

SCOTTSDALE TOURS

SOUTHERN GOLD 2008

Wow, what a fantastic trip this one turned out to be. The weather played its part beautifully and even threw in a couple of unexpected surprises for us.



their tops. (pic of Mt Cook & Lake Pukaki taken in 2006).

We flew out from Auckland in the pouring rain and arrived in Christchurch to a welcome mat of warm sunshine. We didn't strike rain again until we got home. We stopped in Christchurch for the night then ventured on down to Lake Tekapo and on up to the Hermitage for the night. A few of our travelers took advantage of the opportunity to take a helicopter trip over Mount Cook. The weather was okay, affording us some wonderful scenery but we did have some low cloud over the mountains preventing us a view of



Wanaka was our next stop for the night. We had fun at the puzzle house with Ross doing his best to put the building back together again.



Next morning – a glorious day – we made our way up the Matukituki Valley and had morning tea in the Mount Aspiring National Park. Then we tackled the Crown Range over to Queenstown. We opted to go up to Coronet Peak that afternoon rather than tempt fate with the weather the following morning and just as well we did. We had fantastic views from the mountain that afternoon but the next morning was overcast and we wouldn't have seen a thing. Dinner at the Skyline Restaurant that night should have been a highlight but the

restaurant let us down with our seating –although the meal was okay.

Next morning we had a train to catch but before we did, we called in to visit the lovely Da Vella at Stoneridge Estate – this certainly is one of the gems of our southern tours. Then it was on to catch the Kingston Flyer for a fabulous trip down to Fairlight. We made our way to our next overnight stop at Te Anau. Milford Sound was on the agenda the following day. We left in sunshine and could see that there was a bit of cloud over the mountains ahead of us. It started to rain once we started climbing and as we got higher into the mountains it started to snow. By the time we got to the Homer Tunnel it was snowing quite heavily and deep on the ground. That created some excitement among the troops as we were then blessed with some awesome photo opportunities.



It was bitterly cold out on the sounds but warm and cosy in the boat. We made our way back to Te Anau, once again striking snow up in the hills. We went to the Te Anau movie theatre that night and watched 'Ata-Whenua Shadowlands', a magnificent 35 minute movie of Fiordland National Park from the air. We awoke the next morning to snow on the ground, another surprise. We hit the road heading for Dunedin, not sure what to expect weather-wise. We were not disappointed. From Mossburn to Lumsden it was heavy snow and the ground was well covered in at least 6 inches on snow. What a panorama, the countryside was transformed into a winter wonderland – in APRIL!



By the time we got to Dunedin though the skies were clear and it was a darn sight warmer than it had been in Te Anau. We ticky toured around

Dunedin then next day headed up over the Dunstan trail. Again the weather was good to us and although very windy, the scenery was superb. The quaint wee town of Naseby hosted us for the night and the lovely Patty served us up a sumptuous meal by the fire. The next two days were spent driving up and down through the most breathtaking mountain roads, namely Dansey's Pass, the Rakaia, Porters Pass and Mt Hutt. At times there were sharp intakes of breath due to the types of roads we traveled on, but most of the time it was because of the scenery.

We finally landed in Christchurch and took time to enjoy the Arctic Centre, Willowbank Wildlife Reserve by night and Orana Park. Our last day was spent touring around Banks Peninsula, Akaroa and Okains Bay.



In all, this was a magic tour and once again a lovely group on board. Thank you everyone for making this trip so memorable and enjoyable for us too.

Regards, Ross & Susy

