

### Friday October 23

We had breakfast in town and then set off on the 450 Km drive to our next destination, Wellington. It was overcast and rain was forecast but the first several hours were mostly clear with a few brief, light showers. We passed alongside Lake Taupo, an enormous crater created 18,000 years ago in an immense eruption. We have seen a number of diagrams comparing the “cloud” from various eruptions around the world and have seen first-hand the destruction caused, for example, by Mt St Helens and the area over which ash was deposited. For all its power, however, Mt St Helens is relatively a dot on the same scale as the eruption that created Lake Taupo. The latter was probably ten to twenty times more powerful – and impossible to imagine.

The countryside north and southeast of Lake Taupo was primarily farmland on rolling hills perhaps reaching a height of 1500 feet in places. It was very green and lush and nowhere near as forested as much of the land further north. Further south we actually saw a mountain near the west coast that was snow covered and, from the same vantage point looking east we could have been in the American West, with desert-like terrain and scrub.



About 100 Km northwest of Wellington we reached the coast and were instantly in thick cloud and mist, which eventually turned into a solid, heavy rain. This lasted all the way to our destination so, although we could see the Straits at one point, we couldn't see more than a few hundred feet across the water. The traffic leaving Wellington was essentially bumper to bumper for perhaps 50-60 miles out of town and we were grateful that we were headed in the opposite direction. This is Labour Day weekend here and traditionally the start of summer and a time when families visit the beaches or their holiday cottages. I'm afraid this one will be a little damp.

We finally arrived at the hotel soon after 4pm and, after checking in, I returned the rental car to a Hertz location about 1 ½ miles away. This went smoothly enough and then I walked back to the hotel in the rain – but at least got in a little exercise after a day of driving.



Tonight we walked about 100 yards from the hotel to the Bistro on Boulcott – a very nice, small restaurant that we had enjoyed on our last visit here. We had a good meal in a very pleasant ambiance and didn't get too wet on the walk there and back.

### Saturday October 24

What a difference a night can make; we woke up to sunny skies with just a few high white clouds and a temperature around 60F. This was much better than forecast and was ideal for strolling along the waterfront of this very attractive city. Our main focus of the day was the New Zealand National Museum, Te Papa.



**MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND**  
TE PAPA TONGAREWA



However, on the way to the museum we walked through part of downtown (with some wonderful Victorian buildings and arcades) and the beautiful Wellington waterfront and once again were impressed with this, the Capital City of New Zealand.



*Wellington takes its name from Arthur Wellesley (1769–1852), the first Duke of Wellington and victor of the Battle of Waterloo. It was named in November 1840 by the original settlers of the New Zealand Company on the suggestion of the directors of the same, in recognition of the Duke's strong support for the company's principles of colonization and his "strenuous and successful defense against its enemies of the measure for colonizing South Australia". The city's location close to the mouth of the narrow Cook Strait leads to its vulnerability to strong gales, leading to the city's nickname of "Windy Wellington".*

*Wellington is the capital city and second most populous urban area of New Zealand, with 398,300 residents. It is located at the south-western tip of the North Island, between Cook Strait and the Rimutaka Range. Wellington is the world's southernmost capital city of a sovereign state.*

The Te Papa Museum is a six floor building with exhibits on all but the top floor, which is a viewing terrace with some magnificent views of the city, the water and the hillsides around the harbor. We spent much of our time on the floor dedicated to the history, culture and settlement of New Zealand. There were, of course, many exhibits of Maori housing, boats and dress and a good description of their migration to New Zealand about 700 years ago, from their established home in the islands of the southern Pacific Ocean. Apparently, these islands had in turn been settled by migrants from Asia so the Maori can trace their ancestry to that part of the world. However, as we observed, the Maori generally tend to be of large stock





so it would appear that the generations spent in Sumatra and the Polynesian Islands were where they changed from the relatively small Asian races.



There is also a large area devoted to the influx of peoples from other parts of the world, which occurred mostly over the past two hundred years. The largest group was of course from the British Isles (of which our own generation was a large part, with post War help from the New Zealand government) but there were also significant numbers from the Dalmatian coast, Poland and a small part of western India. Most recently there have been refugees from the unsettled areas of the Middle East and, most obvious particularly in Auckland, from Japan and other parts of Asia.

The exhibits and interactive displays are very well done and informative and told the story behind what is now a very cosmopolitan country with many ethnicities living together in relative harmony. From time to time the Government has relaxed its immigration policies and even provided financial assistance to attract people, especially when the economy here was depressed or, conversely, jobs in other countries were taking out talent. Interestingly, the past twenty years or so have seen dramatic shifts almost yearly in the numbers coming and going and it would appear that New Zealand is currently a net “exporter” of people.

