

General note about time zones: ***NZ is 19 hours ahead of Alabama; Adelaide is 17.5 hours ahead of HSV.***

2025 New Zealand trip report

Riding a motorcycle in New Zealand has always been on *Phil's Bucket List*. Reports we've read from others claim the country has more sheep than people, with miles of pristine asphalt waiting to be explored. Sounds great! Australia is way so close; he could check off two bucket list boxes on one trip. An additional aspect got included in this trip. Both of us had ridden BMW motorcycles in 49 US states, ***lacking only Hawaii***. If we stopped in Honolulu on our way to New Zealand and rented BMWs for a day, we could complete ***that challenge*** as well. That was our overall plan which took many months to implement. Here's how it played out.

Friday 27 Dec 2024, – HSV to Honolulu

The alarm rang at 0345{L} and thus started another vacation adventure. Our trusty neighbor who generously volunteered to chauffeur us. Our scheduled 0615 flight was delayed out of Huntsville, causing us to run to make our connection in Houston. Then it was an uncomfortable (*economy class*) 9-hour flight to Honolulu; not only the seats but also ***our stomachs***. We were fed a cheap breakfast early in the flight and then nothing else for the remaining 8.5 hours. We had neglected to bring food with us and didn't have time to buy anything in Dallas. The early start, long flight, abnormal meal schedule, and time changes messed with our bodies, which made the *excessively long wait for our reserved Budget rental car even that much more frustrating*.

We finally made it to the [Ramada hotel](#) and managed to get a real meal – some good seafood nearby at the [Harbor Pub](#) beside the Waikiki harbor - and we later stopped for one beer at the [Waikiki Brewing Company](#); *Karen really just wanted to get some sleep!* We crawled into bed around 8PM and stayed there nearly 12 hours. Although we didn't sleep the entire time, the rest refreshed us for our big M/C rental adventure.

Saturday 28 Dec, our Hawaiian Ride-2-Eat day

Phil made arrangements for the BMW bikes via [Riders Share](#), since no dealers rent BMWs in Hawaii anymore. And these were the only BMWs to be had on Oahu; nor were they co-located. P rented a giant [R1800B](#) with "ape-hanger bars" from [Waikiki Jeep Rentals](#) just a modest walk from the Ramada. Then we rode southwest of town where a young guy had a C400GT scooter available. Unbelievably, we had to stop for gas as the R18's low-fuel light came on. We were told the R1800's tank was likely full, but we didn't take the time to check...

P wanted to take pictures of us and the bikes at a couple of locations. He knew where he wanted to go but didn't have a GPS on the R18. He lost track of where we were and had to stop several times to dig his GPS out of his jacket. Getting lost, circling the block along crooked city streets and stopping to check the GPS became the theme of the day. On our way back to town, it actually fell out of his pocket at a stop light and landed *under* the bike. It took a minute to retrieve it and by that time, our slow lane had missed the green light...

We persevered and made it to a park near historic [Diamond Head Park](#). After taking pictures we had a difficult time exiting the parking lot due to a street fair with many pedestrians and cops. Back on the road again, we headed southeast to the end of the island for a view back toward the Honolulu. The [Koko Kai Beach Mini Park](#) was in a residential area with light traffic, which made it easier to navigate [*next page*]. With that task completed, we then headed to lunch at the [Ono Steaks and Shrimp Shack](#) on the east side of the island near [Bellows AFS](#) [*which we want to visit someday with Phil's AF & college buddies*]. It would have been a nice ride but for the horrid beach traffic (*being Saturday*). Smaller bikes just bypassed the cars on the shoulder, but our bikes were a little too big and sluggish. Lunch was good though, and the traffic was much lighter heading west on HI-72. However, it was now much warmer. We were tired of getting lost, so we limited our sightseeing and

returned both BMWs early. This allowed us more time for walking around Waikiki near our hotel. We took a long circular route to the outdoor bar at the [Hale Koa Hotel](#). It is a lovely location to relax with a drink, listen to some local musicians and watch the sun set; *open to all Active Duty & retired veterans*. We then set out to find dinner using Apple Maps. We tried three restaurants near the resort complex, but couldn't find two of them and the third was having a private party. Having been walking for nearly an hour Karen said "Stop" in front of the [Kayak Café](#). We ate there, but it wasn't actually a good choice - service was slow and the food cool, but at least it was food & a beverage.



29-30 December 2024, – Honolulu to Auckland, NZ!

While making coffee at the hotel, P remembered that he left his well-traveled, steel coffee cup in the rental BMW's saddle bag. We'd be on the plane by the time they opened, *so he was **outta luck***. We made good time through the airport check-in and security.... until the TSA screener found P's Swiss Army knife in his backpack. We chose to combine our carry-on bags and he took it back to the Air NZ ticket counter (*escorted out by TSA*) to "check it" as another bag with only the knife inside. Fortunately, that was our only drama with boarding or

the flight. Business class [Left] was oh so nice for the 8+ hour flight to Auckland on **Air New Zealand**. We eventually arrived Monday afternoon, 30 Dec, New Zealand time. Auckland airport was incredibly efficient at getting us through passport control and customs {*since we'd gotten our tourists' Visa via NZeTA*} - a long walk but still very little waiting in line. The m/c rental place had arranged our shuttle to the President Hotel, we simply had to find the group of picker-uppers behind a barrier, except they weren't *that* obvious for us as we entered the terminal from customs. He waited patiently while Phil bought a SIM card and a 30-day data plan for his old iPhone for use in NZ. It came in handy more than once calling our hotels. This was great customer service provided by Nan Miao at [Te Waipounamu Motorcycle Tours](#)! We decided to share a light supper of baked brie on small toasted bread slices at the nearby [Queen's Ferry English Pub](#) {*after our hearty Business Class cuisine*} to complete our first evening in Auckland.



Tuesday 31 Dec 2024, Auckland

After a good night's sleep we set out to explore Auckland. Many shops didn't open until 9:00 so it took us a while to find some breakfast in an upscale hotel [Not McDonalds]. We later visited an underground grocery store (for *instant coffee, to-go sandwiches & some snacks for our picnic*), and a Starbucks for a New steel coffee mug.



Down by the harbor we found a scenic & quiet spot for lunch. Afterwards, while wandering across the entire harbor front, we saw a splendid pedestrian draw bridge [Left] in action and got a great view of the Auckland national highway Harbor Bridge which we'd shortly cross over to begin our BMW journey.

Even though there was partying in the street in front of our hotel, we didn't pay any attention to it. We just wished each other a Happy New Year and had another good night's sleep.

