

October 6-8, Monday through Wednesday - Day 1 travel log.

Had a great first day.

Got up at about 7:45am in Albuquerque, earlier than expected. Arrived at airport about 10:30 am. TSA line was long, but moving smoothly. Ate breakfast at Panda Express. Flight left about half hour late, then sat on the runway for about 20 minutes. Finally headed to Las Vegas. Quick stop, headed to SFO. Arrived around an hour late, about 5pm, but with plenty of time for the 9pm flight. Quick early dinner (Chicken Salad) and time to board.

Fight was mostly wonderful. Stewards were friendly, attentive, and helpful. What a delightful experience. One was oriental, one (Nami) was from Tokyo and kept bowing to me, one was from unknown but probably somewhere in the UK, and John was from Auckland. What a delightful crew. So, we had 4 full time stewards for 33 people. As a reminder, I picked up a premium economy seat, and bid to upgrade to Business class and was accepted. Food was absolutely world class. I had lamb for a late dinner, and an egg and bacon bagel for breakfast. By airline standards seats were luxurious. You could put your legs and feet up on a foot rest. Space was surprisingly tight to the side, which of course made sense. After eating dinner (Wine, nuts, wine, cheese and probably sushi starter, chardonnay, lamb and sweet potatoes, wine and finally cheese cake and - oh yes - more wine, I watched Lord of the Rings on the iPad. What a nice evening for being on an international, and damn long (12 hour) flight.

Eventually I settled in to bed. Had to have one of the wonderful flight attendants (I think it was Nami) "convert" my seat into a bed. Basically, push a button, pull out a thin mattress that is hidden behind, and roll it out. Incredible - I could lay out. But, and this is a critical but. Everyone else wrapped themselves in a blanket even though they were clothed. I was hot (in my clothes) even without the blanket. So, I had a fitful night waking up in a sweat numerous times. Sigh.

Worth the \$660 upgrade? Absolutely, totally, completely. Worthy the original price of \$8500? Hell no.

After Brian and I got off the airplane we headed to the hotel. Uber lives in Auckland! One NZ dollar costs about 0.58 US dollars. Nice. We dropped luggage and headed to an island off to the west that is a local's weekend getaway (Waiheke). The ferry was a high-speed catamaran. Really smooth and fast. From there, transportation on the island was disappointingly erratic. Island is wonderfully green, sparsely populated and amazingly

hilly. Lunch was Thai soup (Pho) and dinner was Indian lamb in a wonderful curry sauce. Finally, Brian and I enjoyed a “wine tasting”. Very little wine, with a fabulous history and description given for each of the three (very sparsely filled) glasses of wine. Enjoyed it more than I expected.

Brian and I are getting along wonderfully well. Lots of stories, lots of warm memories. He really is a wonderful guy.

Time for bed. It's 11:30pm (4:30am Mountain time), and I'm tuckered out. Night my wonderful sweetheart.

October 9, Thursday - Day 2 travel log.

Brian and I met about 8am, and went down stairs to ask about Breakfast. Breakfast is included in the hotel cost. Comments on the hotel. This is no Motel 6. This is one of the nicer hotels I have been in, equivalent to what we stayed in when attending Supercomputing. I have a corner room, with two walls of ceiling to floor glass. I'm on the 7th floor - high enough that I don't hear traffic, even without ear plugs in. Large and spacious room. The Australia converter for power is working just fine - I was able to charge three items at a time last night. Phone, ipad, power brick, hearing aids were all pretty much drained. So, all is well.

Breakfast is one of the nicest spreads I have ever seen, equivalent to the hotel in Reading, UK. They have any type of fruit you want, eggs, sausage, very good bread, cereal, oatmeal with anything you could think of as topping. Frustratingly, their idea of a long black coffee only fills the mug up half way. I had three and was finally good to go.

Went to the naval museum. This was spectacular. Started out with descriptions of Māori, and how they traveled the seas. Two or three interesting stories. Many of their ships were catamarans. These were fast enough that they could go between pacific islands in weeks. These things were tiny up to huge. They know there was trade between New Zealand and South America because plants were moved between the two. I took lots of pictures. Next, generally speaking, the Māori and western folks (Dutch, then French, then English) really cooperated much more than what happened in the states. Generally, they took care of each other, then the western folks would break their word, people died on both sides, and the westerners would leave. Within a few years, repeat. Anyway, in the 1980's

and 1990s, much land in New Zealand was returned to the Māori, who then lease it back to whomever is using it. This is true of much of Auckland (pronounced Oakland). So, the hotels and restaurants are helping support education and health services for the Māori. Nice. Genetically, the Māori are descended from natives of Taiwan, then they moved down the Philippines, then Eastern Indonesia, and finally to New Zealand.

We then went on an hour long sailing ship ride. That was a lot of fun. Due to time and wind directions, we used a diesel engine to go out, then used sail power to get back in. Wonderful fun. Our crew were generally around 80 years old. They were wonderfully friendly and chatty. One told Brian that New Zealand, and especially Auckland, had really grown and changed over the last 30 or 40 years. Housing is now really expensive, and it's very hard for younger people to buy a house. Traffic is a mess. He said it's harder and harder to do well. He also said that the UK joining the EU back a few decades ago was bad for New Zealand, as beforehand they didn't have to compete with Europe when New Zealand was selling farming goods to the UK.

Then went to the Sky Needle. We had lots of debate what to do, as the restaurant didn't open until 5pm and was VERY expensive. We were thinking of going to a bar, but it wasn't open until 3pm, and was already booked with reservations. Decided to just go see the observation deck, which gave spectacular views. There were people bungy jumping off the sky needle, landing on the ground below. Crazy, crazy. After we spent an hour looking around, we went to a wonderful restaurant on the ground and next door. We both had fish and broccoli, which was exquisite but petite portions. The manager, Jeremy came over, and probably talked to us for half an hour about New Zealand history. Many New Zealanders have an even harder accent to understand than Australians. It was wonderful.

Came home and watched an hour of The Two Towers, Lord of the Rings.

Tomorrow the plan is to go to the local War Museum, wander around a local park, and be back at the hotel before 6pm.

October 10, Friday - Day 3 travel log.

Another wonderful day today. Brian and I went down to breakfast, and it really is a great breakfast. I was intending to pick up an omelet, but they didn't seem to be making them. Still great. They had this dark brown rye bread that is to die for. You get to cut off a slice, so can make it as thick as you like.

