

Mrs Dog's Travels 2015



A Year of taveling with

Grandma and Granddad

Mrs Dog's Travels 2015

by Robert and Molly Hillery

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2015 has been another busy year of traveling for Mrs Dog. With Grandma and Granddad she has flown over 50,000 miles, driven over 5,000 miles and visited four continents. She has crossed the Pacific Ocean twice, the Atlantic Ocean twice and has crossed parts of the Tasman Sea, the Java Sea, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. In addition, she has visited fourteen States in the south and east of the USA on a driving trip with Uncle Robert.



We have been to several places that we have visited on previous trips but we have visited two countries for the very first time. So, here is a book covering a whole year of travel to some very interesting and beautiful places.

Let's get started.



We should start this story in April of 2015 when Sammy and her family visited Grandma and Granddad in Ohio. This wasn't a journey for Mrs Dog, of course, but it was nice to have all the family together.

We spent one night at Great Wolf Lodge where Sammy went on every slide and water feature (more than once). The next night we had dinner at a Japanese restaurant where the food was cooked for us on a hot grill right at our table. Aunt Liz, Uncle Chip, Hayley, Colin and Cameron joined us for the meal so everyone in Grandma and Granddad's family was there. Do you remember another person being with us at that restaurant?



Just before returning to Sacramento, Sammy and her Mommy and Daddy joined us at a place where there was a huge model train layout. It is called Entertrainment Junction. We were given a quiz to work on as we walked through the various train scenes. Does anyone remember how many questions we answered correctly?

As we said, Mrs Dog didn't really spend much time with us during this visit but she was packed and ready to leave on the first big trip on the day after Sammy returned home.



On the third night we all were together again for dinner at Aunt Liz's house. The four cousins entertained us with a balloon party and Grandma and Granddad were given a very special treat. This was a canvas picture to celebrate our Golden Wedding Anniversary; how many years have we been married?



Since we will be talking about countries in many areas, it is perhaps best to start with a map of the entire world so that we can see exactly where each country is located. In this book we will be visiting parts of the United States in North America; Peru in South America; England and Italy in Europe; Singapore and Indonesia in Asia; and New Zealand in Australasia.

Maybe you can find each of these countries before we begin. It's a rather small map and it might be difficult to see all the countries, but perhaps you can find each of the continents.



Peru

Peru is a country in South America that we visited in April. Grandma and granddad had been to other countries in South America but had never visited Peru.

It is a country about one eighth the size of the United States and is similar to parts of California in that it has a narrow strip of flat land next to the ocean but the land rises steeply to very high mountains in the east. We had one day in the capital city (Lima) before flying to the town of Cusco, which is at an elevation of 10,000 feet. We would stay above 10,000 feet for the rest of our visit. Because we are not used to being at such high elevations, it is sometimes difficult to breathe normally, especially if you are exercising. Mrs Dog didn't seem to be affected but Grandma and Granddad sometimes felt a little dizzy and out of breath. We were told to drink lots of coca tea and this did help. We still walked slowly as we toured the various places of interest.

While we were in Cusco there was a large gathering of people in the town square. We weren't sure what they were doing but many groups were in colorful costumes and it appeared as though they were in a dance competition.



Some of the dance teams wore masks on their faces. We were told that some masks represented animals and others were of Inca warriors or gods. The masks and costumes are different in different parts of the country.



We also saw ladies in the square wearing traditional dresses and hats. Some had llamas walking with them but they were really there for the tourists to take pictures.

However, as we visited other places in Peru we did see lots of llamas and most of the ladies and men were wearing typical Peruvian dress. They really were very colorful.





Perhaps the most famous place in Peru is Machu Picchu. This was a city built about 600 years ago for the Inca King. The Incas ruled a number of countries in South America and Machu Picchu was built as a home for the king and as a place of worship.



About 500 years ago the country of Spain in Europe was looking to the New World for gold and other materials and soon wanted to take over the country for themselves. Rather than be captured by the Spanish soldiers, the Inca king decided to leave Machu Picchu for safer ground to the south, so the entire site was abandoned. The Spanish never found Machu Picchu and it was soon overgrown and not visible from the surrounding mountains. In fact, it wasn't re-discovered until about 100 years ago.



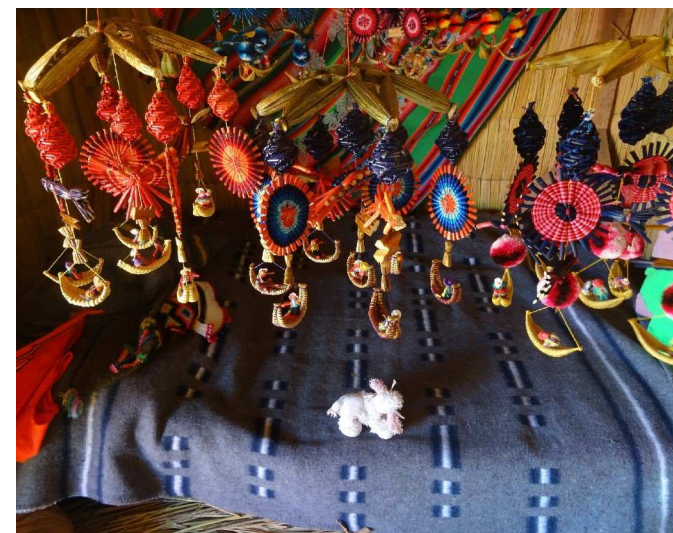
Since then, millions of people from all over the world have visited this area and are surprised by the huge buildings and terraces as well as by the beauty of the view. Even now it is not fully understood how the buildings were erected with the tools available at the time.

We all wanted our photographs to be taken in front of this most famous view.

We visited two more places in Peru which we found to be just as interesting as Machu Picchu. The first was Lake Titicaca, which is the highest lake in the world (12,000 feet above sea level).



We took a boat ride on Lake Titicaca to visit some small villages that were built entirely of straw and were floating in the lake. It felt strange to get off a boat and step onto a pile of straw which had been made into an island and which had houses, shops and schools. Mrs Dog was invited into one of the straw houses and sat on one of the children's beds.



