

Holiday Diaries by Denise Taylor, Award Winning Career Coach and Trainee DJ!



New Zealand

31st October - 26th November 2003

New Zealand holiday 2003

Journey out 31 October

We arrived at the airport with hours to spare, this gave me the chance to send off final emails via my laptop and mobile phone. We meet the tour manager and spotted fellow travellers via their JOD bags.

The choice of movies, and radio stations was immense and I watched 3 movies. My vegetarian meal was awful, why did I choose it? It was a long journey though and I hardly got any sleep, partly as I was spoilt for choice over all the films.

Singapore - 1st -3rd November

We stayed at the Pan Pacific Hotel. This is an absolutely fabulous hotel, with the most amazing lifts. We arrived mid morning and decided not to rest but to go out and about. We got a taxi to **Little India** and then browsed in the main shopping area. In the evening, there was a meet your fellow travellers for a drink and we sat with two nice ladies – June, from Rugby and Carol from Crewe. Most of us went to a restaurant called **Hot Stones** where you get your meat and cook it on a hot stone! This was by the waterfront.

The next day we went on a group guided tour of the city. I took lots of photos of orchids at the **botanical gardens**, and photos from the top of **Mount Faber**. We also visited a Chinese temple.

In the afternoon we went for afternoon tea at **Raffles**. It was a buffet so quite a disappointment and much of the food was Asian, although the chicken pies were good. We had made friends with Val and Brian by now and had cocktails in the long bar.

Our final day was spent around the pool, then an evening flight to Auckland. I didn't sleep well on this plane as we were seated in front of a kitchen area so unable to put our chairs back, and the man in front did so I was squashed. We watched more films.

4th and 5th November - Auckland

We arrived in the afternoon and I felt so tired. We decided not to explore and had tea and sandwiches in reception at the Heritage Hotel with Brian and Val. We had dinner with the tour at the hotel that evening.

The following morning we caught a ferry to **Davenport** and a coach trip around the island. We then had lunch at an Irish pub at the harbour side. That evening we had dinner with Brian and Val at the revolving restaurant at the top of the sky tower.

6th, 7th and 8th November - Bay of Islands

Today we started the rotation of seats on the coach. We were on the front row but it was wasted on us as we slept most of the time. We visited the Kauri Museum at Matakohē and the Waipoua Kauri Forest Reserve. We were booked to stay at the **Copethorne bay of islands resort hotel**, Dinner was included - a buffet which didn't impress me at all.

Next morning was a long trip to Cape Reinga at the very top of the north island. We came back via **90 mile beach**. There was an option to body board down the sand dunes but I was feeling too ill to attempt it, but Simon went down a couple of times. I skipped dinner that evening and stayed in bed.

The next day we had a cruise around the Bay of Islands including going through the hole in the rock. In the afternoon we visited **Russell**, which was a very picturesque town. That evening we had a dinner cruise to the **Haru waterfalls**. It was very low key but really pleasant, and T bone steaks were cooked on the BBQ at the back of the boat.

9th and 10th November - Rotorua

Today was a very long day, travelling beyond Auckland. As soon as we arrived at the Millenium Hotel I went straight to the spa to book some treatments, but alas was only able to get 30 minute appointments. I had an Aix massage and Simon had a head massage which he loved.

The next day we could have visited the trained sheep at the Agrodome, but we skipped it and had a wander around the town. We did visit the **Whakarewarewa thermal reserve**, to learn about the Maori culture as well as to see boiling mud pools and spurting geysers. We caught a back view of a kiwi! In the afternoon we went to the spa and had a nice relax there.

In the evening it was the Maori concert accompanied by a buffet. Lots of food and the show was ok but obviously targeted at a hotel audience.

In the morning, another long journey, to the airport to catch a Qantas flight to Christchurch.

11th and 12th November - Christchurch

We arrived late afternoon at the Heritage Hotel,, I had already sussed out where we could get drinks at 2 for the price of 1 so we went there.

An early start the next day as we had our first LOTR trip planned. We were collected at 6am and taken to the airport for our first small plane ride to Geraldine. We were picked up by Mike who took us to a café for a bacon sandwich, wonderful! We then drove out to see the sites of **Edoras** and **Helms Deep**. The journey was great, lots of wonderful scenery, and we would never have seen it without this type of transport. The river was quite deep so unable to continue with the planned route. We also couldn't get the flight back due to the changes in the weather, but instead saw his home, a lovely bungalow in 10 acres of land, recently valued at NZ\$300,00 (£125k).