At the recommendation of the restaurant manager last evening, we went to the War Museum. Museum was only 2/3 open, the rest is being updated. Still had a great time. To get there we walked, and went through two beautiful parks. Both had huge, old, gnarly, beautiful trees. The Museum is on top of a hill, formed by a volcano. Totally cool.

First floor (weirdly called the ground floor) of the museum had a lot of Māori stuff, such as paddles. They had a great room with projectors showing on a circular 360 wall. It showed the growth of New Zealand society, roads, etc. over the last few hundred years. They also had displays on how much the Māori helped the Europeans, and again how they kept getting cheated or attacked for their help. Second floor (called the first floor) had a pretty good exhibit about historical geology. Turns out that New Zealand is old crustal material from the old continent Pangea, from the Paleozoic and early Mesozoic eras (300 million to 200 million years ago). It has a lot of cool metamorphic rocks, along with lots of volcanics. The third floor (called the second floor) had two large galleries - one of World War 1, and one of World War 2. They had a real Zero fighter plane and a real Spitfire. The Spitfire was the most interesting. It has a massive V 12-cylinder engine. The galleries were also interesting, but kept reminding me how much war is hell, and not fought by the correct people. They should be fought by the idiots at the top (and their children) who decided to go to war against others.

Brian and I then walked back, enjoying the parks once again.

A few stories I was trying to remember from yesterday at the Maritime Museum. The Pacific Islanders understood latitude. When they wanted to go to different islands, they would go north or south to the correct latitude, then know they needed to turn left or right. That's how they navigated. Another way they navigated is that they understood how waves moved across the Pacific, and would navigate by the direction of the waves. They even understood how islands would change the wave patterns, thus knew when they were passing down wind of islands. All of this was passed from father to son - they didn't have a written language. Another thing they did is they would take birds with them. They would then let the birds fly free, and if they flew off in a direction, they knew the birds had seen islands and they then followed the birds. If they returned, they knew no islands were in sight.

Tonight we met Kevin. He really is a fun native, and after saying I'm kind'a deaf, he really did speak up which helped Brian and me. He has a great sense of humor - kind of like mine but with polish. Met some really great folks at dinner. Every one of the guys (our table had half of the tour folks) was in some form of CS/ EE. We have 15 in the tour. Dinner was on Gate

1, and was really good. Had two pork ribs for an appetizer, then a small diameter, very thick steak. It was delicious. Only issue was they took way too long to get dinner out, and dinner and meet/ greet took 3 hours. Have to be up at 6am (it's 9:40 pm now), suitcase needs to be outside the door at 6:30, eat breakfast and be on the bus at 7:30. Off to Rotorua tomorrow.

Kevin taught us how to say hello in Mauri. Kia Ora! (And everyone would echo back Kia Ora (pronounced, to my ear, Key-Ora). Kia Ora became our beautiful morning Hello. I loved that.

October 11, Saturday - Day 4 travel log.

Woke up way too early this morning, just before the alarm at 6am. Had already showered last night, so only needed to get my luggage together. This was easy, as I hadn't added or subtracted anything. Went over to see Brian, and he was huffing and puffing that he had too much stuff. He decided to move stuff to his luggage from carryon, and it just wouldn't fit. An example is he brought a travel water mug. I, on the other hand, bought a bottle of water here, and kept the bottle. If needed, I'll throw out the bottle and buy another one later as needed. Brian even has a GPS with Satellite Text - yet another thing he really doesn't need. Of course I have Binoculars, so I'm not lean and mean either.

Weather had been dry but cloudy since arriving. As we were driving through mountains (well, big hills) we ended up in a rain storm in the fog. But, whenever we were out of the bus it was fine. Hoping it gives us a night or two of clear skies, but clear skies haven't happened yet. As per Kevin, the two main industries in New Zealand are tourism and agriculture. With regards to agriculture, the primary product is meat and dairy. All the cows and sheep are grass fed. Grass grows all year round, and a field is ready for a herd every 25 days. He says the standard is for about 1 cow or 10 sheep per acre. (I looked it up, average is around 1.4 cows per acre in New Zealand. In New Mexico the average is around 35 to 40 acres per cow.) Much of the meat and dairy gets exported, among other places, to China. There is also a fair amount of logging, although I think I have touched only the surface. Some of the native trees here reach maturity in about 150 years, obviously that isn't sustainable. Because of this, much of the logging is Monterey Pine, from California. One of New Zealand's greatest assets is grass. I guessed this correctly, Kevin seemed disappointed that he hadn't stumped everyone. Trust me, he stumped me often enough.

Went to the Waitomo Glowworm Caves. The caves are in limestone, and by USA (i.e., Carlsbad) standards, are tiny and poorly decorated. These are wet caves (still have water in

them). Water was dripping from the ceiling, and hit me maybe half a dozen times. The walking paths were amazingly good. The main cave is pretty much flat with pavers on the floor. You get in by walking down amazing cement stair cases that are only attached at the top and bottom. Then they take you to the ends of the cave, and turn out the lights. There are thousands (literally) of fairly bright lights on the ceiling. Each bright light is a worm, the larval stage of a fly (technically a fungal gnat). From each bright light hangs a thread, about 6" to 8" long. The idea is that insects fly into the caves, see these lights, fly towards them, get caught in the sticky threads, and become dinner. The males live only 3 days, and frequently get caught in the threads and also become dinner. Then we climbed in a boat on the river at the bottom of the cave. Our guide then pulled on ropes hanging from the ceiling, and gave us a great tour of the cave exit in the dark. There were tens of thousands of glowing lights! Really cool. No pictures allowed, but you can find many online.

Next, we arrived in Rotorua, where we are staying for the night. We were right next to a lake in a volcano with an island in the middle. Volcano is very flat, but there are hills in the distance. Went to our hotel. Again, very nice hotel - much better than I'm used to.