Wednesday 1 Jan 2025, Auckland

We were surprised that so many restaurants were closed for the holiday. Some that were open charged an extra 15% "holiday surcharge." We opted for a take-out Kebab place (good lamb with hummus and lots of vegetables). We sat out front in the shade and watched the people go by at the harbor plaza. There was an enormous Holland America cruise ship in port that morning, so there was an endless supply of wandering tourists. Later, back at the [President Hotel](#), we watched Alabama lose to Michigan in the ReliaQuest Bowl on their comprehensive ESPN cable selection.

In the afternoon we stumbled across [Miss Lucy's](#) bar and grill on a long walk away from the harbor. We met the bartender from Oklahoma, in Auckland for a year of work/study. Karen ordered a [Kiwi Burger](#) with beet, pineapple, and egg. She thought it would be like the delicious [Everything Burger](#) she had in Australia many years ago. *It was so disappointing!* The restaurant was out of eggs; the thin meat patty was way overcooked; there were two small chunks of pineapple and three miniscule pieces of beet. Some meals are better than others. The evening was spent packing for our trip to the m/c rental outlet in the morning.

Thursday 2 Jan, Auckland

Arizona State played Texas in the Peach Bowl at 7AM NZ time, so we were able to watch the first half while finishing our packing. Our shuttle to the m/c shop was due at 10, so we headed to the lobby a little before that to check out. The front desk informed us that we weren't scheduled to check out until the next day. Philip called the m/c place to confirm – Yes, we had one more day in Auckland. Oops. Fortunately, that meant we got to see the end of the ASU-Texas game. It was truly exciting, but ASU lost in the 2nd overtime.

Again, we had trouble finding food. Many restaurants were closed from 21 Dec through 5 Jan for a long holiday. This is a rather long break by US standards. Several of the ones that were open were still charging a "holiday" surcharge. We found lunch at [The Shakespeare](#), [Right] billed as **NZ's oldest brew pub** (1898). At the start, we were actually seated outside on the balcony, before the rains came. It showered off and on as we wandered around town before heading back to the hotel to watch darts and cricket - sports we don't get to see at home.



After dinner downtown, we revisited a city square which we had seen before, and then up a long, steep hill [which we had not yet visited - [Below](#)] to the most beautiful part of the city with statues and lovely flower gardens in bloom. It seemed to be part of the campus of [University of Auckland](#). This was a precious gem that we just happened upon! Fortunately, we were already packed for our Friday m/c pick-up and departure.



Friday 3 Jan, Auckland to [Paihia](#)

At the motorcycle shop we signed the usual rental paperwork; then K tried out her F750GS. It was way too tall. The rental guys switched to a lower seat, but it was still tall. Fortunately, the shop had an older F700GS available which proved much more suitable! We were delayed a bit while they replaced both tires and checked the bike to ensure it was road-worthy.

We also were renting m/c jackets and pants (to save luggage space in our many transits through airports). They found items for P that were a bit large, but acceptable. The items they had for Karen were **way too large**. Her hands didn't reach beyond the jacket sleeves (*mens' small*) and the knee pads were at her shins (size 50). Since they didn't have anything smaller, their solution was to drive to a nearby m/c shop and buy a brand-new jacket and pants. The new items fit well enough and were certainly better for Karen than what they'd originally offered! To document the start of this adventure, P set up his camera and tripod in the driveway. While he was

in the garage and not watching, the wind blew the tripod over and broke the camera lens function. Drat, another expensive lesson learned...

After we were fully outfitted and got going around noon, we quickly discovered that their GPS unit with pre-loaded routes & waypoints had lost power. We headed back to the rental shop and caught Aidan just as he was leaving in his car. His solution was to lead us to the motorway and hope the GPS would recharge on the highway to guide us the rest of the way (about 3.5 hours). That didn't work out; Phil was ready with Plan-B! We ended up stopping at a large highway rest stop, and installing our new GPS unit that he had loaded with all 18 hotels on our



itinerary. We encountered only one bad traffic tie-up in Wellsford, but the day was very windy and rather chilly! Following other cars made it easier to get used to driving on the left side of the road and going clockwise around traffic circles.

Due to our late start, we didn't bother to stop for lunch. When we arrived in [Paihia](#), we needed a snack. We were surprised that restaurants were still closed due to the "holiday", however, the [Blue Door](#) on the waterfront was open and gladly served us beer, wine and crispy cauliflower bites, along with a little bit of sunshine and sea breezes as we sat on the veranda beside the sidewalk.

Our hotel offered a simple dinner buffet which featured [pavlova](#) for dessert, which Phil had never had before.

Saturday 4 Jan, Paihia

This was billed as a "rest day" which simply means you don't *have* to travel anywhere if you don't want to. However, P wanted to ride to the western side of the island for lunch, so he created a round trip of about 4 hours, plus stops. It was pretty chilly in the AM so we delayed leaving the hotel. When we eventually left, it was still a strong chilly wind and then it started to rain for a good spell. We often had to endure passing showers, after all it's a small island in a big ocean.

Traveling west on some country roads (Rte 11 & 1), it was very windy and not summer-like with periods of rain. We kept reminding ourselves that it was the height of summer in NZ. Part of this route was incredibly twisty through the mountains, the kind of road P relishes. He had a fabulous time.

The west coast of NZ borders the Tasman Sea. Here, it was dry but still windy. We stopped for pictures at the beach and then lunch at the [North Drift Eatery](#) [Right]. The burger was tasty, and the catsup had an interesting hint of cloves. The return trip took us north on Hwys 10 & 11 along the coast. Most of the ride was very rural – grass-covered hills with sheep or cows grazing along with some vineyards and tall hops vines.

Sunday 5 Jan, Paihia to Warkworth

Another challenging weather day. We had periods of rain, and the winds picked up mightily as we crossed to the west side of the island following Rte 12 the long way to our next hotel.

Heading south we traversed the [Waipoua Forest](#) which preserves the mightiest of the remaining [Kauri trees](#) (National Tree of NZ and as large as Sequoia Trees). We didn't stop to hike and see the trees up close, but it was quite the riding experience. We enjoyed this special route through the jungle, although the road was too curvy to focus very much of the scenery until....

We got stuck behind a very slow tour bus for several km. There was a long line of cars stacked up behind the bus on this massively curvy road with no opportunities to pass. We, just two slender motorcyclists, finally managed to get around the bus and sped off at our usual pace [note that most Kiwi's follow the speed limits].



We stopped in Dargaville for gas and lunch. Since it was Sunday, we again had few options for open restaurants, but found a welcoming [Supahn Thai Restaurant](#).