Finally, for this visit, we walked through the Bush Garden that has been established at ground level and takes one outside through an area filled with plants and trees and with examples of the land and volcanic activity that is New Zealand. In addition to providing interesting data, the area provides a very pleasant walk with, once again, some great views over the harbor.



Leaving the museum, we walked along the waterfront which has seen a dramatic change from wharves to park, exercise and play areas, as well as a number of restaurants. We made dinner reservations at one of these before returning to the hotel. I went for another two mile walk before relaxing until dinner time. Tonight we ate at Dockside, one of the many wharves (“Sheds”) that have been converted into restaurants and shops. Another good meal.



## Sunday October 25

The weather was even nicer today with clear blue skies and no appreciable wind so the 60F temperature was very comfortable for walking with no sweaters needed. We had breakfast at Starbucks again and then took the cable car to the top of the botanical gardens area. We watched a video about cable cars in Wellington in the small museum at the top. Obviously we were familiar with the one we had just used (privately operated but for public transportation) but we were not aware of the many, much smaller cable cars in operation in Wellington. The city has been built on the very steep hillsides directly behind the harbor and as a result many private homes are accessible only by difficult footpaths or steps. Hence the private cable car! Many homes are now accessible via these 2-4 passenger private cars and, indeed, many have been built with all the materials having been brought on site by the cable car. There were some interesting commentaries by homeowners and the manufacturers about maintenance, breakdowns and use in inclement weather, but for the most part they are a normal part of everyday life for many Wellington residents.

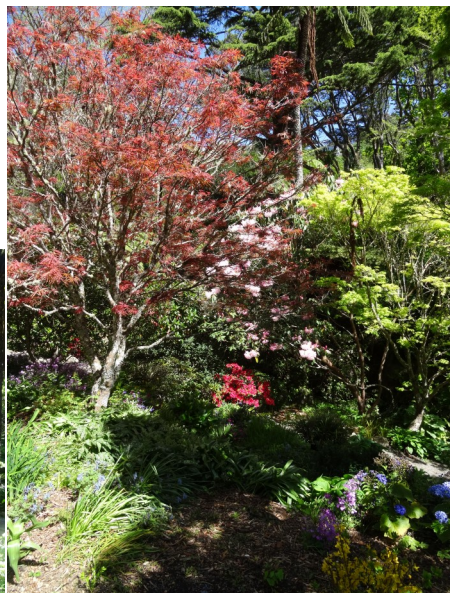
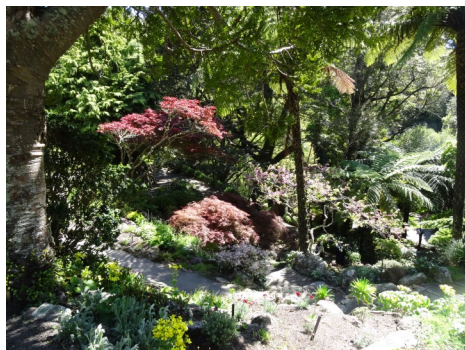
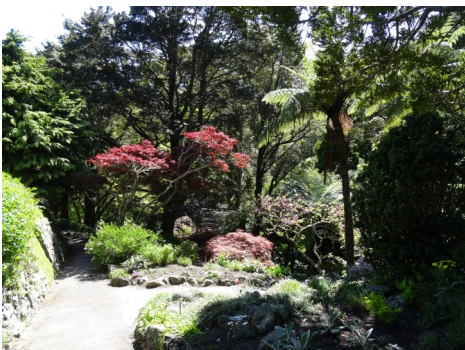


From the top of the ride, with its great views of the city and harbor, we took the winding path down through the Botanical Gardens. This is a beautiful area with many native and imported trees, ferns, flowers and shrubs, and the paved path makes for a very pleasant and easy walk down the hill.