For dinner, they said they were going to have a Māori family treat us to dinner. Totally not what I expected. We ended up in a very nice, modern, large-ish home. Husband and wife, probably in their 40's. They have three (I believe) kids and grand kids. They described themselves to us, first in Māori and then in English. All 15 of us went around the room and described who we were. Although I don't remember much of what was said, it was wonderful. I mentioned Anne, Mango our cat (nick named "trip hazard" - that got a laugh), Albuquerque, Software Engineering, astronomy, Australia vs New Zealand's integration of natives, and the USA vs New Zealand's dealing with natives. She (the wife) then talked about her facial tattoo. This covered the area below the lower lip down to the chin. I was surprised how impressed I was. This tattoo shows her father's heritage on one side, and mother's on the other. It also showed her place in her family, with parts of the tattoo showing she was the first daughter. She has had it about one year. They have had about 94 dinners for Gate 1 (or other tourism groups?) at this point. The husband is a school principal and teaches art. She works for the New Zealand government in Wellington, and works remotely. Food was nothing special and frankly was somewhat spartan, although there was enough (after skimpy portions) for (skimpy) seconds. Desert was to die for. Fluffed egg whites with sweet frosting, with ice cream that was probably pure butter fat. Wonderful. Interestingly, they held grace before the meal with eyes open smiling at everyone. I asked about that, and they said that they, and many Māori are Catholic, but are picking up the old beliefs again. She did express there is tension/ confusion reconciling having one god/ the trinity/ many, many gods. It is very obvious that they are very proud of

their culture, heritage, and religion(s), which was really fun to watch.

New Zealand accents come in many flavors. The primary accent sounds like a harder to understand version of Australian. They say or drop their “R”s the same way. After being in Australia, I sarcastically came up with the statement “There ah no ah’s in Australier”. As I have mentioned, A’s are moved to O’s under certain conditions, such as Auckland sounds like Oakland. Then you get the influx of Indians, Brazilians, Chinese, more Indians, Australians, Brits, and folks from Canada and the US. Last, throw in the Māori influence, and you get the idea.

Off to see the Hobbit town/set used for the Hobbit and Lord of the Rings movies tomorrow. Have to be up at 7:45am, I better get a shower and climb in bed.

Night.

October 12, Sunday - Day 5 travel log

Had a wonderful breakfast with Brian this morning, then headed to the Lord of the Rings, Hobbiton movie scene site. It was, and is a working ranch with cattle and sheep. We had an interesting guide - he said he was one of 5 people in the world with a PhD on Tolkien. He was totally full of trivia. The first third of the tour consisted mostly of walking down a path with many, many hobbit houses. Hobbit doors are round, so we saw a few dozen exterior round doors. The magic was that we were where the films were shot. Interestingly, some of the hobbit doors were normal size (6’ or so doors), some were tiny (3’ or so doors), so that they could shoot normal people next to the small doors and make them look like giants. Also, mostly the outside of the hobbit homes with front doors had nothing behind them other than more dirt. It was a facade for filming. Second third was going through a Hobbit “house” carved into a hill. In actual fact, they found a hill, leveled it, built the homes out of cement and timbers, and covered it up. Incredibly detailed and well done. They built them in 9 months. I suspect it is an example of money being less of an object than schedule. The third nice part of the trip was going to the “Green Dragon” inn. It was made up to look like the prancing pony in the books. They even gave us a beer of our choice. Mine was a stout.

In the afternoon we went to a Māori site. This is a combination of a serious school teaching their young folks about their culture, and a well done tourist trap paying for it. This came in 5 parts. First we saw a real kiwi bird. We actually saw three of them. Walking round balls

with small heads and very long beaks. (New Zealanders are also called Kiwis, so there was lots of jokes mixing Kiwi people, birds and fruit.) They had a mama, papa and young-un. They naturally live alone, so each was in its own pen. As kiwi's are nocturnal, we were in a very, very black hall and the kiwi were under very dim red lights. Pictures were not allowed. Kiwis are slowly going extinct as they have no natural predators and keep getting eaten by imported mammals. Just standing still on the ground isn't a good way to defend yourself against predators. Next, we walked on and saw the Te Puia thermal field. There is a geyser there that can reach around 100 feet high. It is the largest geyser in the southern hemisphere. It goes off roughly hourly. For reference, Old Faithful (Yellowstone) goes about 100 to 180 feet high, and lasts for about 1.5 to 5 minutes. We saw lots of bubbling, steaming, spitting, and hissing, but unfortunately were looking at the kiwi's when the geyser went off. So drat, we missed it. Next we went and toured the local cultural school. This was really cool. They started showing us how they are teaching students to carve stone into such things as pendants, other jewelry, weapons, etc. They then showed us how to carve wood, making such things as the front of a ship which always has a frightening looking guy on the bow. Last of the school tour was showing us how cloth type art was made from native plants. We then proceeded to have dinner. All you can eat, good quality. Chicken, beef, ham, lamb, all kinds of vegetables, prawn, you get the idea. Finally, we had an official Māori greeting party presentation called a Haka. Was really cool. Kudos to Kevin – he knew exactly where to wait, where to walk, and where to stand to get the best views. Man, what great views. Two parts. First they (very handsome, young'ish, almost naked men in briefs and grass skirts) threatened to kill us all with long spears, then the chief came out and asked our intentions (picking up a fern leaf says friend, leaving it on the ground says war) (our appointed chief picked up the fern leaf), then we went inside for Māori dances and songs. The women's "dances" were really memorable, as they were swinging a ball on a string round and round and round as they danced. Wonderful.

Interesting factoid. Kiwi fruit is actually Chinese gooseberry fruit - from China. (Kevin incorrectly called it Chinese Dragon Fruit. Dragon fruit is from the southern Mexico and central America area, and is the fruit of cactus. It's now grown all over the pacific region.) Gooseberry was imported to New Zealand in the early 20th century and renamed Kiwi fruit. Even today, the majority of Kiwi fruit produced is from China.

I'm feeling pretty tired tonight. Time for bed. More tomorrow.

October 13, Monday - Day 6 travel log

Not as much as usual to report today. Got up a bit later today, headed out at a leisurely 8:30. I slept almost 9 hours - I was tired.

Today was a drive day. We drove through forests that are logging farms. Evidentially New Zealand is growing the Douglas Fir from California because it grows so fast. Kevin (our guide) said that in the states these trees take about 80 years to be ready to harvest - here they take about 23 years. I believe it - the soil is amazingly rich from volcanic eruptions. I have heard it rains up in the Rotorua area about 26 days of the month.

As we were driving closer to the tourist spot of Taupo, we came upon the Huca Falls. God, these are incredible. These really aren't technically falls I would guess, but rather the most intense rapids I have ever seen. Took lots of pictures and a few movies. Basically, take the Colorado river (maybe 2 to 4 times the Colorado) and narrow them down to a chute maybe 10 meters wide. This chute must have gone on for maybe 100 to 200 meters. I was videoing the rapids, and just when I started, I serendipitously caught a duck trying to swim towards shore. Of course, shore was vertical rock maybe a meter high. Anyway, the poor duck disappeared into one of the rapids and never reappeared. The most impressive rapids I have ever seen. Olympic class. Honestly, I would never have had a chance kayaking down them without drowning.