Our destination for the night was the old [Warkworth Lodge](#). It was a small room but with a patio and large common area to compensate. It even had an old-fashioned pull rope to flush the toilet. We walked into town for dinner at the [Warkworth Hotel](#), where we finally had some quality sun, sitting on the patio for happy hour.

Monday 6 Jan, Warkworth to Coromandel Town

While in town for brekkie, P bought a small replacement Sony camera. It came with a charging cable but not a cable to connect it to the computer. Thus started a multi-day search for the proper data cable.

With nary a cloud in the sky, we were hoping for a warmer day. We loaded up and headed south on Rte 1 motorway through Auckland. This was a hectic ride, as reportedly 1/3 of the entire population of NZ lives in Auckland, and more people live in Auckland than on the entire South Island! Traffic was calmer after we got past the city. However, by then the clouds were thick and it was chilly. Eventually we turned east on Rte 2 toward the coast then north on Rte 25, heading for the [Coromandel Peninsula](#), where many rich Aucklanders have summer homes. The road [*Below*] was narrow, twisty and hugged the shoreline most of the way up the peninsula. Half way up the coast we stopped at the [Royal Oak Hotel Pub](#) for a large plate of fish & chips and loaded potato wedges. No one left hungry. From there a relatively short ride north and inland across the mountains brought us to Coromandel Town and the [Anchor Lodge](#). It was mostly sunny when we arrived. We walked about 1km back into town to window shop and of course try a brewpub. We bought a chicken Caesar salad and snacks at a grocers and shared it for dinner back at the room. Phil wandered across a nearby field to investigate a potentially colorful sunset [*Below*].



Tuesday 7 Jan (State Routes 2, 25, 39 and 4), Coromandel Town to Rotorua City

Although warmer and sunnier, it was still cool in the mountains. We traversed several valleys and narrow gorges. We stopped in the former gold mining town of [Waihi](#) at the [Sterling Tavern](#) for a tasty lunch. Here, we learned about “getting a house for a thumb” (for mining “accidents”) and the local museum display of preserved thumbs.



A relatively short day, we arrived in [Rotorua](#) (a hot springs area) in mid-afternoon. After settling into the room, we decided to stretch our legs a little. We ended up walking much farther than we had planned! P was anxious to get a cable for his new camera. He found an electronics store on Apple Maps but the building was deserted. Farther along there was a sign for JB Hi-Fi. Little did we know that the actual store was at the far end of a large

mall area. They didn't have the right cable but suggested another store. No luck there either. The sales clerk suggested yet another store but it was 5 miles farther away, too far to walk. By then we needed to sit for a spell. The [Cobb & Co](#) Bar & Restaurant had cold beer on tap and was comfortably air conditioned. Halfway back to our hotel, we ate a scrumptious dinner at the [Urbano Cafe](#) - Scotch Beef Filet and an Urbano Salad. We arrived back at the hotel much later than intended but nicely satisfied and tired in a good way from walking.

Wednesday 8 Jan, Rotorua City to Napier

Our first stop of the day was the electronics store mentioned yesterday. Jaycar didn't have the camera cable either. Reportedly, it is a proprietary Sony connector. Fortunately, it didn't cost much time or distance to try once more. We got off Rte 5 and went on a less traveled road through Broadlands, with lunch at [Tui's Nest Cafe](#) in [Taupo](#). P's burger was enormous, but he ate all of it *[Right]*. Phil thought his front tire was low on air, so we found a gas station, pumped all the tires to spec, and checked the oil levels. Along Rte 5 toward Napier, the weather was cool and threatening rain. We made it all the way to [Napier](#) with only one construction stoppage. But in town, we could not find our hotel. K pulled to the side of the road while P rode around the block to look for a sign. It turns out we were in front of the [Art Deco Hotel](#), but the sign had a different name than we were expecting. We got our bikes unloaded just before the rain came. But after some time upstairs, we decided to have a look along the oceanfront. The touristy boardwalk was basically deserted



because of the weather. This [Hawke's Bay region](#) is now famous for producing full-bodied red wines. We had passed several wineries on the road but didn't take the time to stop, which was sensible due to the inclement weather. The shoreline was actually well-worn rocks *[Left]*!

Thursday 9 Jan (Rte 2, 3, 57, then unfortunately #1), Napier to Wellington

We had a chilly and breezy ride along Rte 2, then Rte 3 toward Palmerston North for lunch at [Hope Cafe](#). The straightest way was south on Rte 57. A road sign said "57 to Levin: OPEN". Not more than 1/2 mile later, the road was barricaded with signs "Road closed; Detour". We rode far out of our way to get to Hwy 1 before we could travel south again. There were multiple slow construction areas and a tremendous amount of traffic on the busy 2-lane roadway. When we approached [Wellington](#), the road grew into a 4-lane highway with the Max speed of 110 Kph. It was slow going through the center of Wellington, but we managed to find the Double

Tree's entrance without too much difficulty. Parking was a different matter altogether. (We paid 20 NZD to park in a nearby garage that required many turns at traffic lights on the busy one-way streets in the area.) A very fine dinner was had at [Bin 44](#) on the waterfront. P had scrumptious red snapper and K had a delicious burger. We bought some snacks on our way back to the hotel to be prepared for Friday's ferry ride.

Friday 10 Jan Ferry day, Wellington to Picton then onto Nelson City

Showtime was 0745 at the ferry terminal. We checked the map and planned our route, however, we still left plenty of cushion and made two trips to the bikes with our bags. At 0700 we navigated 6 floors of the parking garage and emerged to a bright and sunny morning. Our research served us well as we got to the ferry terminal without incident - about 5 miles of quiet city streets. After spending 20 minutes in the stacked queue for the [Interislander Ferry](#) [[Below](#)], loading proceeded in several stages. Our modest group of twelve bikers were told to go down this road along the water and wait; then move over there near the bow and wait some more. Once directed, we rode up the steel ramp and through a slippery hold and parked perpendicular to the



starboard side. We all got to strap our individual bikes down which took a little effort, but then we headed up to the lounge for a 3.5 hour "cruise" to Picton. The m/c rental shop had arranged for our entry into the Premium Lounge where we enjoyed free finger food and beverages in comfortable seats.

Our bikes needed gas by the time we reached Nelson City. The GPS directed us to an unmanned station where our credit card was declined.

Leaving there we drove around in circles until we

found another unmanned station where we didn't even stop. Again we drove around until we found a Z-petrol station. That one finally worked, as we had used them before! From there it wasn't far to the [Rutherford Hotel](#) but the GPS had us zig-zagging through a shopping plaza parking lot. It was truly ridiculous; gotta love Garmin!