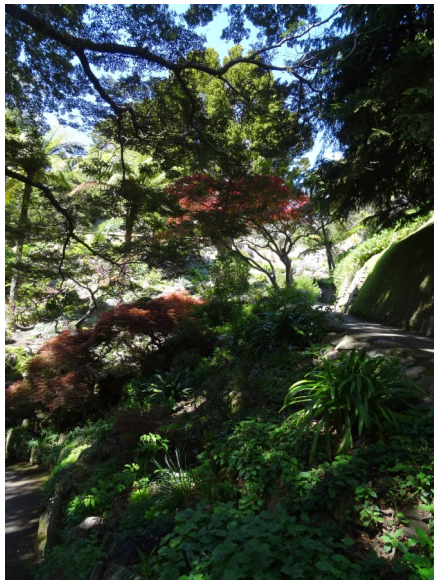


***Molly as a sundial marker!***

***Time for a quick rest on the walk down.***







At the bottom is a huge rose garden (we were about a month early for the best display) and an enclosed begonia house – and, of course, an outdoor café. We had a sandwich lunch sitting in the shade and then continued our walk towards the city. There is also a Peace Memorial Garden presented to Wellington by Japan.



**Richard John Seddon** (22 June 1845 – 10 June 1906), the longest-serving Prime Minister of New Zealand. Sometimes derisively known as **King Dick** for his autocratic style, Seddon dominated the Liberal government for thirteen years, achieving many social and economic changes.

We walked past the Seddon Memorial and through the Bolton Street cemetery, which has been there since the earliest days of the city, but which was split in two by the building of a motorway in the mid-1960s. Apparently the decision to build the motorway, with its necessary relocation of an anticipated 2000 sets of remains (it

turned out to be nearer 4000), was debated for three years before building could begin. However, with the road now long completed and the angst mostly forgotten, the two areas of the cemetery are connected via a bridge walkway





and a mass grave formed for remains not identified. In addition, there is a small chapel with a record book and site map such that those interested may locate the graves of relatives or friends. For those graves not identified, a listing has been inscribed on a marble wall in the chapel.

The cemetery was originally intended as a Public Cemetery (rather than a graveyard associated with any particular religion) but eventually an Anglican Bishop and the Jewish community demanded separate areas so that now there are three cemeteries in one: Anglican, Jewish and Public. The latter does not include Roman Catholics as they had a separate and distinct graveyard in another part of town right from the outset.

The path from the gardens and the cemetery leads directly on to the flat land close to the shore – in fact, in 1840 the shoreline was several hundred meters further back than it is now, there having been land reclamation projects ever since the first Europeans arrived. The part of town we were now in (only 15 minutes' walk from our hotel) is the government center, Wellington being New Zealand's capital since 1865. The capital was moved here from Auckland (which had taken over from Waitangi) in part because it was feared that the South Island (then rich in gold and growing in population) might set itself up as a separate colony. A commission made up of (neutral) Australians suggested Wellington as a suitable place for the seat of government and it has remained so ever since.



*The Beehive*



*The Library—with a little of the new parliament building to the left*

The old parliament buildings were destroyed by fire in 1907 but it wasn't until 1922 that the new parliament house was finally completed. Today it is shrouded in scaffolding and plastic sheeting so it would appear that another facelift is underway—hence no photograph). An executive office building (the old Governor's residence was on this site and was used as parliament for a while) was added in the 1980s and has been nicknamed the Beehive, and apparently created a run of jokes about parliament and politicians for years after its construction.



*Victoria University*

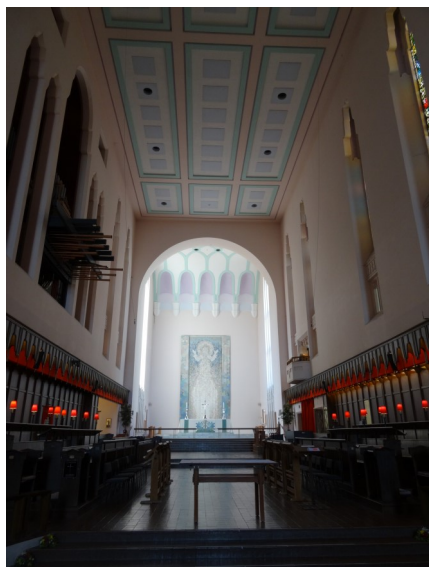
Certainly neither of the two more modern buildings compare with the parliament library, which survived the 1907 fire and still retains the splendor and "strength" of a Victorian building. Perhaps the finest building in this area (and one which I admit I had thought had been the old parliament house) is the campus of the Victoria Uni-

versity of Wellington. It certainly is a beautiful structure and must be one of the nicer city campuses anywhere.

Our final stop was at the **Anglican Cathedral** which was opened by Queen Elizabeth in 1995. On the outside it looks much like many modern buildings and is not particularly attractive. However, the inside, while relatively







plain, is very pleasing and the organ (which was being played during our visit) is magnificent with some most unusual horizontal pipes. The structure is very light and painted in pastel colors for the most part and dozens of rows of chairs replace the more traditional pews.



