

SCOTTSDALE TOURS

SOUTH OF THE SOUTH TOUR 2011



Another magic tour of the deep south. The group flew into Christchurch to meet Ross who had driven the bus down from Picton and then headed to our overnight stop in Timaru. After a quick look around the lovely old buildings of Timaru we wandered down the East Coast to Dunedin to catch the Taieri Gorge Train. It was a lovely day for the trip, allowing for some great photo opportunities.

We toured around historic old Dunedin

the following day, visiting that grand old homestead, Olveston House and the inspiring Larnach Castle. We also made our way out to the Peninsula to visit the Albatross sanctuary where the group were lucky enough to see 3 or 4 Albatross enjoying the high winds which were assailing the peninsula that day. About half of the group also visited the old fortress with the famous disappearing gun. We also called in on the penguin sanctuary to see the yellow eyed penguins in their natural habitat.



Then it was off down south through the Catlins and a picturesque journey in perfect weather along the coast to Invercargill for the night.



The next day we flew to Stewart Island where we fortunately got our local tour in before the rain set in for the rest of the day. Next morning the weather had cleared and we hopped aboard the *Wild Fire* for a cruise around Patterson Inlet with a stop at Ulva Island where we were able to eat our lunch on the beach and watch the birdlife. We flew back to Invercargill in time to enjoy a lovely

dinner at the Servicemen's club in Invercargill and stayed in the same motel we'd stayed at two days earlier. The next day we had an interesting local tour of Invercargill and Bluff with Lynette, our very passionate local guide, before traveling the Southern Scenic Route to stop for the next 2 nights overlooking the lake at Manapouri. The next day was a full on trip across Lake Manapouri, over Wilmot Pass, around the spectacular Doubtful Sounds, and into The West Arm hydro station. Arguably the premier tour in the South Island.

Another night in Manapouri and we were off down the back country roads. Morning tea at the Mavora Lakes was a bit different without a 'cow'. We headed back to pick up the trail which would take us through the back of Walter Peak Station, the scenery coming into Walter Peak took our breath away, the trees were glorious with a touch of the autumn colours coming



out. We watched the Earnslaw steam its way across Lake Wakatipu to meet us and we made our way back across the lake to Queenstown.



We filled in time in Queenstown while we waited for Ross to drive back around the lake, a journey made a little more challenging with a tyre blow out, on the way to pick us up. We dined at the Lone Star in Queenstown that night which was an interesting social experience.

The next day started off with a visit to the majestic Stoneridge Estate and the entertaining Da Vella who kindly showed us through her lovely old stone buildings, the Blessed House and the Chapel and the surrounding gardens. We followed this up with morning tea at gorgeous Arrowtown and a drive up to Coronet Peak for a grand birds eye view of Queenstown and the surrounding area. Then we were off to Glenorchy and Paradise, a highlight for most as we bush wacked our way through some of the most stunning country around. The day was topped off with a trip up the Skyline gondola for a dinner and a view to die for.



We took the scenic drive up over the Crown Range the next day to have morning tea by Lake Wanaka. Then it was on to Omarama for lunch and a quick look around before taking a side trip in to see the fascinating Clay Cliffs. We passed Twizel and the mighty Waitaki Hydro Scheme on our way to our overnight stop on the shores of stunning Lake Tekapo. Over Burke's Pass the next morning, through Geraldine and Methven and down the Inland Scenic Route, we finished our day in Kaikoura.

A special experience today as we boarded the Kaikoura Whale Watch boat and headed out to see if we could spot any whales. The sea was a bit lumpy but we were lucky enough to see a couple of whales cruising by and also a huge pod of dolphins which was a bonus. Simply fabulous. Finally it was time to head up the coast through Blenheim to Picton to board the ferry for our departure from the mighty mainland. We spent our last night in Wellington and awoke to some pretty murky weather but it had cleared by morning tea time and we had a great run up the island, getting everyone home in pretty good time. Lovely trip, thank you everyone for your company. *Kind regards, Ross*