When we did make it to the hotel, we were told we could park the bikes in the underground garage out of the expected rain. The huge storage area had no cars because it was all the storage for work being done to renovate the hotel. Between rain showers, we wandered through town and stopped for a beer where we met a bartender from South Carolina and Neil from *Birmingham, AL*. Neil was also on a m/c holiday similar to ours except he was going north on a rented Harley. We exchanged contact info and invited him to join a future BMW club ride. We might see him back in AL. The rains came in earnest as we were heading back to the hotel. The hotel restaurant served us a fabulous dinner of lamb shank for two [[Right](#)]. Realistically, it could have fed at least four. We saved the leftovers for Saturday's dinner in our room watching Australian Open tennis on TV.



Saturday 11 Jan, rest day in Nelson City

Phil wanted to visit some wineries in the area, and we had free time. We rode two-up out into the countryside. We headed to [Blackenbrook Winery](#) that we both had liked. Turns out they were closed for tastings. We then stopped in [Motueka](#) for a small Indian lunch (after the initial BBQ place was too crowded). The GPS showed the Dunbar Estate Cellars nearby. We went there but they had changed names and only had white wines. The owner greeted us and tried to get us to stay for lunch; we declined her offer. She did, however, give us names and directions for three other wineries nearby. We visited two of them; [Neudorf](#) [Right] and [Gravity](#). Being Saturday afternoon they were busy. We managed to get a quick taste and bought 3 bottles in all. It rained off and on while we rode back. Once we returned to the room, the skies opened up and it poured as we looked out the 6th floor. We were happily dry as we sat in the room eating cold lamb slices (*no microwave available*).



Sunday 12 Jan, Nelson to Greymouth

Not many businesses were open on Sunday AM but we saw a sign for a flea market, which had the nearby [Yaza Cafe](#) doing a brisk business. We shared a bacon pinwheel and coffee before suiting up for the ride. There was quite a bit of slow traffic on the 2-lane roads through the hills. However, the weather was just about perfect. Leaving Nelson we saw a sign “Merge like a zip”. Although it is a common concept, we found the phrase to be unconventional. A bit farther south we saw an advertisement for [Peanut Butter World](#). This struck us as odd. (more later). We stopped for gas and lunch in [Murchison](#) {the “white-water capital of NZ”}, named for an Australian geologist.

[The Breakers Boutique B & B](#) [Right & below], north of [Greymouth](#), was the most scenic accommodation of the trip. Hosts, Stephen and Jan, were quite personable with Stephen’s photographs adorning every wall in our room and in the common area. Situated on a bluff overlooking the Tasman Sea, the view was spectacular along with



the luscious vegetation on the property. We took a walk along their beach [next page] before a dinner of a rectangular, home cooked pizza brought to our suite by Jan, as the B&B is quite isolated and 10 K north of town. We had a great





view of the sunset at 2115, *although the colors were not as spectacular as the sunset at Coromandel Town.*

Monday 13 Jan, Greymouth to Hanmer Springs

Jan served us a lovely breakfast, which we lingered over, learning some of the history and interesting sites in the area. Other guests at the B & B included a lady from Germany, one from Switzerland, and a couple from Maine. We mentioned the sign for Peanut Butter World and

were told the story. Years ago Mr. Picton from Nelson made some peanut butter. His son and friends liked it so much they encouraged him to start selling it to the local shops. It became so popular that it spread across the nation and then beyond. What started in his garage, reportedly in a cement mixer, has become an international product. If you are ever in Nelson, NZ, you can visit Peanut Butter World and appreciate the story of [Pic's Peanut Butter](#).



Jan gave us written directions to a few scenic places along today's route. The stop at the [Brunner Mine site](#) in [Taylorville](#), the location of the worst industrial accident in NZ history, was worthwhile although we didn't take the optional walk across the river to see the site up close. Near [Springs Junction](#) we attempted to go to [The Sluice Box](#), part of the Maruia River which is supposed to be a gorgeous view, but we would have had to ride on gravel to the far end of the picnic area and then walk for 10 minutes (in our m/c boots). We stopped at the first picnic table and had a "family conference". No thanks. Our route took us over [Lewis Pass](#) (907m). Jan said we could stop somewhere

near the top and take pictures. The top of the pass was unremarkable; there was no safe place to pull off and much of the view was obstructed by trees. *Needless to say*, we didn't stop at Lewis Pass. Even with stops at two construction areas, we made it to scenic [Hanmer Springs](#) and our [big Hotel](#) by midafternoon. This presented the opportunity to Team-Ager to go walkies around the smallish resort before most shops closed @5 to buy two NZ souvenirs (a discount T-shirt [P] and a wool/possum hair sweater for Karen) *and a draft beer at [O'Flynn's Irish Pub](#) [above_Left].*

Tuesday 14 Jan, Hanmer Springs to Oxford

Today's ride was full of curvy roads! We went east and then north along the rural & very twisty Hwy-70, eventually to the town of [Kaikoura](#) for lunch at a truly funky sandwich shop on the north end of town, [Slam Club](#) - had tasty and filling panini sandwiches [Right]! Then we retraced some of the coastal



highway heading south along the rugged and crooked seaside 2-lane Rt-1. Eventually we traveled 94 miles south on Rt-1 and turned west onto Hwy-72 toward [Oxford](#). Our room for the night was a full apartment, complete with two recliners, a jacuzzi tub and a private courtyard patio out back [but no Australian Open on TV]. We eventually wandered across the road to the [Black Beech Wine Bar](#) for an “Indian Butter Chicken” pizza {actually *more spices & less butter as best as we could taste*}. Although it wasn’t what we’d anticipated, it was still tasty & filling for our Oxford supper. Later that evening, K had a relaxing soak in the jacuzzi tub for her own private stress reduction bath. 😊

Wed 15 Jan, Oxford to Franz Josef Glacier

It rained off and on all day. The road alternated between mountain twisties [*Right*] and gentle curves following a river. There were also several construction delays [*Below*], making it a longer day than usual. We were both tired and P was desperately low on gas by the time we arrived in [Franz Josef Glacier Township](#). We ate a delicious dinner at our hotel restaurant (P: ribeye, K: duck). We got our



picture taken by another tourist in front of the replica [Moa statues](#) [*Below*] after coming back from Happy Hour up the street. After supper we walked across street to watch a sunset beyond the helicopter landing strip. There were various providers of sightseeing helicopter tours because the actual F.J. glacier has now retreated many miles back up the valley.