So, we concluded over four miles of walking through a beautiful area of Wellington which is a very attractive city in many respects. The fine weather certainly helped, but it is not difficult to understand why it ranks very highly (twelfth) in “most livable” large towns worldwide and third (behind Sydney and Auckland) in the Asia-Pacific region.

Tonight we walked across to the wharf area once again and had another good meal at the Dockside. We tried for something a little different by going to The Crab Shack but were surprised to learn that they had an hour waiting list. Nevertheless, the Dockside was at least as good as last night and we had a downstairs window seat overlooking the harbor and part of the city.

### Monday October 26

Today was Labour Day, a national holiday in New Zealand, and we were quite surprised to see a number of shops open and quite a few people on the street as we walked to breakfast at Starbucks. After that, we returned to the hotel, packed and checked out, leaving our bags for pickup later. We walked to the waterfront, saw a large group enjoying (?) a yoga lesson and then sat and watched the world go by, overlooking the water. We had a very light lunch at the Te Papa museum and then strolled back to the hotel.

We picked up our bags, ordered a taxi and were soon at the Interislander ferry terminal for our 2:45 boat to the South Island. The ship left a little late but we were soon out in the Tasman Straits and relaxing in the “Premium Lounge”. We had paid a little extra for this privilege but found the seating and service to be well worth the extra. We had a light meal and wine in the lounge and then watched as we left Wellington and headed into the open sea.



There were one meter swells once we left the harbor and a good deal of rolling of the ship but in general it wasn't too rough. We stayed in the lounge for the most part but once we were in the more sheltered bays and island region of the South Island, we ventured

out to take in the views. It was a beautiful sunny day once again but, particularly on the ship, the strong wind made it feel rather cool.

Once in Picton we picked up another rental car (which took far too long as they had the pick-up date, credit card and rate wrong – everything else was correct!) and made the half hour drive to our hotel in Blenheim, where we were to stay just the one night before driving south to Christchurch. We arrived at the Chateau Marlborough around 7:30 to be told that the restaurant closed at 8pm (today was a holiday). So, we quickly unpacked, got changed and then enjoyed a very good meal (alone) before retiring about 9:30.



## Tuesday October 27

We had breakfast in the hotel and then started our drive south along Route 1 towards Christchurch. The weather was fine but cool as we climbed the hills out of Blenheim and we had some good views of the lush farmland and vineyards of the area. We were now in the famous wine area of Marlborough and there were young vines for as far as we could see in just about every direction.

After perhaps 40 miles we descended to sea level and spent the next few hours essentially on the coast with only occasional detours inland. Unfortunately, with the ocean came the mist and drizzle and some heavy rain at times so views were somewhat limited. We looked for but did not see any whales (this part of the east coast is famous for whale watching) but we did see lots of seals on the rocky beaches near the road. Later we also saw several deer farms and – now well south on the South Island – the sheep were now outnumbering cows.



The lush countryside continued all the way to Christchurch and was particularly obvious across the Canterbury Plain as we neared our destination. All day we had distant views of mountains to the south and west but the low cloud obscured any views of snow-capped peaks which surely must have been visible on clearer days.

Finding the hotel in Christchurch wasn't easy, partly because the GPS was acting up and partly because of the road system being in chaos following the 2011 earthquake. However, we did find the Heritage eventually and checked in soon after 4pm. It is a magnificent building and has high ceilings and several doors that were obviously entrances to huge safes at one point. We later learned that the hotel had been built as Government buildings – hence the opulence and the reason it seems to have come through the earthquake relatively unscathed. Our suite, for example, is on two floors with a large sitting room downstairs and two bedrooms on the upper level.

Unfortunately, the area in which the hotel stands (Cathedral Square) did not fare well in the earthquake and the whole area looks like a bomb site. The cathedral itself has a gaping hole where the tower stood and the roof of one of the transepts is caved in and surely must be torn down. In fact, it is difficult to imagine that the building could ever be reconstructed but, at the moment, there is no evidence that bulldozers are about to move in.

Tonight we walked across the street to the restaurant in the Novotel Hotel where we had a nice meal, albeit with rather amateurish service.



Wednesday October 28



The Christchurch we remember from previous visits: our hotel (formerly government building), some nicely painted shop houses and the downtown trolley. Unfortunately, these are some of the very few left unscathed by the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011.

We knew that we would see some damage from these events five years ago but we had no idea just how much of a shock it would be. We were stunned by what we saw.