On the floating islands we saw a number of local people dressed in the very colorful clothes that we talked about earlier. This was their "everyday" dress.

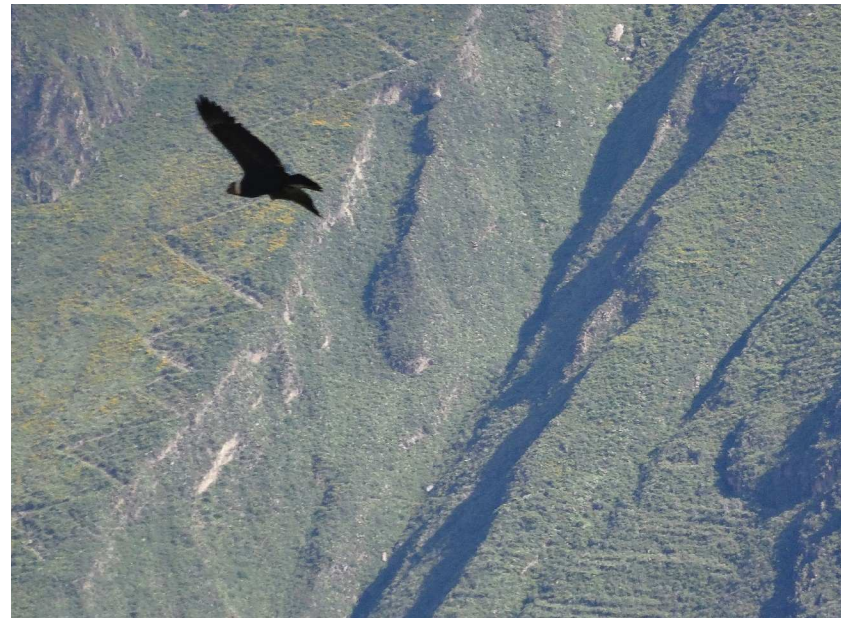
Mrs Dog really seemed to enjoy being on the islands made of straw and she posed for photographs in as many places as possible. One of the local men made a model of an island village and it was just the right size for Mrs Dog to join the two model people.

On the drive from Cusco to Lake Titicaca, we visited a school where we met a number of the children. This school was in a small village and the children walked several miles each day from their homes in the mountains to attend classes.





We next drove over the Andes Mountains to Colca Canyon. This is something like the Grand Canyon in the United States but is about twice as deep. In addition to being a very beautiful mountain area, Colca Canyon is home to the South American condor.



This is a bird much like an eagle but has a wing span of more than ten feet. They nest on the canyon walls and leave each day soon after sunrise to go looking for food. So, we had to get up very early but we were lucky to see about five of these wonderful birds.



The Andes Mountains stretch almost all the way down South America and the part that we saw forms the border between the countries of Peru and Bolivia. Many of the peaks are over 21,000 feet high, making them some of the highest in the world. On our visit to the



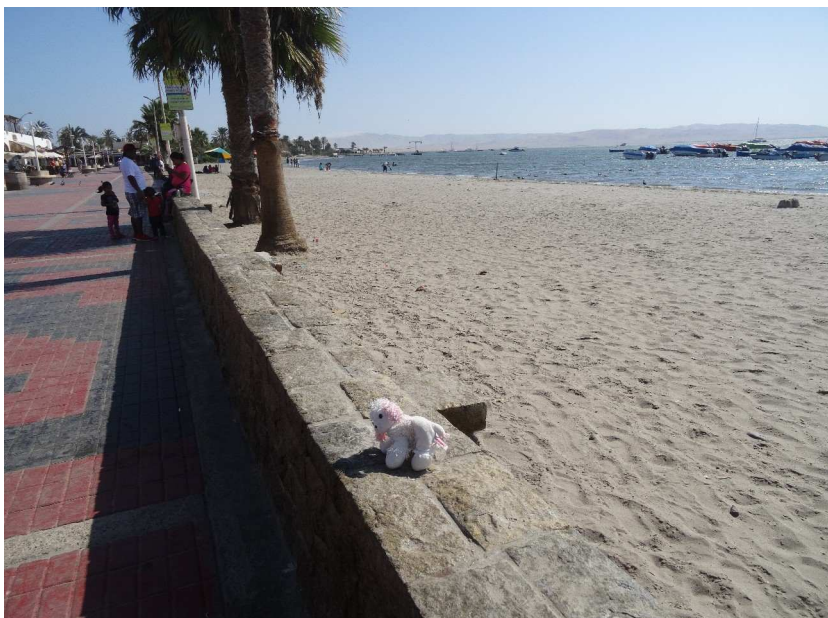
Colca Canyon we climbed to an elevation of 16,200 feet above sea level! Mrs Dog (and Grandma and Granddad) just had to have her picture taken sitting on a rock that marked where we were. On it was written the height, but not in feet. Can you find it? How high is it?



On our last day in Peru we went in a very small plane to fly over a desert on which there are many figures on the ground. No-one seems to know exactly why or how they were put there so many hundreds of years ago and it is only from above that you can identify the shapes.



It was very difficult to take good pictures from the moving plane but we did see about ten of these figures and shapes. Can you see the shape that looks a little like a spaceman?



After the plane ride, we returned to the Pacific Ocean coast of Peru and had lunch overlooking the beach on a hot and sunny day. So, Peru isn't all mountains. In addition to the beautiful scenery and old buildings, the country is home to lots of alpacas and llamas.



