere. The wind was pretty brisk, so we didn't stay long. Finally we got into Auckland earlier than we needed to so I thought we would just drive around a bit. Not such a good idea, as all the schools in the city were letting out. We had a bit of trouble getting gas to fill the tank. Here cars must be returned full. We found a BP station on the first pass, but when we went back, it turned out to be a Diesel only pump for big rigs. Evelyn got out the map and we did find the regular gas station a couple of blocks in another direction. It seems most of the maps here don't have a

North indication. So we got gas, turned in the car and are now waiting at the airport. More later.

The Auckland airport has a combined lounge for Upper Class folks from all airlines except NZ and Quantas (who have their own). This is much nicer than the Hawaiian lounge in Honolulu (???) as it has lots of food, showers and probably other things we didn't see. Finally, we boarded our flight just before midnight and took off right at 00:00 (on Thursday/Friday). Evelyn managed to sleep quite a bit (or at least it looked as if she did). I watched "Good Morning, Vietnam" with a young and funny Robin Williams. It's quite a good movie, and yes we had seen it before. Half way through the movie they served us a three course "snack" consisting of lamb chop on a bed of mashed potatoes, ginger prawns (HOT) or a vege choice. Of course I had the two listed ( and Evelyn didn't like any of the items, so she ordered lamb and had both portions of potato. We also had soup and dessert. I got out my netbook and started working on the Westar papers for next week. Lots to read. I finally tried to sleep and did for a couple of hours. After the sun came up, they served us an excellent breakfast and let us off. Since we had seats 1A and 1B, we were first off the plane, although the lady in 1C could walk faster than Evelyn so she got to customs first. Zip. We got our bags and then picked up the ride to our hotel. We got in before 11:00 so they didn't have our room ready. We went for a walk up and down Waikiki, waiting for the phone to ring. I guess I must have had the ringer turned off, since when I finally checked, we had 4 attempts to let us know the room was ready. Well, now we were at least a mile from the hotel but walked right back. We took our morning showers and napped before going out to dinner with Dave and the Lisas. Yep, Dave and Lisa Garcia work with Lisa Kane and the three of them seem joined at the hip. We had an excellent dinner at Kit Kitchen (or some such). A four course meal of soup, salad, appetizers and main. There was so much food that we save the left overs for breakfast. After dinner we went to Dave's home to see the remodel work and then the Lisas took us up the hill to see the lights of Waikiki. We were back in our room by 8:30 and I was asleep by 9:00. It was a wonderful way to spend our extra day in Hawaii.

This morning we had plenty of time to get ready, eat our left over dinner for breakfast, and be down in the lobby to meet our van. The same driver picked us up, and then stopped at the military hotel to pick up another couple. This hotel is the place Bill and Claudia always stay in Hawaii, as it's subsidized and the location is perfect. We found that the van rate is round trip so didn't have to pay (he got a nice tip, though) for our return to the airport. This time we found the Hawaiian lounge and here I sit typing what may be the end of this journal. Perhaps another bit about the flight/drive home (or not).