We ended up in Taupo, again a tourist trap next to a huge lake. This lake drains through the previously mentioned rapids. Not much to say, other than the local McDonalds had a DC-3 prop driven airplane in the parking lot. Lake was not Great Lakes in size, but was way bigger than anything in Utah or New Mexico. Mountains behind the distant shore were only slightly visible. One was the one used in Lord of the Rings for Mt Doom.

Headed for Napier which is at sea level. Went down a steep to very steep canyon that went on and on and on. Rock was very likely a non-welded tuff. Obvious erosion was all over. For some hillsides as large as 5 to 10 meters, the green brush and grass looked like it had drug the rock face off of its foundation, exposing wonderfully fresh rock. Wish I could have gotten out and picked up some pieces.

Now in Napier. Went to a vineyard, and had a wonderful meal. Appetizer (called the Main) was squid. Was actually really good, not rubbery at all. I wanted to not just have what is available in New Mexico. The main meal (I can't remember what it was called) was a fairly small, and very thick steak. It was delicious, and not skimpy at all. Desert was ... flame burlet? Or what ever it's called. The waitress kept walking around offering us more wine, but then only putting say 2 to 3 cm (1 inch) of wine in the glass. Really, really good

wine. Kevin (tour guide) paid for Josh (driver) to join us, and we enjoyed his company immensely.

Headed home and here I am. Time for bed, I have to get up in just over 7.5 hours.

October 15, Wednesday - Day 7,8 travel log

I missed a day, I need to catch up. Here is my travel log for the last two days.

Kevin explained why New Zealand is such a friend to the US. During WW II, many of the young men of New Zealand had been sent to fight the war in Europe with the Australians and British. As Japan proceeded south through the Philipppians, New Zealand was effectively defenseless. The US Navy sent a significant force to New Zealand to protect them. 80 years later, it has not been forgotten. What's wrong with us today? Why can't we be the worlds good, reliable, stable neighbors like we were back then?

Can't remember if I mentioned this. Around Rotorua, and inland North Island, people moved into the area within the last decade or two to farm. Upon arriving, the government told them they couldn't cut down the trees, as they had been "sold" as carbon credits internationally. There were big protests by the farmers, with them driving tractors on roads tying up traffic. Finally, the farmers won, but it was a hard victory.

Napier was a very nice town. It was on a flat'ish landmass on the edge of the ocean. There is a wonderful museum there to an earth quake that happened in about 1930. It was bad enough it basically leveled the town. They had a movie going on, which was a loop of 4 survivors, maybe 12 minutes each, talking about the earthquake. It was really good, and really terrifying. One guy went out to play during recess from school, and when the earthquake hit, looked back to find his school had collapsed. Another was in bed home sick, and when the earthquake hit it threw him out of bed onto the floor. A lot of death and destruction. The town felt quite a bit like a tourist trap, with lots of stores mid-town selling all kinds of trinkets and souvenirs. I bought two pairs of shorts.

The next day we headed to Wellington. Apple farms were all over the place. Apple trees were quite small, maybe 6 feet high. As there were no tall apple trees, I believe they were trimmed on purpose. About 1/3 of the apple trees were trimmed like a grape vine. This allows them to be planted much closer together, and I suspect to be much easier to pick. Kevin said they are mechanically harvested, but I'd take what with a grain of

sugar. Man, there were a lot of apple trees.

At Manaal's request we visited a huge wind farm. It is located on top of a large, tall ridge near the ocean a bit north of Wellington. Evidently this farm provides a fair amount of New Zealand's electrical energy. Most electricity, however, comes from hydro in the South Island. They obviously see a lot of rainfall - I believe I read that Frans Joseph, where we are going on the east side of the South island, gets about 26 days of rain a month. Man.

Many smaller public restrooms are unisex. Works well in New Zealand. Why can't the US stop worrying about bathrooms? Jesh people, grow up.

Drove to Wellington. Not much to say other than it looks like the rest of the country - green grass, tall hills, smallish, oldish looking houses, especially wood ones. Wood will survive much better than brick if there's an earthquake.

Wellington is built between the sea and very steep hills. It looks like Seattle, where Seattle is built between the tall hills behind and the lowlands near the sea in front. It really doesn't have that many people - something like .75 million. The whole country is now about 5.5 million - a bit smaller than the population of Colorado. It is surprising that there are as many tall buildings in Wellington as there are for being so sparsely populated. Downtown Wellington reminded me of San Francisco. It's a wonderfully walkable city, with our hotel within 30 minutes' walk of downtown or the beach. This is a major trade center, along with Napier and Auckland. We are back in a very nice hotel. (Napier's was good, but not as good as the others so far).

We took a ride up a cable car that goes up the mountain. The bottom half of the route goes through tunnels - basically through buildings that have been built around the cable car. The upper half of the cable car route is open air. It reminds me of what Anne describes as the "cog" going up some mountain in Colorado - but this one is much shorter and is cable driven. (The Cog is on Pikes Peak, is almost 9 miles long and goes up to 14,000 feet in elevation) At the top is a great view of Wellington, and there is an observatory! Nothing special from what I can tell. (Scopes are a 9 3/4" old refractor and a 16" Schmidt Cassegrain. Jesh, my 20" is a better telescope.)

We went out to dinner last night at the oldest pub in Wellington, The Thistle Inn. We had a room all to ourselves. The building looked 100 years old. Food was fabulous. I chose fish, and it was a whitefish that reminded me of Michigan white fish. I had potatoes and asparagus as vegetables. Yossi gave me a part of his steak (he was full and wasn't finishing

it). I've never had such a good steak - it tasted like pot roast, where every strand falls apart and almost melts in your mouth. Wonderful!! Wish I had ordered it, but oh well.

The hotel we are in has a free chocolate fountain between 4 and 5. Have to admit it was heavenly.

Today we headed out for a walking tour. Walked up "Cuba Street". Lots and lots of shops. On the way back to the hotel Brian and I came back on Cuba Street, and passed a Murphy's pub. Brian and I stopped for a Guinness.