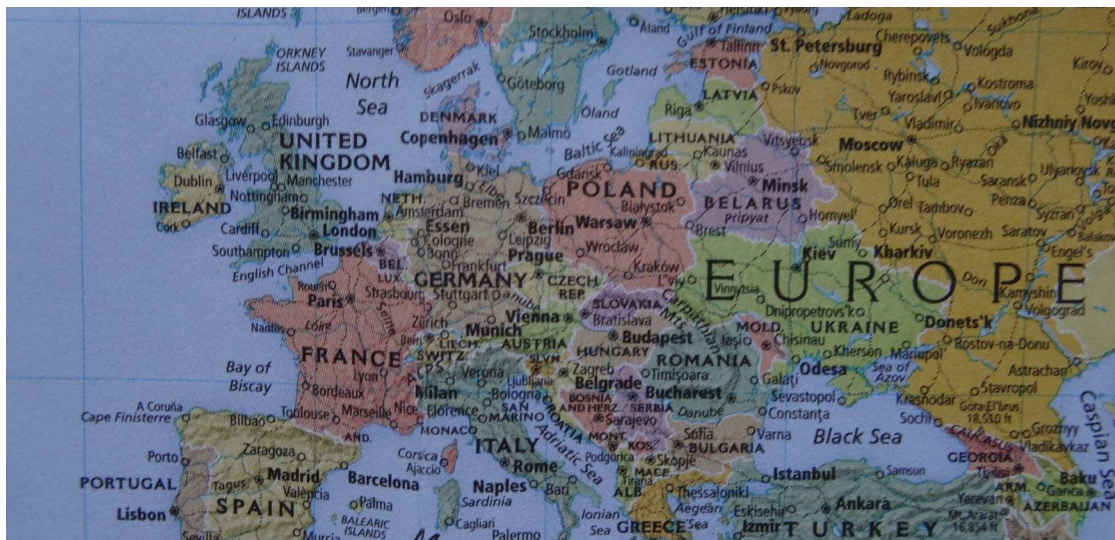
There are also vicuñas, which have the softest fur, which is made into very expensive sweaters and other clothing. Peru has a lot of interesting things to see and we really enjoyed our two week visit there.



England and Italy

On June 5 2015, Hayley graduated from High School and Grandma and Granddad were there for the celebration. She looked happy to have graduated and her two brothers were full of smiles also.

What year will it be when we are at Samantha's graduation?



Two days after the graduation, we started another trip and flew across the Atlantic Ocean to England. So now we were in Europe and it should be fairly easy to find England (clue: it's part of the United Kingdom) on the map to the left.

In England, we stayed in Cousin Mark's apartment in Ilkley for a total of about eight weeks. Sammy probably remembers visiting this apartment when she was almost four years old and where she met more people from her English family. On that trip she also visited the town from which she got her middle name and spent some time with Auntie Fran where she slept in a Princess bed.



While in Ilkley we saw many of our family and friends and we celebrated our actual wedding anniversary (June 21) in England. Grandma and Granddad visited the place where the wedding reception had taken place all those years ago before they emigrated to America. The party following the wedding was held in an old house in a beautiful park where lots of photographs were taken. This is one of our favorites. Don't you think Grandma looks very pretty?



As part of our anniversary celebrations we took a short drive with two friends who had also celebrated their Golden Wedding in June. One place that we visited was an old mining town. The mine is now closed but the village has been restored to look as it did over 100 years ago, with old cars,



buses and shops from that time or a little later. It was very interesting for Grandma and Granddad as they recognized many of the items that were in the shops and the houses as they had used them in their childhood. Obviously it wasn't that interesting for Mrs Dog.



On the same short vacation, we also visited a castle at a town called Alnwick (pronounced "Annick"!) This is a very big castle and part of it is still used by the Duke of Northumberland as a residence for his family. It is also where some of the filming took place for a movie you may have seen about a young boy who is also a wizard. Do you know its name?



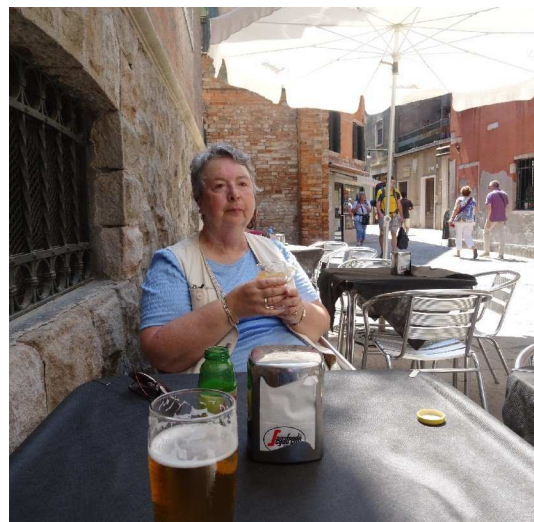
During our stay in England we took an eight day trip to Italy to visit two of our favorite cities—Venice and Florence. Venice is unusual as the “streets” are actually canals and everything is moved by boat throughout the city. There are sidewalks so people can walk without taking a boat and that is exactly what we did.

Venice has lots of buildings that are over 500 years old and we enjoyed strolling along the sidewalks and visiting a number of them, especially the beautiful old churches.

Florence also has many beautiful buildings as well as a very famous art museum that we visited. There is also an interesting bridge that crosses the river and has shops on both sides of the pedestrian walkway. These shops used to sell gold and silver but now also offer many tourist souvenirs. The bridge is called the Ponte Vecchio and you can see it in the middle picture on the bottom row below.

The biggest building in Florence is the cathedral which is often called the Duomo after its enormous domed roof. You may just be able to see some people right at the very top of the dome in the picture at the bottom right of this page. It's a long climb to the top so we didn't do it.

The weather in Venice and Florence was unusually hot and humid so we stopped for a cold drink often during the day. Mrs Dog preferred to stay in the air-conditioned hotel room much of the time; she even looks a little hot in the picture below, don't you think?. Even Grandma and Granddad were glad to get back to the room each afternoon to cool down.



We returned to England for one more week before flying back to America—to prepare for the next trip—to visit Sammy in Sacramento.

*Then, two weeks later, Grandma's brother Robert (do you remember meeting him?) came to Ohio so that we could take a driving trip through the **Southeastern States of America**. During the trip we visited 14 states, we saw four state capitols and we drove about 3500 miles.*



First we followed the Ohio River to Louisville and then we drove through Illinois to St Louis. Here we saw the huge arch near the Mississippi River. It is called the Gateway Arch and is over 600 feet high. It is hollow and has an elevator inside. Mrs Dog went with Uncle Robert and Grandma to the very top, where they could look through tiny windows at the ground below.