Thurs 16 Jan, Franz Josef Glacier to Queenstown

The clouds were not as low as yesterday, so we were treated to a beautiful view of the glacial

mountains surrounding town. The morning was cool, but finally with some sun. The [Haast Pass](#) was going to be closed for road construction starting at 12:30. It would be a 3-hour drive, not counting slow traffic or other road work delays. We left extra early to build in some cushion.

Fortunately, we did not encounter many delays (but all *across the south island, we encountered many one-lane bridges*, but “most” were devoid of opposing traffic) [*next pg*], and we made it over the pass in just under 3 hours. Only then did we stop for gas.

While we were at lunch, a local couple on an F850GS engaged us in conversation. They suggested taking the scenic route (Crown Range Road) to Queenstown rather than staying on





the main road (SH 6). P jumped at that suggestion. The distance was shorter, but it probably took longer but it beat sitting in a stalled construction zone. We had to get through [Wānaka](#), a very busy tourist area, with pedestrians crossing the street every which way, causing us to stop often. We made it slowly through that town, but overall there was too much traffic for that route maybe due to a busy crossroads. We were constantly getting stuck behind slow moving

vehicles like summer camper vans. Just when we passed one car, we'd catch up to another sets of pokes. Then the twisty 2-lane roads meant there were limited opportunities to pass. We just had to relax and make the best of it. Toward the end of the ride, we slowly traversed the quaint town of Arrowhead in the hills above Queenstown. By this time the temperature had risen above 80 °F – the warmest day yet. Having come down from relatively cool of the hills, we were way overdressed in our black riding suits on the city streets.

Slow as it was, we did make it up a steep hill to our hotel. That wasn't the end of the day's travels. Apparently, two hotels share the same reception area [[Below](#)]. We were booked into the [Scenic Hotel](#) which was two

buildings over from the lobby and it had an underground parking garage. But we didn't know this at the time. P set out to move both bikes; K intended to meet P in the garage to help unload whilst P rode each m/c. First off, the elevator in the lobby didn't go *down* to the parking deck, only *up* to the rooms. And suddenly there was a horde of people at the front desk, so K couldn't ask about the elevator. She found a maid and asked her. It turns out you need to walk *up* one flight of stairs and across a sky bridge to the right building, then *down* to the garage. Way big lack of visitor information and *biggly geographic confusion!*

The second problem was that you needed your room *key-card* to make the elevator work; we only had one key, which P had so he could get the bikes into the underground garage. After wandering a fair bit, K managed to find a stairwell that led down and didn't need a key. *That was progress!*

We unloaded all of our stuff (it always seemed like so much stuff) onto a luggage cart. We maneuvered the cart into the elevator (*a tight fit*) and used our room key to start the elevator (*as directed*). But it didn't work! No matter how many times we made the little green light go On, the elevator refused to take us to the third floor! We thought perhaps we could go one floor at a time. Amazingly, it worked when we pressed the button for the Ground Floor. We were ecstatic! And then we tried the third floor again. No dice! While we were playing these elevator games, two young hotel employees came by and asked if they could help. We explained our problem. Using their master key, they took us and our



luggage to the third floor. We thought we had succeeded but the hotel had one more trick to play on us. When we tried to find our room, it didn't exist. The employees then realized our mistake - we were in the wrong hotel and should have been in the next one over. The lads said "no problem" and proceeded to wheel the luggage cart over to the next building. Wide luggage cart; narrow doorway... It wouldn't fit through the door! The lads ended up taking our luggage back to the first building, back down the elevator we had travelled up on, through the basement to a *different* elevator (in the proper building), and then up to the third floor. *Never have we had so much trouble getting our belongings into a hotel room [on that angled 3rd floor facing a busy intersection and the beautiful lake way down the hill].*



We wandered our way down to the waterfront and had a pleasant seafood dinner beside the harbor. It was quite a steep uphill hike to return to the hotel (*but at least we knew which building to go to*).

The hotel had weird 2-room pods because they were on a 45°

angle to the street [*Above*]. From the hallway, the first door accessed a vestibule with 2 doors - our room *and the neighbor's*. The hallway door had a doorbell for each room.

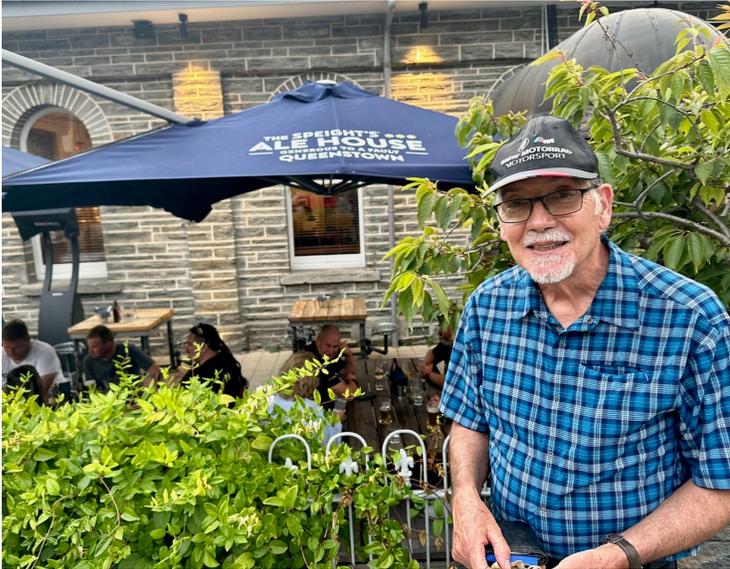
Friday 17 Jan, Queenstown

This was our first true Rest Day in that we didn't ride anywhere. We explored Queenstown all day; *three times in fact*. In the morning, we hiked over the hill where the hotel was situated, and we shared an omelet at the [Captains Table](#) on Ballarat St. We then wandered around the seafront where the tour boats and jet skis are made available [*Right*]. The bald spot on the mountainside may be a scar leftover from the big earthquake in Sept 2007. That scar is also where the [Sky Line gondolas](#) run for the tourists and many hang gliders (*as Karen had a go in Slovenia in '11*)!

The tiny red speck in the *upper right* of picture is one of many hang gliders we saw that day. We then enjoyed a long stroll through the Botanic Gardens (the green peninsula that juts



SW out into Lake Wakatipu in *photo Right*). For our lunchtime stroll we wandered around the central shopping district where K finally found a comfortable pair of walking shoes (her long-time favorites were literally falling apart). For our dinner sojourn we returned to the edge of town and ate a good dinner at at [Speight's Ale House](#) (*Below*).