The highlight of Wellington was the Museum of Wellington. The group went on a tour. Top floor had some really great Māori artifacts, stories and presentations. They had a beautiful house there, which had "do not photograph" signs. Drat, I followed the rules. They also had a lot of stone instruments, mainly carved out of greenstone, a local form of Jade. There were blocks of the stuff the size of a car engine. Beautiful rock. Brian and I went through the museum afterwards, and they had a very detailed, no punches pulled display of the New Zealand contribution to the ANZAC contribution to WW I Tripoli landing. (ANZAC stands for the Australia New Zealand Army Corps.) As close to hell as I have ever imagined. Brian and I were both impressed, sober, quiet when we left. When we left, there was a sink, with the statement that you could wash your hands to wash your mind of what you had seen. I washed my hands, which did help. We went through the middle floor, which had a great presentation on faults and earthquakes. They even had a great video of the super volcano that created the lake at Rotorua. Basically, it was a super volcano that erupted, then collapsed to form a caldera. I have lots of pictures.

The Wellington Bay really is beautiful. You can see all the way across. It is a mix of water, green hills, and buildings in an idyllic setting.

Tonight Brian and I go to dinner, then head to the top of the tram. Skies should be good tonight for astronomy, and it should be reasonably dark'ish. I invited everyone, I bet not many show up.

Need to head to dinner. Tomorrow, we fly to Christchurch.

October 17, Friday - Day 9,10 travel log

Again, I missed a day. Here is Wellington, Christchurch and Franz Josef.

This continues in Wellington. Brian and I did go up to the top of the tram, and walked to the observatory. No one else showed up. Before hand, we found an average Chinese food place on Cuba street, and frankly, it was disappointing. Anyway, after dusk fell, we were able to see a few objects in the southern skies. Observing was really, really rough as there were old fashioned "street lights" on the walking paths around us that didn't turn off. As we were in the middle of Wellington, the skies were way brighter than they should have been to observe. The two Centauri pointers (Alpha and Beta) were visible, as was the southern cross. Almost everything of interest was very low to the south, as they are high in the fall (i.e., April). From there, I could find Omega Centauri just above the trees (medium size fuzz ball, no stars observed), the southern Pleiades (very nice), the jewel box (glorious, but too small for the binoculars - could not separate the belt stars), 47 Tucante (just saw the core, small fuzzy star). The Large and small Magellanic Clouds were not visible. Carina nebula was not visible. We gave up about 9:30 or so and headed home. Didn't dawn on me but it was obvious - Brian was bored. Not being an astronomer, stars over Utah and stars over New Zealand look very much the same, and in Wellington's light polluted environment, the stars were underwhelming

Yesterday morning we flew from Wellington to Christchurch. I had an assigned seat 2D, which put me on the right side of the plane. One in four chance, and I hit the jackpot. As we flew south on the east side of both islands, both the southern end of the north island and the north end of the southern island was in view. We took off towards the north, then turned towards the west and then south, giving me a great view of Wellington. I took lots of pictures. We then went south with the southern alps off to the right. There is still snow on those mountains! The airplane we were on was a turboprop ATR 72-600. Nice plane, about half to third the size of an A320. Had a great flight.

We stayed at the Novotel that was right across the street from the Christchurch Cathedral. This Cathedral is under renovation due to the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. The first earthquake was the strongest, but the second unfortunately was felt more and impacted Christchurch the most. As we were driving around, Kevin was commenting on lot after lot that was empty. He said they were lots of buildings that had been damaged and torn down. The first earthquake killed no one, but the second leveled a multi story building that had foreign students in it, killing all inside (I believe Kevin said over 100 - I looked it up, it was 115 in the Canterbury Television building). Christchurch is a beautiful city of around 400,000 people. There is a winding river that runs through the town, and has been made into a beautiful long, thin park. Connected to this is the botanical gardens,

which we didn't have time to walk through. After leaving our hotel yesterday, we talked to a walking street that had every type of shop you can imagine. Towards the end of this is a food market, with every kind of food imaginable. There was an Indonesian woman selling Indonesian dishes. Nothing sounded appealing, so I continued to wander. I ended up with a Thai noodle soup dish (with lots of MSG, I am sure). Very tasty. Brian and I then looked for a new suit case for me (mine had a broken handle), but didn't find one. We then went for a walk on the river park. Finally, we headed to "Quake City", a fabulous museum about the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. It had interviews of people who were in the quake, lots of pictures, really good examples and discussions about liquefaction (which was one of the primary issues in Christchurch). They had pictures of cars swallowed up by holes in the road. Many of the sewer pipes broke as the surrounding ground turned to liquid, and I was surprised that the liquid then moved through cracks and filled up the sewer pipes, and solidified once again. They described one tall building, the 26 story Hotel Grand Chancellor that had a broken foundation, and was leaning. I assume due to surrounding buildings, they didn't blow up the building, but actually dismantled it one story at a time from the inside. Finally, they could get construction equipment to it from the ground, and finished the job. Kevin told a funny story about a condemned hotel that had a light on each night in a room. But every night the lit room changed location. Finally, the police checked into it and found a homeless man was living in the hotel, moving room to room each night - I assume for a fresh bed. Brian and I had dinner in our hotel restaurant last night, and had salmon. My idea of what salmon is, and theirs is different. This was thin strips of thin salmon. I bet it wasn't very cooked, but I didn't ask. Was very good.

Today we woke up and took the train to Arthur pass. It was a wonderful train ride. I thought I was on the correct side (as per the internet), but was wrong. Minor mistake. Train was wonderfully comfortable and smooth. I took lots of pictures. Anyway, we kept passing beautiful valleys and winding streams on the right side. At Arthur Pass we boarded our bus and headed to Franz Josef.

Arriving in Franz Josef, we took a tour with local rangers of the park below the Franz Josef glacier. Turns out New Zealand, along with Alaska and Canada, have what they call braided rivers. Basically, there is so much gravel in the river that as they have minor floods, it pushes the gravel around and the river moves back and forth across the river bed. The ranger told a story of some tourists that ignored signs to stay away from the river, and when a minor flood came down, the river moved closer to the trail, and trapped the tourists on the other side of the river. Franz Josef glacier is retreating at surprising speeds. As per Kevin, it isn't due to increasing temperature (which I disagree with) but changes in weather patterns due to climate change (which I agree with). The glacier is visible from the trail, but just barely. As I'm cleaning up this travel log, I checked Wikipedia on the Franz Josef

glacier. There is a picture from 2011 showing a fairly healthy glacier. This glacier is dying. It really is sad. We went on a wonderful ranger given nature walk up the main trail, then on a small, minor sub trail. We were wandering through a rain forest. It was wonderfully fun. One of the two rangers is from Christchurch, the other is from Chicago USA. The one from Chicago has a degree in general science, minor in Chemistry. She hated being in an office, so moved here about 1.5 months ago. She did a great job. We then headed to our hotel (where I wrote the first half of this), dinner (Lamb shank), and back to the hotel where I grabbed a shower and am finishing this

Tomorrow the plan is slightly up in the air (so to speak). They are offering helicopter rides, and Brian and I put our names on the list. As it is a sightseeing trip, theory is they won't fly unless the weather is clear. We have a 65% to 85% chance of rain tomorrow morning. So, I'm going to get up at 6am, get ready, eat breakfast, and probably head back to bed for half an hour. Then, tomorrow we take our final bus drive to Queenstown. Queenstown is in the bottom part of the Southern island, say 1/3 from the west coast and 2/3 from the east coast. We leave from there on Tuesday headed back to the states. Incredible that Brian and I left SLC/Abq almost 2 weeks ago.

