



SCOTTSDALE TOURS

TOP OF THE SOUTH TOUR 2011



We gathered up our passengers and headed south in lovely weather, around the western side of Lake Taupo and on down SH1 to Wellington for the boat trip across Cook Strait.

We stayed overnight in Picton and awoke to a fabulous day for our cruise around Queen Charlotte Sounds. Following lunch in Picton then headed up over the hills to Havelock for our next nights stop. The weather was

gorgeous as we dined on the water front at the marina. The next morning we boarded the BBQ Boat where the crew did a wonderful job taking us to Elaine Bay where we once again boarded the bus and headed over to French Pass for a sumptuous lunch and a cruise through the Pass with Danny's usual passionate nature commentary. The scenery from the top of the hills going in and out of French Pass is always stunning and this day the weather was perfect. A bit of added entertainment on the way to Nelson with a broken water pipe in the roof providing yours truly with a nice shower of water out of the radiator every time we went downhill.



We stayed in Nelson for the next two nights taking in the sights of Nelson with our on-board tour guide Ray who took us here there and everywhere. The WOW and Car Museum was certainly a popular feature of the day. We went out to Eyebright and sampled some wine or found something in the shops to take home as souvenirs. Of course a stay in Nelson is not complete without a visit to the famous Hogland Art Glass Studio.

Then we were off to Motueka and on out to Kaiteriteri Beach where we boarded yet another boat for a cruise along the Abel Tasman National Park coastline calling in to various little bays along the way to drop off and pick up passengers doing the many walks through the area. Weather again was perfect for being out on the water.

We stayed in Takaka for the next 2 nights and dined well as we always do at the local hotel. From Takaka we took a trip out to fabulous Farewell Spit where perfect weather again afforded us some more stunning views from the hill tops and along the miles and miles of pristine beach. We went right out to the lighthouse and after a picnic lunch in the sun we made our way back again after learning **all** about the flora and fauna of the area from our driver Murray's very fulsome commentary. Pupu Springs was also on our must do list – the clearest springs in the world, colourful and pure magic.



After we left Takaka we made our way back up over the Hope Saddle and to the lovely Nelson lakes. After sharing our lunch with 3 million sandflies we had a little adventure over the Braeburn Track and on through St Arnaud for the next 3 nights in Blenheim.

A little damp this morning for the first time so we went out to Brayshaw Park and had a look at their new, upgraded Museum and saw the movie about Whale Watching out on the coast. We also called in to the popular Omaka Aviation Museum just south of Blenheim and what a spectacular display of old aircraft they have on display. Whole scenes of actual events have been recreated with the mannequins' faces depicting the faces of the actual people who were there at the time. Quite amazing and expertly done. We followed this up with a local sightseeing tour and a lunch break in town before heading out to historic Auntsfield Winery for a bit of wine tasting.

A cracker Marlborough morning greeted us as we packed a picnic lunch and set off up the Awatere Valley on the second day and made our way through to Molesworth Station about 100kms in from the main road. The scenery through here is simply breathtaking, the majestic mountains, the valleys and the streams all come together in one of nature's fantastic works of art.

Later we went back to Brayshaw Park and boarded their wee steam train which took us through Pollard Park to our dinner destination, the River Queen river boat. A gorgeous night up the river with good food, good company and good music.

A very wet and windy morning as we made our way back to Picton for our trip back across the Strait. The ferry was running an hour and a half late but we had a surprisingly smooth crossing and a great opportunity to see the sights through the Sounds during daylight hours. We boarded a local bus for scenic tour around Wellington before settling in for our last night at the Kingsgate Hotel just one block from Parliament buildings.

Our last day was an early start as we opted to include a train journey home instead of the bus. The Overlander is a great way to see behind the scenes all the way up the main trunk line and was most enjoyable if somewhat damp. Certainly a lot less stressful way for us to end the trip. We were met at the train station in Hamilton and all sent homeward bound in various forms of transport. This was another trip crammed full of a lot of activities and things to see, everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. Thank you all for sharing a great trip.

Regards, Ross