Granddad stayed on the ground!



Mrs Dog at the top of the Gateway Arch overlooking the Mississippi River





From St Louis we followed the Mississippi River to Memphis where we left the river for a couple of days to visit Jackson, the capital of Mississippi. We visited the State Capitol and we thought of Sammy because we know that she wants to visit as many Capitols as she can.

Then it was on to New Orleans where we stayed for three days. We did a walking tour of the French Quarter (New Orleans once belonged to France, then to Spain and finally the United States) and took a ride on a real Mississippi River sternwheeler.



We also stopped for coffee and beignets in a very famous cafe in New Orleans called Cafe Du Monde. Beignets is a French word for doughnuts and these particular ones are covered with lots of powdered sugar. Everyone who eats there comes away covered in sugar - but it didn't seem to show too much on Mrs Dog.



Our next major stop was in St Augustine, Florida and on the way we saw the State Capitol in Tallahassee. St Augustine is the oldest city in the United States and was celebrating its 500th anniversary on the day we were there. So, in addition to seeing many of the old buildings in the city we also saw a parade through the streets by lots of local dignitaries. We even saw two ladies in the parade who were dressed as princesses.

The building to the left is the oldest wooden schoolhouse in America and is almost three hundred years old. It doesn't look anything like your school, does it?

We left St Augustine to drive up the east coast, first to Savannah and then to Charleston. Both of these towns are very pretty and have a lot of history. They were part of the Confederate States that separated from the northern states in the Civil War of 1861-1865. If you haven't learned about this yet in school, you surely will.

Savannah has many tree-lined squares and some beautiful old houses. It also has a golden-domed building that you would think was a Capitol. However, Savannah is not the state capital of Georgia and this is actually City Hall. Do you know the city which is the capital of Georgia?

Mrs Dog posed under the seal of Charleston which shows just how old the city is. Also in Charleston, we took a boat ride to see Fort Sumter, which was very important in the Civil War. You may want to ask Papa about it sometime.

Uncle Robert was excited when we got off the boat and he saw a signpost that showed the distance to various cities around the world - including the one where he lives in England. Can you see the city and how far it is from Charleston?

Charleston is not the capital of South Carolina but we did visit Columbia, which is. It has a very beautiful State Capitol. How many is that, so far?





From Savannah we left the coast and drove over the Appalachian Mountains and then through the Smoky Mountains. Why do you suppose that they are called Smoky Mountains?

To get a really good view of the mountains, Uncle Robert and Granddad walked up a steep hill and then up to this huge observation deck.



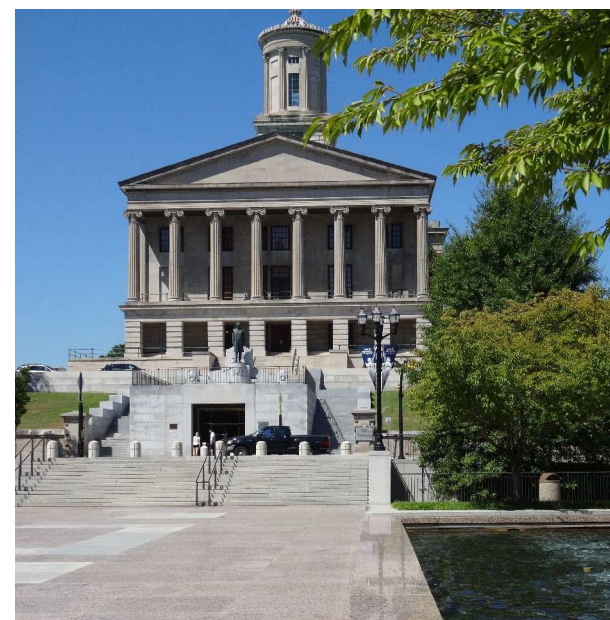
Grandma and Mrs Dog stayed in the car rather than make the climb, but they both got out for pictures at the North Carolina-Tennessee state line.

The major city we visited in Tennessee was Nashville which is also the capital of the state. So, guess what, we saw our fourth Capitol on this trip.



Nashville is also home to a theater called the Grand Ole Opry. It is where a famous country music show was performed for many years and from where it was broadcast on radio and television.

The old theater has recently been restored so Mrs Dog just had to pretend she was in the audience.



From Nashville we returned to Ohio and shortly afterwards, Uncle Robert flew back to his home in England.

By now it was September - but we were not yet finished with our travels for the year. Keep reading to see where we went next.

New Zealand

New Zealand is quite a small country (not much bigger than the State of California) and consists of two major islands as well as a number of smaller islands.

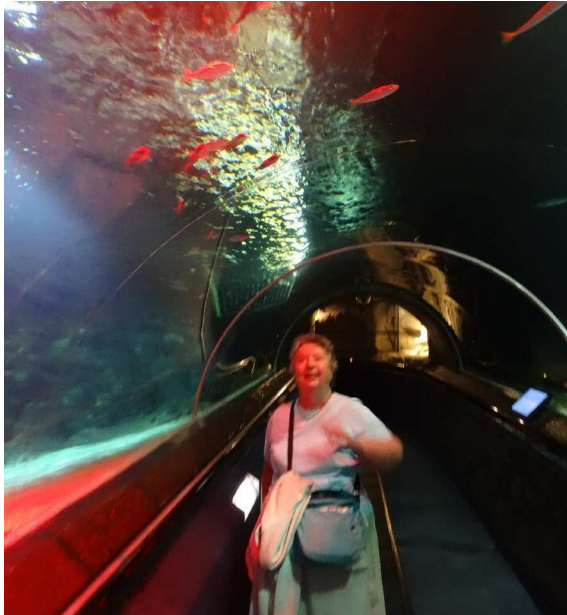
As we said earlier, New Zealand is part of Australasia and you can see the much bigger island of Australia in this map. You may also be able to see a little of the islands of Indonesia towards the top of the map. Remember that name because we'll be visiting there later!

