



SCOTTSDALE TOURS

TARANAKI RHODODENDRON FESTIVAL 2011

After a bit of a muddled start to the day we finally had everyone on board. It didn't help that the GPS had been stolen from the bus and we had to go back to the old fashioned method of using maps and asking people for directions. It wasn't raining though and that was a blessing. First stop of the day was Colleen and Tuffy Coleman's Waitomo Limestone Soaps and gardens. After morning tea, a look around the garden and some Christmas purchases from the shop we hopped on board the bus again and headed off down the back road to the Maungapohue Natural Bridge where we set up for a picnic lunch. Next stop Marakopa Falls which were a picture due to the recent rain, Marakopa Beach and a walk through the historic stock tunnel built by hand in the 1930's. It was a long day and everyone was pleased to arrive at the Devon Hotel in New Plymouth. A quick freshen up, a delicious meal at the Marbles restaurant at the hotel and off to bed.

It was fine the next morning but with a biting wind. A little inclement when we got up to the Pukeiti Gardens and still a cold breeze but we got around the gardens and had morning tea without getting drowned. We were pleased to be back on a nice warm bus as we made our way back to New Plymouth for lunch stopping to visit the lovely 'Doune' garden on the way. Then we got down to business and visited some local gardens: Tupare Historical Home and gardens, a beautifully designed Olde English garden. Thorveton, Pukemara, and Jo & Johns's Hillcrest Haven were next on the list, each of them interesting and unique in their own special way. The last garden of the day was a random 'passenger request' which turned out to be a real winner with everyone, it was called 'Where the wild things are'. It was their first time in the festival and they were thrilled with the responses they were getting for their 12 years of hard work that had been put into the garden, with still more development to be done. Back to the Hotel and another feast at Marbles but unfortunately it was a full house and very noisy. Some of us were woken up by noisy revelers resulting in a noise control call out at 2am. We smiled to ourselves when the fire alarm went off 6am and everyone had to evacuate the building – ah justice!

It was wet and windy when we left New Plymouth on Sunday to head around the mountain to Stratford but by the time we reached Hollard's extensive gardens the weather had brightened and we were able to meander around in comfort – trying not to get lost.



Stock tunnel, Marakopa



Marakopa Falls



Tupare Historic Home & gardens



Thorveton

Next stop, Marie Walkers very neat and tidy garden with not a blade of grass out of place, a gorgeous wee town garden, very much in contrast with her neighbours property. We stopped for lunch in Stratford, it was overcast with a cold wind but we didn't get rained upon as we stood and watched the famous Stratford glockenspiel in action. We were told there had been 50mm of snow on the ground at Dawson Falls so it was no wonder there was a chill in the air. Maureen Ostler's garden was first on the list after lunch with three man made lakes set in gorgeous gardens which she built by herself over many years and in her 80's she is still doing the gardens without help. An amazing lady. We had our group photo taken at Erica's 'Merleswood' garden under her gorgeous wisteria. We called into Big Jim's nursery on the way back to New Plymouth so some of our gardeners could stock up on some plants they had seen that took their fancy. Our last gardens for the tour were three grouped together which were new ones on our list, the medium sized town garden of 'Eleven Chatswood' had lovely sea views, 'Mountain B & B' was an immaculate garden with a beautiful modern home and 'Bev's Garden' was a sloping section with extensive well designed gardens and a beautiful seating area also with sea views. Then after much cajoling, Ross was encouraged to take us down to see the new bridge on the 16km New Plymouth seaside walkway. And we weren't disappointed. The whole walkway system is unique and innovative and a real asset to the city and the well thought out bridge was breathtaking in design and well placed to frame the mountain. Our final night at the Devon and a much quieter dinner in the restaurant followed by a peaceful night's sleep.

Monday, home day, was a little more pleasant weather wise but spat at us a bit when we got closer to our river cruise destination at Mokau. Fortunately though we were able to go up and back and have our picnic lunch on the river bank without getting wet. A fabulous day on the river with Neil and Dawn. A couple of passengers purchased some whitebait at \$35 per 250gms at Mokau and then we headed for home. A great trip everyone, a fabulous group, you made it all the more enjoyable for us so thank you and hope to see you again soon. *Regards, Ross & Susy*



Maureen Ostler's garden



Stunning colours



A lovely pink variety



Fuschias galore



A lots of various coloured iris's