As we were traveling by train and bus across the Southern Alps (backbone of mountains that go north and south through the southern island), Kevin mentioned and it was obvious that the eastern side of the mountains are much, much dryer than the western side. On the eastern side there are all these hedgerows. These exist to try to decrease wind, and drying of soil on farmland. On the west side of the southern alps hedgerows don't exist. We have driven through rain forests since hitting graymouth, at the bottom of the western canyon from Arurther pass. Lots of rain. A comment on the mountains around Arther Pass. They are at least as good and tall as the Colorado Rockies, but probably not much better. Beautiful mountains off in the distance that reminded me of the Needles. The rivers looked like (much) larger versions of the rivers and river beds around Silverton. It also reminded me of some of the beautiful canyons Anne and I have driven up with the Toyota. Colorado really truly is a special place.

A comment about tattoos. Tattoos are everywhere here, much more than the states. The tattoos are almost all black on skin - no colors. They come in two distinct flavors. The one that is growing on me, and I would almost be tempted to have if I were from New Zealand is from the Māori culture. They are in beautiful patterns that almost look like patterns on cloth. A few men and women even have them on their faces. For the men they're quite extensive, covering the area around the mouth, are quite wide and go up onto the cheeks. For women, they extend from the lower lip to below the chin. As I had it described

to me by a woman that had us to dinner, one half represents her mother's family and heritage, the other side her fathers. Then, there was a thin half moon that was not tattooed that ran horizontally through the tattoo that told someone that understood that she was the family's oldest daughter. Facial tattoos are so not my thing, but what she said explained a lot and made sense. The other tattoos I see are laughable and just plain wrong. A woman in Auckland that I saw had a tattoo of a couch (and a large one) on her leg. As Anne says, it is her body, she can do what she wants with it. But jesh, can't she come up with something better than a couch? Today there was a woman with a tattoo of a horse head (and a really large one) on her upper arm. She also had just a line that came out of her shirt in the center of her chest up to her Adam's apple. Seriously? I just so don't get it.

Well, need to be up in 7.5 hours. Off to bed.

October 18, Saturday - Day 12 travel log

Today we left Franz Josef. Got up at some insane time of the morning (6am), packed and hit breakfast at 6:30am. I didn't know if we were going to be taking a helicopter flight, but the weather looked really bad. We had clouds covering the tops of the foothills. By 7:00am Kevin hadn't shown up so I figured we weren't going. He had said unless it was clear, the flight would be canceled. Went back to bed for half an hour and dozed. Luggage was out at 8:00am, and we were off by 8:30am.

First event was walking across the street to a non profit Kiwi conservation center. This morning was the first time they had opened their new penguin experience. These are smaller penguins than the ones at the Hogle Zoo (Salt Lake City's zoo) - cute little guys. I took lots of pictures and a few videos. It is crazy watching them fly through the water. Next, we went to a Kiwi (the bird) experience. This is the second time I have done this in New Zealand. Both were pretty much the same. Kiwis need to be separated. There were two in side-by-side pens. The "pens" were maybe 8 feet deep and 30 feet wide. Kiwis are nocturnal, so they turn the lights on at night, and have the rooms very dark in the daytime. Kiwis can't see red light, so the "pens" are very dimly lit with red light. The guide had a red flashlight, and kept pointing them out. Let's see ... They look like a feather covered cantaloupe that has massive chicken legs and feet (with wicked claws), a head maybe the size of a nectarine with a thin beak the size of 3/4 of a full length number 2 pencil. They eat by digging into the ground with their beak for insects and worms. Their biggest threat is a small mammal named a stoat that looks like a tiny ferret. These critters were brought over to keep the rabbit population under control, but found that fearless Kiwis

were easier to eat. Adults can fend for themselves with their feet, but young-uns can't. Thus, they are currently raised in shelters such as this, then moved offshore to protected islands, then after they are mature, brought back onto the South Island and released. There are 5 types of Kiwis, the endangered ones are on the west side of the South Island where we were.

We finally headed to Queenstown. Incredible journey. The roads are all 2 cars wide, and I mean for narrow cars. The bus took up its half of the road, and when other busses or trucks would pass I was glad I wasn't driving. The vast majority of the bridges are 1 car wide, with a sign saying which direction has the right of way. We never did have the right of way, so the oncoming vehicles always went on the bridges first. The bus probably cleared each side by 6 to 12 inches. Wow. Incredible mountains. I would say these mountains are newer, sharper, taller than the Rockies. I would describe them as between the mountains in Alaska (that I have seen in pictures) and the Rockies. Or maybe the Wind Rivers and the San Juan. On the way here, from Franz Josef to the east side of the mountains it rained, sometimes really heavily. Waterfalls were everywhere, but Kevin told us to ignore them. Milford sound should have world class waterfalls. Here in Queenstown, it reminds me of the Wasatch front, without the city at the base of the mountains and a huge, beautiful lake filling the valley. Again, much of this looks like the Rockies and Wasatch Front, just many times as many mountains. Totally awesome. The mountains are green, green, green. The west side, as I mentioned is a rain forest. The east side is much dryer, looking more like ... a mix of Michigan and maybe Idaho? I heard on the west side they get something like 10 meters (31 feet) of rainfall per year, on the east side they get about half of that.

We had lunch near Wannaca, which is the town Brian and I were going to stay in 5 years ago.

Heading to Milford sound tomorrow, up at 6am. We expect to be home about 8:30pm. Skies today/tonight are clear, I'm heading outside with binoculars to see if I can see much. Have to be up at 6, thus need to get moving. Weather from here on out should be in the 40's and rain. So far we have been lucky - we have been very cloudy but not too rainy. More tomorrow.

