



# SCOTTSDALE TOURS

## WINTERLESS NORTH TOUR 2011

Day 1 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 – Home to Dargaville

After a late start from Hamilton we set off heading north to our destination of Helensville. A couple of pickups in Auckland gave us all an insight into Ross's driving skills as he maneuvered his very large bus (China Doll) around the busy streets and motorways. North of Helensville we boarded the "Kewpie Too" excited and happy and for most of our passengers who had a very early breakfast to be greeted almost immediately with a cup of tea or coffee and a very large fresh muffin was just the ticket. A five hour cruise across the vast Kaipara Harbour was fabulous. It felt as though the sunshine and calm waters had been turned on just for us. Our skipper was very knowledgeable and informative and we were well looked after with a plentiful lunch as well as morning and afternoon tea. New acquaintances were made and friendships formed; some snoozed, some just relaxed and enjoyed the sights.



We boarded the bus at Pahi and after a short drive we were delivered to our motels at Dargaville where we would settle for the night. Collected in the bus for our mystery dinner destination a short time later we set off. Luckily we were not traveling far as our "China Doll" decided to be oh so delicate and turn off all power. As the engine died we coasted down a slight hill and Ross pulled over. The emergency lever was pulled to open the door and we had a short stroll down the main street of Dargaville to our dinner destination – the Northern Wairoa Hotel. The heavens decided to open as we proceeded to cross the street and the manager who was waiting outside for our expected arrival was more than a little surprised to see a bus tour group of nearly 40 people arriving on foot and quite wet! Our spirits however were not dampened; we relaxed and enjoyed a delicious buffet dinner. We had great faith in our operator and as we knew he would Ross arrived around an hour later with our bus in working order and more than ready for his well deserved dinner. Back to our respective motels for a good nights sleep!

Day 2 2<sup>nd</sup> April – Dargaville to Kaitaia

The day dawned bright and clear; we were in for another spectacular day in the winterless north. First stop was the Dargaville Museum set high on a hill overlooking Dargaville township, the expansive Wairoa River and beyond. Even those that weren't usually history buffs enjoyed the many treasures and insight into our ancestors. A quick drive back to the motel where someone (who shall not be named) had left a camera behind then it was on to our next planned stop – the Kai-iwi lakes. A cycle race was taking place when we got there and much to Ross's dismay he was told that the road was closed and we weren't allowed to get to our destination. A few steamy words from Ross followed by a well known hand gesture left the cycle race organizers literally standing in the dust such was our speedy departure! We drove on to Lake Waikere, just a few minutes further on where a cuppa in the sun and a detailed explanation on the mechanics of China Doll's rear end calmed Ross and left us all a little bit wiser. Travelling north our next stop was Trounsen Park for a walk through native bush and magnificent Kauri trees. A drive through the Waipoua forest gave us the opportunity to see the awe inspiring Kauri tree "Tane Mahuta", God of the Forest, which left us feeling humble in it's shadow. A picnic lunch in the sun and we were off to our next destination Rawene, where a much anticipated ferry ride would take us across the Hokianga Harbour .

We were not disappointed. With time for an ice cream or latte before boarding the ferry we were able to get a glimpse of this charming harbourside town perched on the tip of the peninsular. As we chugged across this beautiful harbour many of us reflected on just how lucky we were to be part of this experience. On arrival at the Northerner Motor Inn Kaitaia there was time for a rest and spruce up before enjoying a sumptuous buffet dinner. With full tummys and looking forward to an extra hour in bed in the morning we said goodnight.



Day 3 3<sup>rd</sup> April – Kaitaia to Cape Reinga & return via 90 Mile Beach - The Gods were truly smiling on us; another clear day with more of that northern sunshine and the predicted rain nowhere to be seen. Ross had the day to catch up on chores and snores and we boarded a Kaitaia charter bus for our excursion north. Our tour guide Robin kept us well informed with his local knowledge (what he didn't know he made up along the way) and had us laughing in the aisles with his good humour and jokes. We had many interesting stops along the way and opportunities to take photographs or purchase souvenirs and ice creams with a picnic lunch in the sun at the magnificent Tapotupotu Bay. Cape Reinga was pure magic; to stand at the tip of New Zealand and see where the Tasman and Pacific oceans meet is an example of mother earth and nature at their very best. The walk from the lighthouse back up the hill to the bus left the majority of us huffing and puffing but was well worth the effort. On to the Te Paki stream and sand dunes where a few bold and brave passengers climbed the massive sand dune in order to toboggan down. Well done! The drive along 90 Mile Beach was stunning and we travelled 72 kilometers of beach before beginning our journey back to Kaitaia. There was time to unwind and wash the sand off our feet before eating another delicious dinner. It was another delightful day with more to come tomorrow.

Day 4 4<sup>th</sup> April Kaitaia to Paihia

Can this weather last? It's another gorgeous warm sunny day that Northland has turned on for us. First stop was a "mystery tour" that Ross had organized; a trip to Lake Ngatu Plantation where our hosts Peter and Pauline showed us around their large tropical tree and flower business. The nature and life of exotic plants that most of us had never heard of were explained to us and a wonderful walk amongst the many varied species was appreciated by all. Heading south our drive from the west coast to the east coast took us along many steep and winding roads with beautiful bays and harbours to view along the way - morning tea in the sun at Maungonui, out to Whangaroa Harbour and Tauranga Bay, past Matauri Bay and onto Kerikeri for lunch and time for a bit of shopping in the town centre. A brief look at the Kerikeri Mission House (Kemp House) and the Stone Store and we were off to our next destination – Te Waimate Mission House. To see New Zealand history so rarely preserved and learn of the stories associated with it was truly remarkable. This was the perfect setting for our tour group photo. Continuing south we were driven to the Haruru Falls where a short walk gave us a magnificent view of this natural feature. Arriving at our planned stop for the night, The Kingsgate Hotel and Autolodge late afternoon gave us time to relax, stroll into town or enjoy a cuppa before dinner. Another sumptuous buffet awaited us and thoughts of added kilos were pushed to the back of our minds as we indulged. Tomorrow's adventure is looked forward to with excitement.



Day 5 5<sup>th</sup> April Paihia to Tutukaka

As the sun rose over the sparkling waters of Paihia another fabulous day awaited us. A visit to Waitangi to be reminded of our cultural history was essential and a morning cuppa on the footpath by the water had us holding onto our hats in the blustery south west wind. Divided into two groups, one group motored across the choppy harbour from Paihia to Russell in the local ferry while Ross took the remaining passengers via Opuha and the car ferry. A minibus tour highlighting the historic and current features of Russell was most informative. We had time for a stroll and leisurely lunch before boarding our China

Doll (who was starting to feel like a comfy slipper) and once again we headed south. Our travels along the meandering east coast to Tutukaka saw us take in some of the most scenic views in New Zealand. We had a short time to refresh at the Rendezvous Apartments overlooking the Pacific ocean and Tutukaka marina before enjoying a friendly relaxed dinner at the Tutukaka Boat Club. Home to bed!



Day 6 6<sup>th</sup> April Tutukaka to home.

A sad day today as we waved goodbye to Linda (the author of this wonderful newsy newsletter) who was off to catch her plane to Australia for her holiday and it was also our last day on tour. We stopped off to take in the magnificence of the Whangarei Falls before calling in to the intriguing Clapham's Clocks museum where we enjoyed a blast from the past with their fine array of interesting and unusual timepieces. Morning tea was much appreciated before we once again boarded the bus bound for Auckland stopping for lunch at Warkworth for lunch.

*Thanks for a great trip with a very enthusiastic and appreciative group, Regards Ross & Linda*