***On Saturday 4 September 2010, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake struck Christchurch and the central Canterbury region. It caused widespread damage to the city and minor injuries, but no direct fatalities.***

***Nearly six months later on Tuesday 22 February 2011, a second earthquake measuring magnitude 6.3 struck the city. Although lower in magnitude than the previous earthquake, the intensity and violence of the ground shaking was measured to be among the strongest ever recorded globally in an urban area and in total 185 people were killed with nationals from more than 20 countries among the victims. Christchurch Cathedral lost its spire, the Canterbury Television Building collapsed, causing most of the deaths, and widespread damage was caused across Christchurch to buildings and infrastructure already weakened by the 2010 earthquake and its aftershocks. On 13 June 2011 Christchurch was again rocked by two more large aftershocks. There were further earthquakes in December 2011 and in January 2012.***

***In all, 4,558 earthquakes were recorded in the Canterbury region above a magnitude 3.0, from 4 September 2010 to 3 September 2014. Over 1000 buildings in the central business district, which is about a third of the total buildings within the four avenues, were demolished following the earthquakes.***



We had breakfast at a little coffee shop across the street from the hotel and then set out on our walk of the city center. We were using pages from an 8 year old guide book so we knew a number of sites would no longer exist but what we didn't realize was just how extensive the damage was throughout the city. We knew of the cathedral of course, but for blocks around it in every direction there was evidence of the almost total destruction that must have occurred. Five years on, a good deal of re-building has taken place and a number of temporary structures are in place and doing business, but there are still blocks of waste land and partially destroyed or demolished buildings such that the area still looks much like a war zone.

There are boards up in many places showing artists' impressions of what an area will eventually look like and clearly there is a lot of desire not only to rebuild but to re-vitalize. It is equally clear that the city is looking at a very long term project and it will take a lot of money in addition to the determination being demonstrated.

Our first stop was not on the "old route" as it was at the so-called cardboard cathedral or, more properly, the Christchurch Transitional Cathedral. This is about three blocks from the old stone building and is an A-frame structure set on a concrete foundation. It would appear that the main supports are indeed tubes of cardboard with some sort of plastic surround and this has been covered with an exterior grade sheet. It is of course much smaller than the original cathedral and has seating for no more than a few hun-



dred but it is a usable home until such time as a more permanent structure is available. This cardboard building is said to be capable of lasting for as long as twenty years. Nowhere, however, could we find any details as to what was going to happen on Cathedral Square and how long it might be before a new place of worship would be ready.

From the cardboard cathedral we walked several blocks through building sites and/or open spaces left by the earthquake before we reached our next stop – the Bridge of Remembrance spanning the River Avon. This bridge was built to honor the men of New Zealand who fought in World War I, particularly those who served in Gallipoli and Egypt. Once again, this bridge is in the middle of a reconstruction zone and is closed to pedestrians, although we were able to get close and could appreciate how it must look without bulldozers and cranes around.





Near here has been built a temporary shopping mall in which the shops and cafes are housed in what looks like trailers side by side to give the appearance of a typical shopping area. This and several other such projects around the city are labeled Re-Start Christchurch and are another attempt to bring some semblance of normality to an otherwise surreal environment. We also visited a beautiful old wooden church that had survived the earthquake and seemed to be unscathed.



A more typically Christchurch scene was just ahead as we saw a group just finishing a trip on the river in a punt and were being returned to the only surviving boathouse on the river. Their "cruise" (in a beautiful area lined with trees) finished just in time as the rain which had been threatening all morning now started in earnest. For our part we chose to shelter in the Canterbury Museum which is just inside a huge park and botanical gardens which spans an area much bigger than the city streets we had just walked.



Here we were able to get dry, stay warm and have a cup of tea while deciding what to do next. At what appeared to be a slight easing of the rain we set out to walk through at least part of this huge green area and see some of the magnificent tree specimens as well as the New Zealand gardens. It really was a beautiful walk and on a dry day

would have kept us interested for much longer but today the rain just got heavier and forced us to head back towards the city sooner than we would have liked.



## ***Christchurch Botanical Gardens***





The beauty of the gardens (even in the rain) provided a stark contrast to the devastation we had seen in the downtown area. This was further amplified as we got back to Cathedral Square and once again saw the terrible effects of the earthquakes on the once magnificent cathedral. We hope to see it restored to its former glory some day.



We thought of getting the tram back to our hotel but were told that the price was \$20, for which we believe we could ride all day and maybe for a second day. However, all we needed was to cover the perhaps 15 minutes' walk back to Cathedral Square so we chose to stay wet and stroll back under our own steam. On the way we found an attractive restaurant for dinner this evening so we made a reservation and completed our walk home.