October 18, Saturday - Day 12 travel log - Addendum

My hotel room is to die for. I believe many rooms here overlook the lake, but this one definitely does and is one of the best. Third floor (four floors in this building). The Remarkables (a mountain range) and Cecil peak are prominently framed out of my window.

Went observing tonight. Walked until I had very little direct light, looking over the lake. 12X36 IS Canons. Didn't have time to night adjust. No observing log, but here is what I saw:

- * Southern Cross. I never realized the lower bright star is red! It's beautiful.
- * Constellation Hydrus.
- * Southern Pleiades. Very nice open cluster. Surprisingly, I used it a great deal to find other stuff.
- * SMC. Visible by direct vision, very faint. Very nice in the binoculars.
- * LMC. Visible by direct vision, somewhat faint. Spectacular in the binoculars. Saw at least one more star forming region other than Tarantula.
- * Tarantula nebula. Very easy, very obvious. No detail. Wonderful.
- * 47 Tucante. Nice, small. Individual stars not visible.
- * Jewel Box cluster (C 94). Beautiful, saw major stars. Could not separate belt stars. Left and right of the belt did show different colors, which was cool. Needed more magnification.
- * Omega Centauri. Beautiful, huge, low, fuzzy, no stars visible due to elevation and lack of magnification.
- * Carina nebula. Saw a very small nebular patch, nothing like what could be seen with a big telescope. But hey got it.
- * Tried Centaurus A. Failed.
- * Tried Blue Planetary Nebula. Failed
- * NGC 3532, C 91, got it. Nice open cluster. Saw maybe 1/2 of the stars.
- * C 100. Faint nebula, dim, small

Not bad for an hour's work.

October 19, Sunday - Day 13 travel log

Woke up at some ungodly time of the morning (6am), and was on the bus this morning at 7am. This after staying up an extra hour observing with the binoculars. Today's goal was riding on a boat on Milford sound. By bird, it's 44 miles. By road it's about 178 miles. By time it's about 3 hours each way. Kevin emphasized that we needed to leave at 7am, as

schedules were really tight. They actually were, but he's done this trip frequently enough that he knows where we should be all the way along. We were fine.

The problem with driving to Milford sound is a lake is in the way (Lake Wakatipu). Once you drive around the lake, mountains are in the way. There's a price for all of this beautiful country - you drive where the valleys are (if possible). To go north west towards Milford Sound (surprisingly) you start by driving south for maybe 45 minutes, then head west for another maybe 45 minutes, then drive north for an hour and a half. Incredibly beautiful country. It's basically flat valleys with sheep, cattle and to a lesser extend deer packed insanely densely on the greenest pastures I have ever seen. This side of the southern alps is drier, thus there are many, many wind breaks every half kilometer or so. These wind breaks have been in place for decades - many are long, tall, dense and really beautiful. As this area is windy and fairly dry (Queenstown is in a rain shadow and gets about 0.75 meters of rainfall per year. Milford sound gets about 6.5 meters of rainfall a year. For reference, Albuquerque gets about .2 meters per year), they are trying to keep the winds from stripping the soil of moisture. There is a HUGE transition as you drive north towards Milford sound. This is where land ownership changes from private property (with the trees all cut down to create grassy pastures for livestock) and the national parks, which look like undisturbed rain forest. One side of a line you can see the mountains, the other side allyou see is forest. The one issue I had taking pictures is farmers frequently fence in their property (makes sense), and thus leave the area between the road and fence wild. This leaves a 10 to 20 foot band of dense growth that makes photography rough. Having said that, the further we moved north the more glaciated the valley looked. As we moved north, we went up a huge U shaped valley that ended up with sparser and scarcer vegetation on the mountain walls. We weren't above tree line, or dry - it was just all rock. Don't get me wrong, there were still lots of green bushes especially in the valley, but not the trees from before (assuming memory serves). After a very steep climb, all of a sudden we hit the head wall at the top of the valley, and the road disappears into a tunnel (the Homer tunnel). That head wall mush have been a thousand feet tall at least. The tunnel is amazing - it's one lane only, and STEEP losing altitude to the north. It's also 1.2 KM long and took 19 years to make. And, it comes out at the headwall of a huge, U shaped glaciated canyon. Again, the road very, very steeply descends into this glaciated valley. And within not too far we are at Milford sound.

One thing Kevin said as a joke I loved. We stopped at an international rest stop. On the way in you are Russian (rushing). When there, European (your peeing) When you leave you are Finnish (finished). What a character.

The weather today was interesting. We started out rainy, and were told that the main road was closed due to avalanches. However, expectation was that the road would be opened by the time we got there, and it was. As we drove towards Milford sound it appeared to be clearing up somewhat, but as we got closer to the Homer tunnel there was maybe 1" to 2" of slush on the sides of the roads. It snowed up there last night! The road was opened, but had ominous warnings on signs that the road would be closed at 5pm tonight through tomorrow for avalanche control. I never got a clear answer if it was due to expected additional weather (rain or snow in the high country) and avalanche risk, or work clearing avalanches. I will deal with weather in Milford sound below. After Milford sound, weather cooperated and was mostly partly cloudy.

The mountainous areas and canyons we drove through had me pondering. I don't believe the mountains were much taller than the Rockies (measured from the bottom of the foothills to the top of the mountains), but there are two differences. These mountains appear to be young. They aren't very eroded, are sharp, extremely steep and frequently have very little soil. They look like the geology gods took U shaped knives and cut huge canyons out of the earth (obviously done by very thick glaciers). The side effect of this is that water doesn't move through streams or underground as it flows from the mountains - it cascades as water running down the rocks and/or as waterfalls. The rocks were beautiful, and I bored Brian babbling about them. To my eye, the rocks looked very metamorphic. In Milford Sound, my guess is they were some type of sedimentary banded rocks closer to the dock, then Dolomites, and more unconsolidated dirt and gravel towards the sea. Again, there is so damn much green growing that it's hard to see the rocks from a distance. Sigh. The canyons as we were going to and coming from Milford looked ancient - Gneiss? Beautiful rocks. Mountaineering would have been a challenge - many of the mountains would have been technical in nature from any direction.

Kevin clarified Fjords vs Sounds. I didn't know this, but it makes sense. Fjords are carved by glaciers and then flooded; sounds are carved by rivers and then flooded. Milford sound isn't a sound - it's a fjord. Ditto all of the sounds along the western side of the southern island.