18 Jan, Queenstown to Te Anau (on the west coast)
As we were loading the bikes we met two chaps from Britain on rented GS's and an Austrian couple (Stefan and Michaela) in New Zealand for 3 months riding their own big BMWs. All of us were heading a relatively short distance to Te Anau with plans for a Nature Cruise the next day. The weather started out fine, but dark clouds moved in as we got closer to our destination. It started raining as we were unloading the bikes.

The [Te Anau Lodge](#) is a converted convent. There were photos of the nuns and their activities throughout the lodge. All of the rooms had churchy names - we were in the Vestry. The middle of the old confessional booth had been turned into a small luggage lift (*Right*). We were allowed to use it for our big bags, but we had to climb the stairs.

The cinema in town was showing a short scenic documentary about [Fiordland National Park](#), "[Ata Whenua-Shadowland](#)", which is larger than Yellowstone and Yosemite parks combined. We walked (15 mins) into town in light rain to attend the 5 pm show and then had dinner next door at the [Black Dog Bar](#). *The cinema and bar were built specifically by the film's producer/ helicopter pilot to show his aerial perspective while allowing moviegoers to enjoy an adult beverage at the same time.*



We ran into Stefan and Michaela several times during the day and shared some wine & chit-chat before our dinner arrived.

19 Jan, Te Anau & a wonderful two hour Nature Cruise

The M/C rental place had booked us on the morning [Nature Cruise in Milford Sound](#). We were advised to allow 2.5 hours to reach the Sound and had a 10AM *check-in time*. Fortunately for us, we could go faster than the campers and buses, *once we safely got around them*. Adding to the potential for delay, there is the long, one-lane [Homer Tunnel](#) controlled by a stop light [*Right*]. We managed to hit it on a green cycle, so we proceeded happily! The scenery along the route was spectacular [*Below - P sitting on his BMW pointed downhill balancing with one foot on the brake on loose gravel while K kept going up the road*]. Some sheer mountain faces shot up to the sky, along with many tight corners. The twisty road required a lot of concentration, but we were able to sneak a few peeks!



two permanent glacier-fed waterfalls in the park ([Bowen](#) and Stirling). One special mountain rose a mile out of the water to its peak, making it one of the highest seaside peaks in the world. Interestingly, Milford Sound isn't a sound at all, but [a fiord](#) - carved out by a glacier *and not by a river*. The morning was quite chilly, however, it turned into a beautiful day. We were so blessed that the substantial rains came through the day before.

We spent a lovely afternoon exploring the grounds of our lodge and partaking of their complimentary coffee, tea, beer, wine and snacks. On our way back into town we asked a

We managed to arrive at Milford Sound in plenty of time to take off our m/c gear and change out of our boots before boarding the catamaran. But we did have to procure a parking ticket from the machine for a TBD amount of time. The cruise was well worth the effort to go exploring [*Below, leaving the harbor*]. The area is called [Ata Whenua](#) {*You-Tube video*} by the [Māori](#) (translates to [Shadowland](#)) because the mountains are so steep and close together that the fiords are seemingly almost always in the shadows.

The [Southern Discoveries](#) nature cruise transited Milford Sound all the way to the [Tasman Sea](#). We saw sunning seals and [bottlenose dolphins](#). We saw the



local about food nearby. She recommended we try the nearby [Te Anau Club](#). The food was good and the large clubhouse for neighborhood locals was nearly empty (*unlike the many restaurants in town*). It was pleasantly quiet for conversation when Stefan and Michaela finally arrived for a drink (*Phil was texting with them using the NZ-registered iPhone*).

Monday 20 Jan, Te Anau to Invercargill

We had a pleasant and relatively short ride to Invercargill along scenic country backroads. For lunch, the GPS directed us to [Nichol's Garden Center Café](#), but we were surprised when we arrived at an actual *nursery*. Fortunately, they did have an attached café which had very nice selection of lunch offerings, where we ate our selections on the back-porch patio with other guests.

Our short ride today allowed us time to visit the [Classic Motorcycle Mecca Museum](#) [*Right + Below*], just a block from our hotel [*Well Done, NAN!*]. We spent a couple of hours viewing a great variety of vehicles on three levels until they closed their doors. We could easily have spent more time there. We even ran into Stefan & Michaela briefly at the museum but they were staying in a B&B in the town of Bluff and had to move on.



T 21 Jan, Invercargill to Dunedin
The southernmost drivable point in NZ is [Stirling Point](#) in the town of [Bluff](#), about 30 minutes south of Invercargill. Of course, we just had to visit the “end of the road” and take some pictures, even if it

was just a bit out of our way. We found a very artistic Anchor chain holding New Zealand steadfast [*Below*].

Our accommodations for the night were listed as the [Larnach Castle B&B](#). Phil just assumed it was a B&B near the Castle, but it ended up being on the Castle property, high on a long, hilly peninsula east of Dunedin. We arrived in the late afternoon and were told that a self-guided tour of the castle was included with the room, but the last admission was 5 pm. We needed to hurry. The castle was built in the 1870's by [William Larnach](#) for his family with about 25 acres of surrounding property. The views were



amazing, especially from the tower, [*Right*] and the gardens were full of various plants, mostly in bloom in January (*summer*). The Castle has had a storied history and fell into serious disrepair. In 1967 the Barker family bought the Castle and are still in the process of restoring it (some rooms were off-limits due to repairs) [*Below*].

Being isolated in the country, the best dinner option was the special 4-course meal served



in the castle's dining room. There were 20 of us seated around a long table. It was a lovely and quite tasty affair, but didn't start until 7:45pm and ended after 10. Our neighbors for dinner were Andy (who looked just like [Jeremy Clarkson](#), the British car show guy) and Debb Blake (from England), Scott and Sharon (from Australia) and a Kawasaki rider and his pillion (from Switzerland). At the end of the meal, we were offered a short, guided tour of the main floor. It was informative regarding the storied history and various

owners of the castle, but didn't end until 11pm, which made for a very busy and tiring day.

Wed 22 Jan, Dunedin to Aoraki/Mt Cook Village

We awoke to dense fog on the peninsula. Fortunately, it burned off quickly while we were packing-up. We rode along the east coast for a while before turning NW. Inland was quite dry and reminded us of parts of southern California. We stopped for lunch at [the Flying Pig](#) in [Duntroon](#). The building used to be a barber shop and community hang out. It's still a popular restaurant along a busy X-country roadway!