The afternoon seemed to get a little brighter at times but we chose to relax in the spacious quarters of our hotel suite and Molly even took advantage of the washer and dryer included to catch up on the laundry. This evening we walked about 15 minutes to Fiddlesticks and had a very good meal with good service and a pleasant ambiance. Fortunately the rain had let up so even the walk was pleasant.

#### Thursday October 29

It was raining as we left the hotel on our way to Lyttleton Harbor – and it continued to rain on and off throughout the day. We drove out of town to the next hamlet of Sumner where we found a small coffee shop for breakfast. On the coast road leading to Sumner there were areas where hundreds of containers (the type use on container ships) were lined up at the base of the Cliffside in a makeshift wall, presumably against the risk of falling rock resulting from the earthquake. In fact we did see one example of a flattened house on one of the hillsides, so clearly the effects were felt this far out of town. Indeed, the whole of the coast road seemed to be under construction (as were those in the center of town) so clearly there is still a lot to do.

Leaving Sumner we climbed the Evans Pass road which on our map looked as though it would take us over the top to Lyttleton. We both remembered having taken this somewhat hazardous route on previous visits, although Molly remembered that it had come to a dead end



before reaching the town. She was right! We came to a parking area which had a great (if misty) view over the sea but it was little more than a place for hikers and bikers to leave their cars and take one of the many trails over the hills.



The GPS system on my phone had not been working well to this point but came to life at this elevation so we were able to program our destination and, indeed, the route detailed took us over more hills to Lyttleton with backtracking all the way to Sumner. It was a nice drive with occasional good views as the mist cleared a little but the clouds really thickened as we neared sea level and the port of Lyttleton.



This is the port for the city of Christchurch (and is only about 20 minutes away via a direct route) and really has nothing to offer as a tourist destination. It is definitely a working port and there were several ocean-going vessels in dock being loaded with wood. It is also the jumping off point for New Zealand's expeditions to their base in Antarctica and is the

terminal for about a dozen cruise ships visiting this part of the South Island. There were none in port today as far as we could see. In fact, the main street of Lyttleton (really only one block) was relatively quiet and presumably most people on the street were locals. We did find a coffee shop for a light lunch and a break from the rain before starting the trek back to Christchurch.

We had intended to follow the same route as we had taken on the way out but obviously we missed a turn at some point and in ten minutes we were back in Sumner – so we headed straight into Christchurch and back to the hotel for the afternoon.

We ate again at Fiddlesticks and had another very good meal.

#### Friday October 30

We checked out of the hotel in Christchurch before 8:30 and were soon headed out of town towards Arthur's Pass and the West Coast. We had breakfast a little way out of the city and then set off across Canterbury Plain (farmland with lots of sheep and relatively flat) with the Southern Alps in the distance and partly shrouded in cloud.

As we started to climb, however, the clouds lifted somewhat and we had magnificent views of the snow-covered range that forms the spine of the South Island. It was now sunny (although still cool; we had left Christchurch with a temperature in the mid-forties) and the view seemed to get better with every turn in the road. Despite the fact that this is basically the only major road across the island, it wasn't very busy and even the odd truck didn't slow us down for long so we were able to travel at or near the 100 KPH speed limit. This was re-

### Gateway to the Antarctic

*Christchurch has a history of involvement in Antarctic exploration—both Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton used the port of Lyttelton as a departure point for expeditions, and in the central city there is a statue of Scott sculpted by his widow, Kathleen Scott.*

*The International Antarctic Centre provides both base facilities and a museum and visitor center focused upon current Antarctic activities. The United States Navy and latterly the United States Air National Guard, augmented by the New Zealand and Australian air forces, use Christchurch Airport as take-off for the main supply route to McMurdo and Scott Bases in Antarctica.*



duced some as we neared the summit at Arthur's Pass and the road became much more twisty, as it was on the downward side as we drove towards the coast.



The views and the nice weather made for a very pleasant drive and we were happy to keep driving (with the occasional photo stop) until we were on the southbound road running along the west coast.