New Zealand is thousands of miles from our home in Ohio and is very far south of the equator. Going there means crossing the International Date Line which Mrs Dog did not really understand except that she knew we had somehow lost a day on the way there!



We started our visit in the largest city of the country, Auckland, which is on the North Island. The island is very narrow at this point and from the top of one of the hills in the city you can see the Pacific Ocean and the Tasman Sea. They are separated by less than ten miles at this point.





We visited a number of places in Auckland but Mrs Dog seemed to like the aquarium the best. In this aquarium you can walk through a tunnel with water on both sides and over your head so that fish and sharks can swim all around you. Grandma enjoyed this also.



There is also an area set aside for penguins and we were able to watch them as they waddled around and protected their eggs by covering them with their large feet.



To get into the aquarium everyone has to walk through a tunnel of ice on a shaky platform. To make this worse, the walls of the ice rotate all around you and it is difficult to walk without feeling dizzy.



As we said, Auckland is the biggest city in New Zealand and it has some very big buildings. Can you see the tall tower in the picture above? It is called the Sky Tower and is over 1000 feet high. Would you believe that people bungi jump from the top?

In the extreme north of the North Island is an area called the Bay of Plenty. It was here that a treaty was signed between the original inhabitants of New Zealand (called Maori) and the British, who were claiming the country for their queen. Queen Elizabeth of England is still the head of state but now New Zealand is governed by its own elected parliament.

We visited the site and saw a reproduction of the building where the Treaty was signed. The site is on a beautiful green hill near the ocean and some children had been playing cricket on a flat area. Grandma couldn't resist having a try!



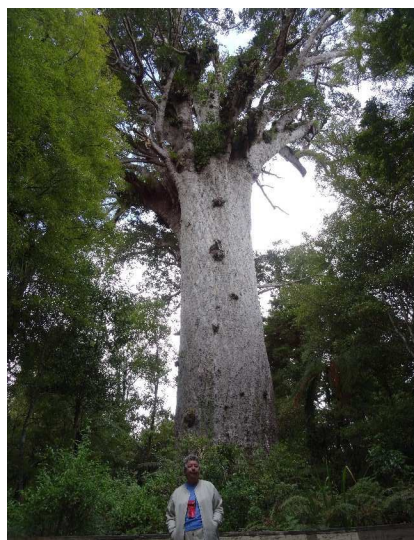
Also on the site was an old Maori canoe with a very ornate carving at the front. Mrs Dog was very brave and had her picture taken next to the strange face.

New Zealand is home to the kiwi bird. It sleeps in the daytime and comes out at night. There aren't many kiwis left in the country now so they are protected and great care is taken not to lose any more. Apparently dogs have a habit of chasing kiwis when they can, so they can't go in areas where there are lots of the birds. We didn't let Mrs Dog go any further!



Near the Bay of Plenty is a forest of Kauri trees. These trees are something like the giant Redwoods that you may have seen in California and some are over 1000 years old.

Another interesting thing that we saw in this part of new Zealand was a steam train coming straight down the middle of the main street in a small town. Fortunately the train whistle was very loud so we all knew it was approaching.

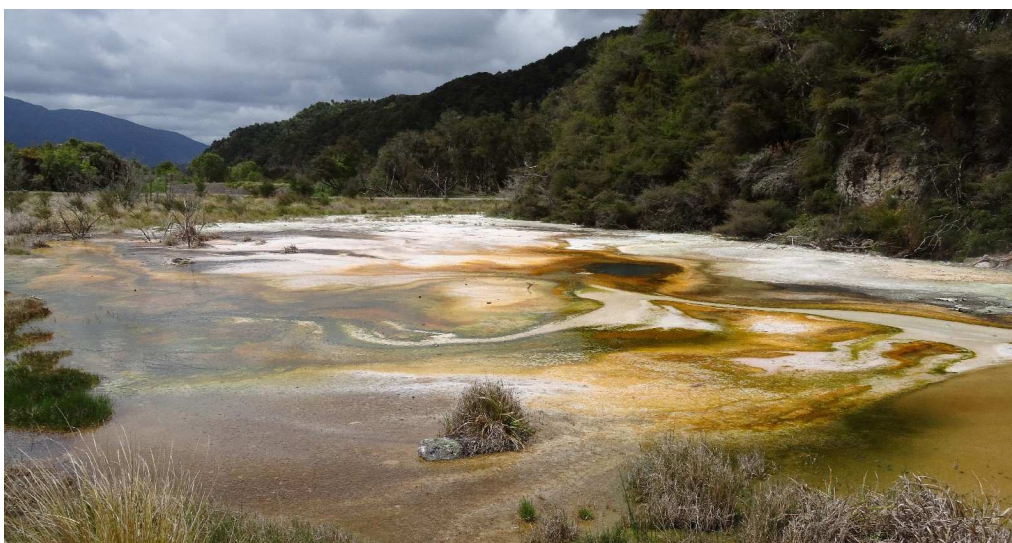




In the middle of the North Island is the city of Rotorua where we spent three days. This town has lots of areas of “thermal activity” such as geysers, mud pools and clouds of steam. It’s a little like Yellowstone Park in the United States, except here a lot of the activity was right in the middle of the town.



We spent most of two days in parks where we could get very close to the mud pools and the steam by walking on paths or boardwalks that had been built for visitors to keep them safe. Despite that, Grandma held on to Mrs Dog when she stood on a barrier to have her picture taken.