Side issue. As I'm writing this, they keep showing sports on TV. They seem to be alternating between Cricket and Rugby. Makes so much more sense to me than American sports. These sports seem like real team sports as opposed to the tall genetic mutants or fat armored walls of plastic and flesh playing in American sports. Still, I'll stick to chess.

Milford sound. Oh. My. God. It truly was beautiful. I'm struggling trying to figure out how to

describe it. It's a huge, and I mean huge, U shaped canyon that was flooded by sea. (Oceans are very large, deep bodies of water, seas are smaller and generally surrounded by land. West of New Zealand is the Tasman Sea, or "the ditch" as the Australians say. Sydney is about 1,300 miles to the west of Auckland. Credit again to Kevin.). Two things are amazing. First is the height of the walls. It feels like being in Yosemite, but with the valley bottom being flooded. The cliffs are beautiful, huge, tall, green, amazing. Shrubs and trees grow where they really shouldn't - Kevin mentions a "tree-valanche", which is basically a tree that loses it's footing, crashes into lower trees that don't have anything to hold onto and start cascading down the hill, etc. The second thing that was crazy beautiful is there were waterfalls everywhere. I didn't count, but I bet there were 40 to 60. Many were falling all of the way down the mountain, with water running down the rock, off cliffs, continuing down the rock, over cliffs again, etc. Others were huge, and I believe glacier fed. Again, I took lots of pictures. Our weather was interesting. It seemed to alternate between mostly sunny skies and small storms or squalls (hard rain, wind, waves, etc.). I think this was probably the best of both worlds, as the waterfalls were flowing, yet we had sun on the waterfalls and rocks. Really nice. It was obvious when we went from "sound" to "sea". The boat started rocking, the wind was howling, the rain was pouring. Brian and I were the only ones that stayed out on the bow, and I quite before Brian did. The mountains around Milford are also incredible. Not that tall, but they are starting from sea level. Beautiful, beautiful experience. In two spots the boat pulled very close to shore, and there were penguins on the shore! One of them slowly wandered down to the water's edge and dove in.

Side issue. The Captain said something about making sure Australians don't fall overboard from the stern. Make sure they fall overboard from the bow. Kevin has been making jokes about the Australians for 2 weeks. Feels like a younger brother/ older brother rivalry. It's obvious there is a love between the nations, even if there is a bit of an inferiority complex on the part of the Kiwi's (New Zealanders). Or maybe just playful brothers.

Tomorrow we sleep in slightly. Brian and I meet at 8am to go into town.

October 20, Monday - Day 14 travel log

Not as much to say tonight. Let's see.

Brian has a cold. He ended up with a cough last night, and GI distress this morning. He has also had sniffles all day. He really doesn't look that bad, but what horrible luck. He has

been wearing a mask all of yesterday and today (a good KN95), and really has been trying to not pass whatever he has to others. Good man. So far I feel fine, relatively speaking. I have had my normal head congestion, clearing throat and cough. Allergies have been worse here in New Zealand, my best guess is mold. Probably not a good climate for me. (Note, I never did get sick. Brian really did get sick after we got back to the states, he is getting better now – Friday the 24th. Thanks, Brian, for being so diligent trying to keep us all healthy with your masking. You are a great guy.)

Went to a working sheep farm today for lunch. Went across the lake on a steam ship - the TSS Earnslaw. Really cool, the engine room is totally open for tourists to gawk. I took lots of video and pictures. Weather was rainy, rainy, rainy. Clouds were pretty low. Anyway, had a great lunch that consisted of about every type of meat that comes off a farm, including delicious lamb. The vegetable section was extraordinary, as was the desert table. They had little bowls of sherbet that was dark red/purple that was delicious. Can't have any of that in the house or it would be gone in seconds. After lunch they took us out to watch a sheep herder in action. It was wonderfully fun. For the show, they normally herd the sheep, then shear one. As it was raining pretty heavily, the shepherd elected to not climb into the mud and shear a sheep. He did give a fun demonstration on herding sheep. He had a dog that was a short hair New Zealand Herding dog, a dog derived from a Border Collie. These dogs are prized for their ability to be trained quickly, their stamina, and their calm and quiet disposition. The reason they use these dogs is they don't want the sheep running down hills and getting excited or hurt. The shepherd was controlling the dog using voice. We were at the bottom of a hill, with the sheep close to the top on the left, and the paddock going to and over the top of the hill. Upon command, the dog went running up the edge of the fence on the right, leaving the sheep alone. He ran to the top of the hill, and made sure there were no sheep behind the hill. He then waited for commands. Upon receiving instructions, he slowly started to walk behind the sheep, systematically but calmly starting them down the hill. Due to commands, he was steering the sheep across and down the paddock from the upper left side to the lower right side. Upon driving the sheep into a corral, the rancher had the dog drive the sheep left, then right, then left, then right. The dog looked like he was having a wonderful time running as fast as he could to the left, then right, then left, etc. The dog then, upon command, drove the sheep back into the field, just to gather them back up again. Finally the sheep were driven out to their field, and they looked as calm as if nothing had happened. The dog looked disappointed that the stupid rancher had let them go.

We also went to dinner tonight, our last supper. The food was incredibly delicious. Vegetables were perfection. My slab of beef was wonderful, a few folks said theirs was too tough. Desert was - I can't remember, but was good. Kevin then stood up

and gave us a very nice speech about what we had done over the last 2 weeks, what we had seen, etc. He really gave us a nice finish for the evening. Many of the tour members piped up and expressed how much they had enjoyed the tour. No surprise I then piped up (and Kevin had me stand up) and I expressed three things. 1) This tour gave us memories that will last for a long time and I hope will last forever. (Thus, this travel log.) This tour showed us the New Zealand geography and culture. It was wonderful. 2) It was really nice to get to know the other members of the tour, and pick up a New Zealand family of people that shared a great experience. 3) What I expected from a tour guide was a Wikipedia presentation on steroids. What we received was a well-organized, very knowledgeable, entertaining, culture rich experience that looked easy, care of Kevin. Kia Ora! We heard a lot of really good jokes, but don't tell Kevin they were any good. Kevin knew where to stand for the best views, such as The Haka in Rotorua. Kevin really did elevate the trip from being a book lecture tour of New Zealand to an interactive cultural and geographical experience. He was terrific. Kevin, my hat is off to you, my friend. Well done sir.

Well, off to sleep. Big travel day tomorrow.