Farther along was the town of [Twizel](#). Just past there we came across the [lavender field](#) that Sharon told us about at dinner the night before [*Right*].

Of course, we *had* to stop for pictures and a cup of *lavender flavored vanilla ice cream*. It was a pleasant respite from riding on a warm day. Down the road the scenery changed to Windex-blue glacial-fed lakes and high mountains [*Top, next pg*]. That was exactly where we were headed: the [Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park](#). We had some difficulty finding our motel but happened upon





another unmanned gas station instead. The auto pay machine again declined all of our credit cards, when just then a helpful Asst manager (from the village's big hotel) asked if **we** had called for help. "No, but we could use your help!" He paid for our gas with his company card and then had us follow him to his hotel to settle up (with an extra \$10 service fee).

Meanwhile we asked where our real motel was. He confirmed that we were in the wrong place but offered to lead us there after our transaction. That made the \$10 fee almost worth it, as it was a rather confusing maze of streets & lodges.

The scenery in this area is stunningly beautiful with snow-capped mountains, glacial lakes and rivers. We admired it all as we walked around the village before dinner [Right].

Th 23 Jan, Mt Cook Village to Lake Tekapo

Our itinerary was planned with today's ride being only about an hour so we had time to hike in the nearby, beautiful [Hooker Valley](#). Unfortunately, with the logistics of riding to the valley, hiking is a less-than-optimal activity in motorcycle gear. We opted to just get on the road. By the time we stopped for more scenic photos, got gas and had a *delicious lunch* at the [Dark Sky Restaurant](#) overlooking the lakeshore [Top of next pg], we were ready to get some actual exercise.



As it was 2pm when we got to the nearby [Grand Suites hotel](#), we were happy that they checked us into our room early. This allowed plenty of time to explore the rocky shore of [Lake Tekapo](#) (in regular shoes and without having to carry M/C gear) [*Phil's modest Carin - Next pg*]. Later, we had a wonderful salmon dinner at the [Blue Lake Restaurant](#); perhaps the best meal of our NZ trip!

Friday 24 Jan, Lake Tekapo to Christchurch

It was Quite Chilly as we suited up for our last ride in NZ over to [Christchurch](#) up on the east coast of the South Island. The cool temps, with periodic rain showers forced us to stop at a tiny cafe at a crossroads just to warm our hands with some hot coffee & a snack (+ a potty break!). After stopping to take pictures by the [Rakaia Gorge](#) and a late lunch in Christchurch, we finally arrived at the "finish line" around 3:30, *having ridden over*



3,000 miles all around New Zealand! Turning in the rental bikes was less time consuming than getting them had been, so we were able to get to the [Rydges Hotel](#) on Latimer Square with extra time to go exploring. We ended up at the [Cathedral Square](#) [Below] where we saw



the slow progress of repairs to the protestant cathedral which was severely damaged in the 2011 earthquakes (*Feb-June*). Work commenced in May 2020 and is now due for completion in 2027. There was an unbelievable amount of construction all over the city; much of it because of the extensive '11 earthquakes.



Saturday, 25 Jan, Christchurch

We were awakened early by the front desk calling to tell us that our taxi was out front waiting for us. Except we didn't need a taxi as we weren't leaving *until Sunday morning*. It was a mix-up from Nan's original itinerary; P had extended us by one extra sightseeing day. After a delicious brekkie at a nearby coffee shop, we set out walking all around the city. It's a busy city with old fashion trolleys and buses crisscrossing the many boulevards. Along the way we discovered the 2025 [World Buskers Festival](#) had begun in Christchurch on Friday near the Avon River. We happened upon [MulletMan & MiM](#) doing their acrobatics and juggling comedy show [*Top of next pg*]. It was great fun and completely

unexpected. Mrs MiM is about to shoot a 3rd juggling pin, *with her feet*, over to her hubby; it all went well - then they passed the hat(s) in two directions... Leaving there we hiked on a scenic stroll along the Avon River that forms a big horseshoe until we reached the very large Botanical Gardens. The grounds were beautiful with so many different types of plants and varied colors! As we wandered back toward the hotel, we had lunch at a large food court. We even ended up at the same place (different food choices) for dinner after our first couple of choices were too crowded on a busy Saturday night. One place we tried was a crowded **brew pub** in [The Old](#)



[Church](#) [*Below*]. It was a great space, with the pipe organ, choir loft, stained glass, etc. all still in place. It is apparently very popular with the locals! (*We walked over 14,000 steps on Sat.*)



26 Jan Travel day. Christchurch to Auckland, onto Melbourne and onto Adelaide, South Australia

We were up early for a shuttle to the airport, and our farewell to New Zealand. The shuttle driver was a salmon fisherman originally from *Romania*. He had been told that we needed a ride yesterday... He was also informed that we had *3 suitcases and 2 bags each*, so he needed to bring a trailer for our luggage. Not so. We only had 2 duffel bags and 2 day-packs combined. Not sure how these errors originated.

We were quite impressed by the efficiency of the Christchurch airport. No lines, no waiting through check-in and security. We had plenty of time before an uneventful flight to Auckland. However, then it was a *very long walk* to get to the International Terminal {now undergoing renovations}. Fortunately we were fairly mobile pushing our luggage on a trolley. We had time for a snack in the Air New Zealand lounge before boarding our flight to Melbourne. This flight was also delayed making for a close connection, but we were lucky that there wasn't a line at baggage claim. We managed to get our bags and clear customs in short order. The problem came when we didn't know which terminal we were leaving from. We headed toward T4 Domestic Departures — except that Qantas flies out of T1 - off in another direction. We managed to make it, but it was a rush.

It was a short and pleasant flight into Adelaide. We stopped to buy some local wine and whiskey in an airport shop. While P was paying, he sent K off to collect our checked bags - no problems... They were already on the carousel, so it was easy going to grab them and put them onto a free luggage cart. And then.... Two police officers approached K, stating that the drug dog had alerted **3 times** on one of our bags and they needed to investigate further. They led K to a corner of the baggage claim area. By this time P had returned. The police woman (politely) required us to take *everything* out of our large and carefully packed army duffel bag, one item at a time, spread all over the airport floor (near the front exit) - m/c helmets and gloves, shoes, dirty clothes, everything. And they didn't find anything even remotely suspicious. So they left us to stuff it all back in. ***So Frustrating!***

We finally found summer in the southern hemisphere. It was 95 degrees when we arrived in Adelaide. We eventually got our Budget rental car with right hand drive and headed north to [Auburn](#) on the M2 to switch to the Horrocks Hwy. It only took Phil 20 miles or so to stop turning on the windshield wipers whenever he wanted to use the turn signals in the right-side driver's seat, but it still took a couple of hours to reach our

quirky [Rising Sun Hotel](#) in Auburn [*Below*]. Our particular wing behind the old hotel/restaurant used to be a horse stable, making the room terribly small but adequate with the ensuite Loo 2-steps down. The WiFi outback on the other hand was less than useful, but we had some cable TV...