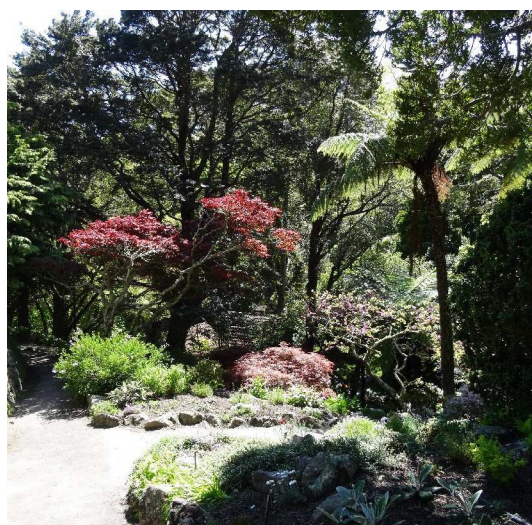
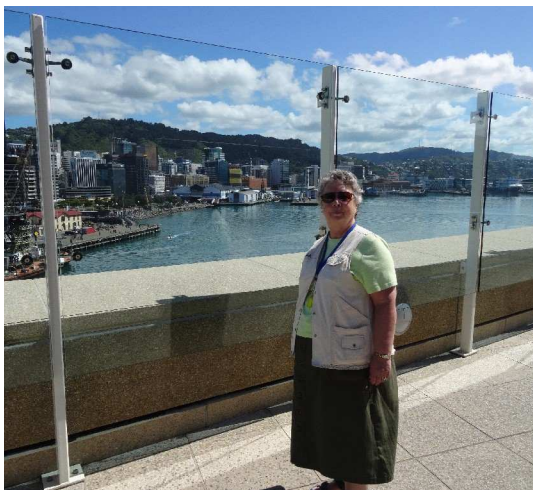


The pools and streams had lots of different colors; many were brown or orange but we also saw red, blue, white and even black. Of course the trees and shrubs were mostly green so the whole landscape was varied and very interesting. Perhaps you wouldn't want to live so close to such hot ground but it was very nice to visit.

From Rotorua we drove to the capital city of New Zealand, Wellington. Wellington is at the southern tip of the North Island. In addition to being the capital it is also a port city and is only a three hour ferry ride from the South Island. You may be able to see one of the ferry boats in the top left picture.

While we were in Wellington we spent one day at the National Museum and learned a lot about the country and its inhabitants. The Maori first settled in New Zealand about 600 years ago, after arriving from Polynesia. The museum has a reproduction of a typical Maori house which, as you can see, has its living quarters built above the ground. The area underneath was used for storing food and other things. About 400 years later, Europeans (primarily from Britain) began to settle here and more recently many have arrived here from Japan and India.

On our second day in Wellington we took a cable car to one of the highest peaks in town where we had some great views of the city and the waterfront. From the cable car we walked slowly down through a very beautiful park. What do you suppose Grandma is doing in front of all those stones? We finally arrived at the parliament buildings. Parliament is something like Congress in the United States and there are lots of government buildings just as in Sacramento. They don't have a Capitol - but they do have a Beehive!





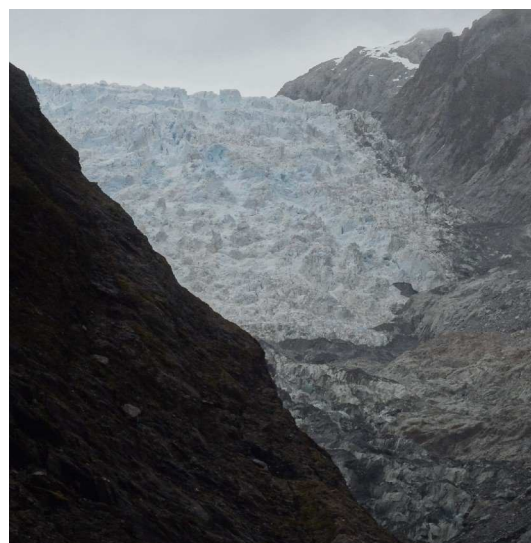
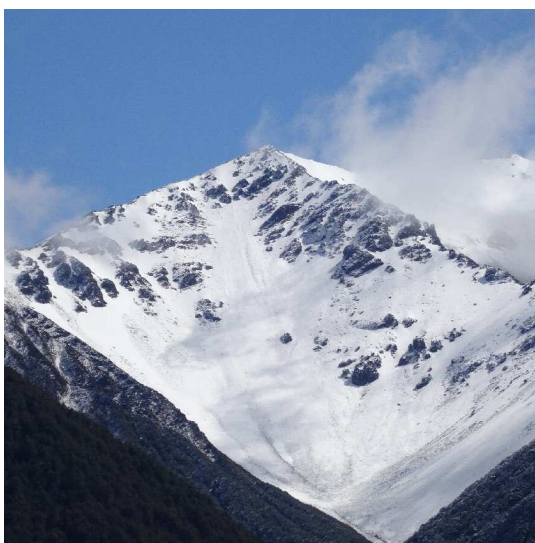
We crossed to the South Island by ferry and spent the rest of the vacation on that island. We drove along the eastern coast and saw seals on the rocks close to the ocean. We had hoped to see some whales which live in this ocean but it was too rainy and misty to see very far out to sea.

On the drive towards our next destination of Christchurch we saw many fields of deer and of course we saw lots of sheep. There are more sheep than people in New Zealand! Granddad also found a little bear - but he ate that with his coffee.



About five years ago, the city of Christchurch was hit by a series of very strong earthquakes which did a lot of damage. Many buildings in the middle of the city are still in ruins, much like the cathedral in the photo to the left.

However, until they can build another stone cathedral, the people of Christchurch have built a much smaller church (with the colorful windows) which is made almost entirely of cardboard. Can you imagine living in a house built from cardboard?