That evening we had our first curry of the trip. We had missed our curries! But the differences are that you have to pay for each item of the relish tray, and they don't have the heated trays for the food.

13th November - Franz Josef

We were taken to the railway station to catch the **Tranz Alpine Express** through the **Westland National Park**. We then rejoined the coach for a scenic journey. We stopped at **Hokitika** which was a great town and the first place we bought crunchies filled with hokey pokey.

It was a sweet hotel, the Franz Josef Glacier Hotel with the same staff moving the cases, serving in the restaurant and cleaning the rooms. We should have gone for our scenic flight the next day but the weather was too poor. We tried again in the late afternoon and the following morning but still not able to do it.

Our journey to Wanaka crossed through the **Haast river bridge**, and **Clark bluff**. It rained all day, so a bit of a mizzy day.

14th November - Wanaka

A beautiful town and the Edgewater Resort Hotel was on the lakeside. We booked a scenic flight to see Mount Aspiring and it was cancelled due to the weather.

Our afternoon off road experience with Edgewater Adventures went ahead and ended at the winery. We then did a quick call to check on the weather and were collected to go to the airport. We had a brilliant flight and loved it.

15th November - Arrowtown

The next day we visited **Arrowtown** on our journey to Te Anau. It was here I had the brainwave to get a flight back to Christchurch from Queenstown and to miss out on an 8 hour drive. We got two seats for NZ\$160 which was brilliant.

16th November - Te Anau

It was a nice late afternoon when we arrived at The Quality Hotel, and we went and took some photos around the lake. The hotel was similar to the one at Franz Josef, but at least there were drawers to put your clothes away. I had a good sort out here and packed up one case of things we would never wear or use again.

17th November - Wanaka

We drove to **Milford Sound**. A picturesque journey and we saw seals basking on rocks. We also saw loads of waterfalls.

18th 19th and 20th November - Queenstown

It was only a short journey. On the way we stopped at **Fairlight** to ride on the **Kingston Flyer**, we got in a 1st class compartment with 3 seats on each side, like something from an Agatha Christie film.

We arrived at Queenstown for lunch and had another curry! In the afternoon we did a **shotover jet trip** which was very thrilling. In the evening we went with the group to have dinner at the Skyline restaurant, which we reached via gondola. We stayed at the Gardens Park Royal Hotel.

The next day was a bit dismal and it rained in the afternoon so our scenic flight was cancelled. We took it quite easy today. We had dinner at a steak restaurant, which had lots of armour, halberds, etc.

The next day we had a full day of LOTR adventures. We had 2 half day 4WD trips, in the morning to **Glenorchy** and in the afternoon more local. Late afternoon we were dropped off at the waterside as that evening we had a group cruise on the vintage steamer Earnslow to Walter Peak homestead for dinner. We skipped the evening farm tour and had port and cheese looking out to the lake.

We didn't have to do the long coach day, but we did miss having lunch at a farm, still we managed to get our LOTR scenic flight which was fantastic. Unfortunately it was quite long, and we both felt a bit sick and wobbly when we got off. It was a shame as we were going to do a second shot over jet trip, but just weren't up to it.

The Quantas flight was quick and we were pleased that it was only just over 2 hours door to door. Yet another curry that evening.

21st and 22nd November - Christchurch

Just for a change we had another curry. Booking essential it said, but we were the only ones there. We stayed at the Heritage Hotel again.

We decided to do the two hour walking tour of the city, plenty of interesting things to see, and from that we booked for the fudge tour in the afternoon. We also booked for an evening meal at Annie's wine bar.

On our final day we were due to leave the hotel at midday so we took it easy and had a restful morning. We knew we had a long journey coming up.

23rd and 24th November - Singapore

We arrived at the Sentosa Rasa Resort Hotel at 9.30 which was 2.30 am back in New Zealand so we went straight to bed. Of course we woke early so I got some help from the hotel so I could access my laptop from the hotel lines.

We planned to have a relaxing time here and spent most of the two days around the pool. The first day I had a reflexology treatment at the poolside and the last day I had "A touch of heaven" treatment in the spa which made me really relaxed for the journey home.

The hotel was good, and some amazing sites like the monkeys climbing over the hotel balconies in the morning.

25th November - Flight back to England