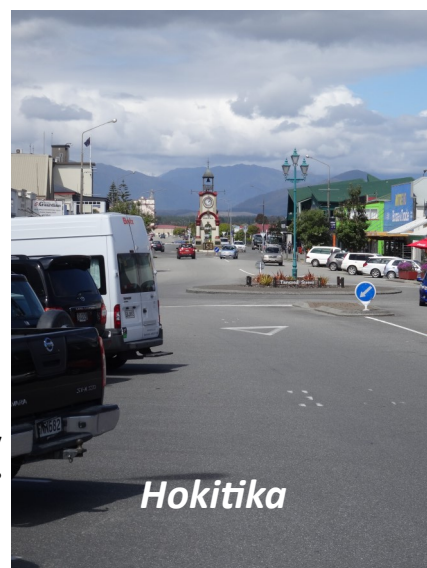
### *The Drive over Arthur's Pass*

Here we had some great views of the Tasman Sea with its high surf and long beaches as we drove towards Hokitika here we stopped for lunch. The town is famous for its Wild Foods Festival held every March. ***Festival-goers have the opportunity to try crocodile bites, chicken***

***feet, grasshoppers, colostrum cheesecake, mountain oysters and the infamous stallion protein shots*** (words from the Festival's web site). We were there briefly in 2003 but refrained from participating in the food delights; rather, we were more intrigued by the latter-day Hippies who seem to form the largest group of the visitors.

From Hokitika it was almost another two hours to Franz Josef, with more ocean views and one twisting climb and descent as we headed inland for a while. All the time we had huge hills and mountains to our left, although views of the glaciers became obscured by mist and then some light rain as we got close to our destination.

We checked into our hotel at the north end of town (just across the street from the place we had stayed 13 years ago with Dorothy and David) and then took a short (Franz Josef is tiny) drive into town to check on restaurants for dinner. We actually found several that we thought would be okay and made reservations at the Blue Ice. We have alternatives for our second night also. Tonight's meal was actually quite good and the service was great. The ambiance was less than exciting but we enjoyed our evening.





**Saturday October 31**

We were up late and walked into town for breakfast at one of the local cafes. It was a sunny morning and we had some good views of the snow-covered mountains near town but there was still cloud shrouding most of the surrounding area.



***Franz-Josef—from our hotel and downtown***



After breakfast we drove about 5 Km south of town to an area where we could park and take one of several paths to view the Franz Josef Glacier. We both walked about  $\frac{1}{2}$  Km and got a good look at the glacier in the sunlight at a distance of about a mile from our vantage point. From this point there was another path which led to the closest viewing point allowed by the park rangers – as close as 250 meters from the foot of the glacier.



***Franz-Josef  
Glacier***

I decided to follow this trail for a while, which started out as a well paved (small stones) path across the vast river bed (essentially dry but for a few streams) that was the outflow from the retreating glacier. The path zig-zagged across the terrain and was well marked by posts even when it started to climb over parts of the moraine as I neared the end of public access.

It was a very pleasant walk (with dozens of people following the same path) although





the clouds came down and it started to rain as I made the walk back. The views of the glacier were still quite clear, although I am not sure that the camera captured that as well as being there.



Molly had started walking back to the car when I got back to the place where we had parted but I soon found her along the main path. She had waited and walked this stretch of path for the past hour in my absence and had also got a little wet – but she seemed OK with it all and pleased that I had enjoyed my exercise.



We drove about 25 Km further south to Fox Glacier where we had lunch in a local coffee shop before going just a few kilometers further to view the [Fox Glacier](#). The viewpoints here were even further back than at Franz Josef and the cloud had come down more so our views were extremely limited. We both went to the nearest viewpoint and then I walked another one mile round trip (mostly through dense forest) to





view an historic suspension bridge (limit five persons at a time!) that spanned maybe 200 feet across another glacial stream. The bridge had been built in the days when getting to see the glaciers was a matter of trekking from the town over the rough terrain. As the glacier was in retreat even then bridges, access paths and routes changed as the geography changed.



Following our two visits we returned to Franz Josef, made reservations for dinner at a small restaurant a few kilometers north of town and then returned to the hotel for the rest of the afternoon, which by now was very cloudy and showery. Tonight we had a very good lamb meal and a huge cheese plate for dessert. We also chatted for a while with a couple from Philadelphia who were touring (at about 600 Km per day) and then taking a cruise from Auckland to Sydney; and also with the waitress who was from Slovakia but had spent time in Vancouver and now in New Zealand. Apparently, Slovaks can get working visas for only three countries – Canada, New Zealand and Taiwan! She was still considering the latter.