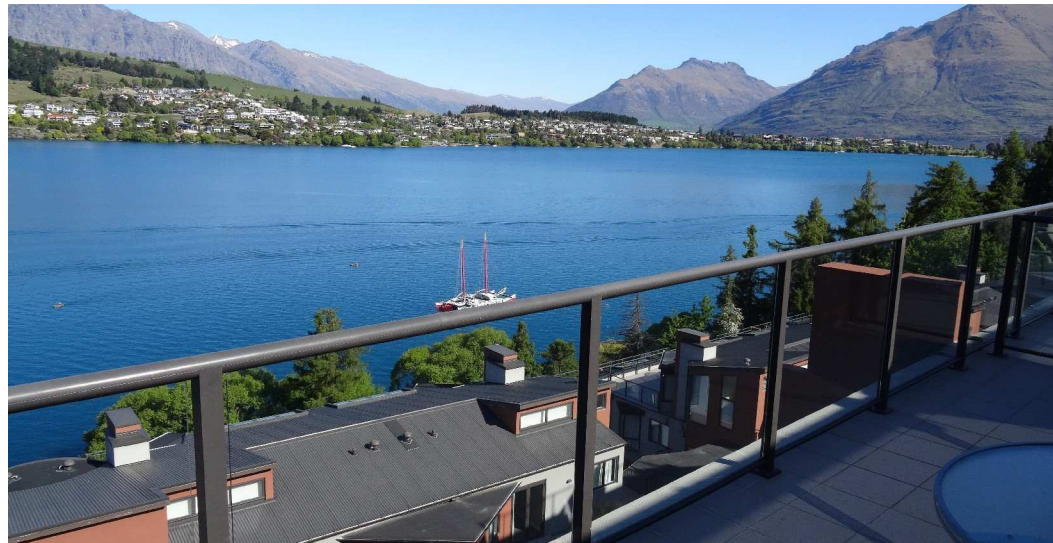


Also on the South Island are mountains called the Southern Alps. We visited two glaciers (do you remember seeing glaciers in Alaska?) and saw lots of snow on the peaks.

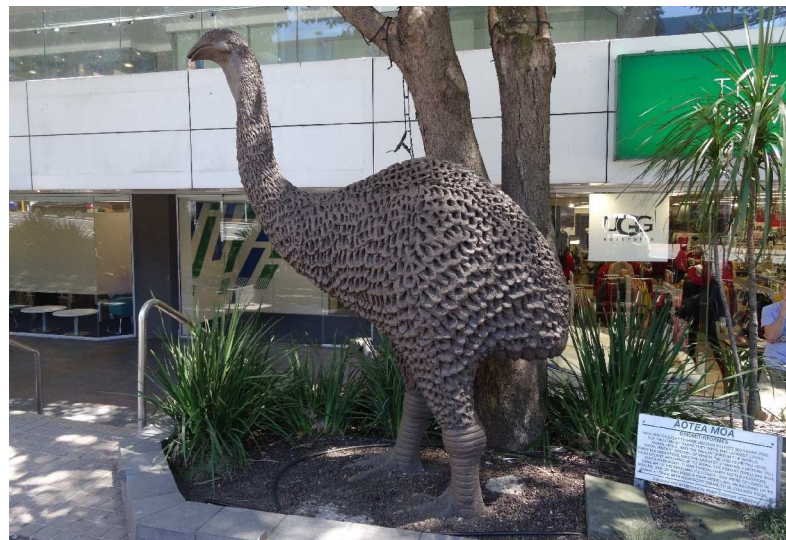
Finally we arrived in the town of Queenstown where we stayed for four nights. We stayed in an apartment owned by Auntie Fran which has a deck overlooking a beautiful lake with high mountains in the background. Mrs Dog really enjoyed these views and often sat on the dashboard of our car to see them better.

Do you remember staying with Auntie Fran in England and sleeping in her “Princess” bed? The apartment in New Zealand didn't have a Princess bed but it was a very nice place to stay.

All through our trip to New Zealand Grandma had been hoping to see a bird called the Moa and on our very last day she saw one! Actually, these birds are now extinct so there are none that are still alive but Grandma was happy to see this model.



From Queenstown we flew back to our home in Mason and shortly after that we made another visit to Sacramento to celebrate Sammy's birthday and Thanksgiving. We also had a “mini-Christmas” so we had lots to do in just a few days. But our travels were not yet over for 2015. We had one final long trip to visit the country of Indonesia.





Indonesia.

This is a very big country in Asia but it is made up of hundreds of islands. There are five or six large islands where most of the people live but there are many more on which only a few (or none at all) live. It's a good place to visit by ship—and that is exactly what we did. We flew from America to Singapore and then had ten days on a cruise ship which allowed us to see several islands.

You may be able to see Singapore on the map above (at the very left). We got off the ship on several days to visit places of interest. Do you remember doing the same thing on the Crown Princess?

The ship we were on for this cruise was nowhere near as big as the Crown Princess but it had very nice rooms and some nice restaurants. It also had a pool and a sun deck as well as a walking track on the very top level. It was only a short circular path and Granddad almost got dizzy walking round and round on his daily walk.



Almost every time that our ship docked at a new port we were greeted by a local group dressed in strange clothes and playing unusual instruments. We didn't understand exactly what they were doing but some of the costumes were quite scary. (Like the one in white!) They were friendly when we got off the ship!



Indonesia has a lot of temples and we visited a number of them. Red seems to be a favorite color for Buddhist temples like this one. We thought that they were very beautiful; they had especially ornate roofs. We have seen many like this one on our travels so you may have seen pictures like this before.



Many temples have lion statues at the main entrances. Mrs Dog wanted to get close to this one. Do you think it was the fancy pink bow that she liked?



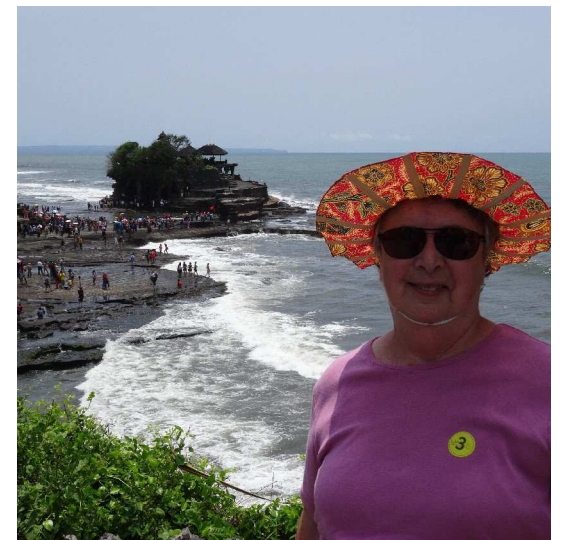
We also saw dense forests and farm land on some of the islands. One of the main crops was rice but they also grow corn, bananas, mangos and many other fruits and vegetables.