Monday 27 Jan, Auburn

[Australia Day](#) (actually Sunday; celebrated on Monday).

Today was a hot one, so we planned to travel in the air-conditioned car and investigate the wines in the [Clare Valley](#). Apparently, the first area settlers *walked* from Adelaide and stopped when they saw how beautiful this valley was. Our first stop was the Sevenhill Vineyard, the first winery in the valley, started in 1851 by Fr. Aloysius Kranewitter to produce sacramental wine. It has grown since then, but is still owned by the Jesuits and is the only not-for-profit winery in the region. The Cabernet roots tend to

suck up eucalyptus flavors from the surrounding trees, giving the wine a unique taste. All of the wines we tried were excellent but this area is especially known for their [Rieslings](#). [Sevenhill Cellars](#) [*Below - left*] with a distant shrine to [St Ignatius of Loyola](#) in the woods - K is shown [*Below - right*] giving her thanks for our Australian visit & a special wine tasting inside that small, rock out-building.



We lunched at the [Pikes Beer Co's](#) beer garden (*and winery*), where an outgoing chap at the next table bought us a bottle of Pikes' Riesling as



a gift for two visitors from the US. Later, on our driving excursion, we stopped on a dusty dirt road at the [Spring Gully Conservation Park](#) {found in the GPS} for some pictures [*Right*]. This is one of the only remaining "forested grasslands" left in South Australia.

Back at the hotel we learned that the hotel (including the bar and restaurant) was closed today. With no other options for food in Auburn on this holiday Monday, we drove to the larger and historic town of [Mintaro](#). We dined on kangaroo at the [Magpie and Stump hotel and restaurant](#). It was delicious.



Tuesday 28 Jan, Auburn

The town was more alive today after the holiday, including kids returning to school *after their summer break*. As it promised to be cooler, today's activity was riding the [Riesling Bike Trail](#) (a converted railroad bed, mostly flat, hard-packed dirt) [*Right, at the former Sevenhill RR stop*]. We rented the bikes at a campground near Clare township at the north end of the [Clare Valley](#) and started south. Almost immediately we took a wrong turn and ended up on the road but were able to get back on the trail at the next road



junction. The [Watervale General Store](#) had varied lunch options that suited us, but they didn't have a bathroom. This necessitated a stop at the nearby [Watervale Hotel](#) for a beer and necessary potty break after lunch. The afternoon was warm as we biked back to Clare, but we made it, probably 25 km in total. We stopped at [The Bentley's Hotel](#) for another beer, then headed back to Auburn. Our hotel neighbor was part of the [Wakefield Wines](#) family. We had a nice chat with him before he had to leave for a business meeting. We had a good salmon dinner in our hotel's restaurant. Afterward, we were so tired from our bike ride and with no internet, we sat on the bed (*the only place to sit*) and watched silly Aussie cooking shows.

Wednesday 29 Jan, Auburn to Adelaide

After enjoying a cool morning (56 deg) on our porch, we packed up and returned to Adelaide for a couple of days. We got into some heavy traffic in Adelaide which was such a contrast with our time in Auburn. We

detoured to the beach for some additional sightseeing and opted for lunch in [Glenelg](#) at the [Surf Life Saving Club](#). From the second-floor balcony [*Right*] we had a great view of the beach and water. We then wandered around



the charming seaside town until our parking meter was due to expire. On the way to the hotel, we stopped at a corner gas station to top-off our soon to be turned-in Toyota. Like many American gas stops, the place had a sandwich counter; the sign on the roof called it a [Foodary](#).

We were staying at the [Indigo Hotel](#) in downtown [Adelaide](#) [*Left, 7th floor*]. With one-way streets, construction blockages and city traffic, it was a nightmare getting to the hotel just to check-in. Fortunately in the car, P concentrated on driving and K on navigating. *It would have been doubly difficult on two BMWs*. Since we were there for two nights, they gave us a discounted parking pass in a garage four blocks away (a 12 minute walk back



through the Chinatown pedestrian passage ways). We'd pick up the car early on Friday morning for the six mile drive southwest to the airport.

We looked at the map and decided to find the [River Torrens](#) north of our hotel. We basically set out on foot using the GPS to wend our way uptown. Many of the streets didn't connect, so we went well out of the way to get there and to cross over some RR tracks. It was worth the effort, though, as Adelaide has put a lot of effort into beautification of their riverfront area *[Right, including the Big Cricket stadium]*.

There were many joggers, bicyclists and many racing shells out for some exercise! We had a difference of opinion about what direction to wend our way south to return to the hotel, but we made it after seeing yet more sights to include an impressive Veterans' War Memorial which included an underground vault with bunches of deceased veterans & their units on inscribed brass displays. After walking at least 2.5 miles, we ran into an exuberant Chinese



New Year's celebration including a dancing dragon and drummer at one of the many Chinatown restaurants. We ended the day with a tasty dinner back in the hotel's restaurant just inside the large lobby on pink leather seats *[Right]*.

Thursday 30 Jan, Adelaide

We went wandering, basically around in circles, but we did manage to see the ornate [St Francis Xavier's Cathedral](#). Beside the cathedral is a statue of [St Mary of the Cross MacKillop](#), who was *the first Australian Catholic saint*. Adelaide has a *fantastic* central market where you can buy all sorts of produce, meats, cheeses, pastries, etc. as well as ready-made meals. We stopped there for lunch along with hordes of other patrons. Later, we paid a visit to the [Mismatch Brewing Company](#) and even later we visited the *Silver Brewing Company* - *their dinner & their service was not what we had hoped for...*



Friday 31 Jan, Adelaide to Melbourne to Dallas to HSV

We'd chosen to fly business class for this very long trip. Perhaps it is worth the extra expense. We know that the seats are more comfortable and the food is very much better. And for the first time ever, we were offered a set of pajamas on the Qantas flight from Melbourne to Dallas. We had three flight legs, which meant lots of time in airports, however, we didn't spend much time in lines with the exception of Dallas, TX. That was by far the longest and slowest security check of the entire trip. With a 17-hour time difference, we managed to arrive home at 8:30 pm still on Friday. Yet another P&K M/C Adventure completed! Stay tuned for even bigger & better excursions!