***The Franz Josef is a 7.5 miles long glacier located in Westland Tai Poutini National Park on the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island. Together with the Fox Glacier 12 miles to the south, and a third glacier, it descends from the Southern Alps to 980 feet above sea level.***

***Fed by a 7.7 square miles large snowfield at high altitude, it exhibits a cyclic pattern of advance and retreat, driven by differences between the volume of meltwater at the foot of the glacier and volume of snowfall feeding the névé.***

***The glacier advanced rapidly during the Little Ice Age, reaching a maximum in the early eighteenth century. Having retreated several kilometers between the 1940s and 1980s, the glacier entered an advancing phase in 1984 and at times has advanced at the phenomenal (by glacial standards) rate of 70 cm a day.***

***This cyclic behavior is well illustrated by a postage stamp issued in 1946, depicting the view from St James Anglican Church. The church was built in 1931, with a panoramic altar window to take advantage of its location. By 1954, the glacier had disappeared from view from the church, but it reappeared in 1997. The glacier was still advancing until 2008, but since then it has entered a very rapid phase of retreat.***



## Sunday November 1

The big news when we woke was that the New Zealand All Blacks had beaten Australia in the final of the Rugby World Cup in London. Bars had been open from about 4am to broadcast the game live to excited fans who were now sighing a collective sigh of relief or confirming that the outcome had never been in doubt! Anyway, we were pleased that they won, if only to assure decent service in our remaining days here.

It was cloudy as we ate breakfast in Franz Josef and no glaciers were in sight. We got a glimpse of a cloud covered nearby mountain but that was about all for the first hour or so of the trip south. We were now driving towards the southern end of the South Alps and the road hugged the west side of the mountains for about 100 Km with just a couple of short stretches next to the Tasman Sea. At the second of these, Haast, we had a coffee before the road turned inland and started to climb. Haast was an Austrian explorer who named the Franz Josef Glacier for his emperor.



Once we were headed inland the clouds began to clear and soon we were driving under clear blue skies with some of the most magnificent views anywhere in the world. We drove through thick forests of trees and ferns, some wide valleys with lush green fields (with sheep and cattle as well as

deer) and broad rivers, but mostly we were gazing at snow-capped mountains in virtually every direction. Every bend in the road seemed to yield a more impressive sight and it was difficult not to stop every few hundred yards to take "an even better photograph".

This scenery continued as we drove along Lake Wanaka and then Lake Havua with breathtaking reflections of the nearby mountains in each and a number of spectacular waterfalls from the steep-sided cliffs. Even after a short break in the town of Wanaka (right on the lake and a beautiful spot in its own right) we were







still driving through the mountains as we climbed the mountain pass at Cardrona on the highest road in New Zealand at a little over 3000 feet.

Finally, as we reached the summit and started the descent to Queenstown we had perhaps the best view of all as the whole valley was laid out below us like a topographical map. We could plainly see the airport runway (one of the most exciting landing strips anywhere), the city of Queenstown, the lake and, of course, mountains all around. I took only one picture from the top in anticipation of perhaps returning here in the next three days to try to capture the magnificent scenery when not trying to make a destination. This may have been a strategic error as I later found out that the weather is scheduled to make a dramatic change in both cloud cover and temperature as early as Monday so a prime opportunity may have been missed. We'll see!

We arrived at Fran and Alan's apartment in Queenstown around 4:30pm and checked in. We had a cup of tea on the deck while the sun still shone brightly and the temperature was about 70F.



### ***View from Alan and Fran's apartment in Queenstown***

This was just a little shy of the 75F high we had experienced earlier in the day but even so was one of the hottest days of our trip so far.

We drove into town and found a very nice Italian restaurant for dinner. We had the "Chef's Surprise", a three course meal of the chef's creation and unknown by the customer until served. It was very good, as were the wine, espresso and grappa – plus we had a nice chat with the young French waitress who had been in New Zealand for only a few months.



## Monday November 2

We went into town and had breakfast at Starbucks and then walked around the waterfront area for about an hour before driving to Arrowtown. This was a gold mining town which had been “flushed out” by Europeans who then brought in Chinese workers who were prepared to work a little harder and get the more difficult seams. This led to the establishment of a small Chinese community and some reconstruction of the village has taken place. The buildings, together with explanatory plaques, show the conditions under which the immigrants (mostly men) worked and describe something of the life in the small encampment. Apparently it wasn’t until the 1980s when the government relaxed its immigration laws that any further influx of Chinese took place in New Zealand.



## **Arrowtown** **Re-created Chinese Miners'** **Settlement** **Old Main Street**

The rest of old Arrowtown is the main street which is now full of tourist shops and cafes but which has a few 100+ year old buildings, including the post office. The shops were full of souvenirs and we found one in particular that had a huge selection of very nice mementos. Needless to say they received a little of our money, as did the coffee shop where we had our late morning snack.