As we said, there were lots of temples to visit while we were in Indonesia. Some were very old and had very fancy stonework and others were quite unusual.

One was a Monkey Temple (because hundreds of monkeys live in the grounds) which also had a large colony of very big bats.

At another one, it was considered lucky to throw a coin over your shoulder into a small pond. Grandma wanted to be lucky.

Finally, there was a temple that had been built on a rocky island in the ocean. When the tide was out you could walk to the temple but it was completely surrounded by water at high tide. Do you recognize the sun hat that Grandma is wearing? Do you think it could also be used as a fan?

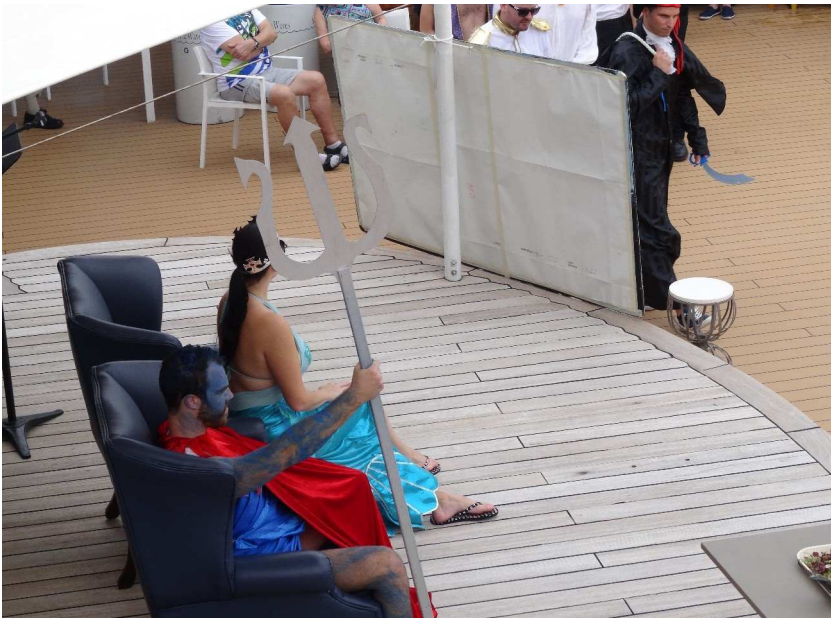




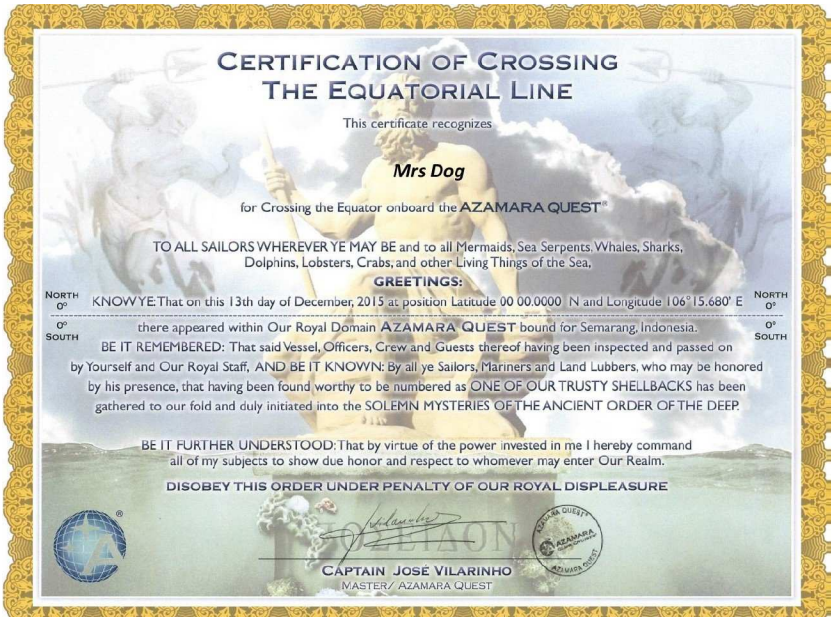
We had one very unusual experience as our ship crossed the Equator. As you can see from the small world map, the Equator is an imaginary line that runs right round the earth in the center. As we sailed from Singapore to our first stop in Indonesia, we crossed over this imaginary line so there was a special ceremony on board.



In order to get back control of the ship the captain had to pledge his allegiance to King Neptune and several of the crew members had to be "sacrificed". This involved throwing them into the pool - fully dressed - and before long almost every member of the crew, including the captain, was in the water!



First King Neptune and his Queen came on board and took their seats on thrones near the pool. Then the ship's captain had to hand over control of the ship to King Neptune. He presented the king with a large key which was supposed to be the key to the engines of the ship.



Even some of the passengers were thrown in the pool. It was all done in fun, of course, and everyone had a good time.

Grandma and Granddad and Mrs Dog watched from a safe distance but we all got a certifiacae to commemorate the event.



One of the highlights of this trip was a visit to Komodo Island which is home to the Komodo Dragon. The dragon is really a very big lizard which can grow to ten feet long and weigh several hundred pounds. We were lucky on the day we visited because we came across a



watering hole where there were six or seven dragons drinking and resting in the sun. Our guide kept telling us to stand well back while we took photos because the dragon might get angry if we approached too closely.



They looked peaceful enough but this was their resting time; later in the day they would start hunting deer and wild boar for their dinner and we didn't want to add tourists to their diet! In fact, Mrs Dog was not too anxious to see the dragons so she stayed on the ship.



This ended our trip to Indonesia and our travels for 2015. Grandma and Granddad did make one additional short trip to Florida to meet Sammy and the rest of her family but our world travels were over - at least for this year. Mrs Dog hopes that you have enjoyed this journey.





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