

A L D E B A R A N' S
Sailing Circumnavigation
33rd Report

NEW ZEALAND (part 1)

**Prices quoted in this report are in New Zealand \$ unless otherwise stated.
The approx. rates of exchange; one NZ\$ = two Euros, two US\$ and three £stg..**

Since sailing into Tauranga, New Zealand on 17th November 2001 we have had a wonderful insight into life here. With the exception of the three months, December 2001 to March 2002, when we flew home to Dublin the rest of the time has been spent here in New Zealand. This report is the first of two covering our New Zealand experience.

Arriving back in New Zealand on 14th March gave us a few days to prepare for St. Patrick's Day. For the 3rd year in a row we were joined for the celebration by Malcolm & Helen Shaft our English friends. They drove down from Opuia in the Bay of Islands, where they had their yacht Muna a steel 33ft Ebbtide, to spend a few days with us. Malcolm's birthday is also on the 17th March. An Irish concert on the 16th started the two days of celebrations.

The purchase of a 1984 Mitsubishi Sigma automatic car for \$700 Kiwis at a local car auction got us our wheels. Buying at such auctions is a bit of a gamble, we were "kind" of lucky as we had to pay as much again to have it granted the necessary warrant of fitness (wof). Registration for the year cost \$217 and insurance \$165.

After recovering from the St Pats celebrations we began working on ALDEBARAN. We had her topsides re-painted. Doing all the preparation work ourselves, including sanding and filling prior to the primer coats, sanding prior to the undercoats and again prior to the final coats kept the cost down to, materials \$850 and the professional spraying \$450, and so for a total of \$1,300 (650euros) we got a very nice topside re-spray. An unpleasant job was replacing the outlet hoses on the two heads (toilets). From their original inside diameter of 42mm the build up of calcium etc had reduced the aperture throughout the tubing to about 14mm. No wonder we found it hard to flush the heads.

The final job prior to re-launching was to, again, raise the waterline by 30mm and apply the anti-fouling. As an experiment we applied 3 coats of a hard anti-fouling to about 25cm below the waterline and then 3 coats of an eroding anti-fouling, Micron CSC, all International products. The thinking behind this experiment is, as the waterline is where the greatest fouling occurs, scrubbing it will not remove the anti-fouling as quickly as in the past when I had the eroding type up to the waterline. Re-launching and moving into our allocated berth at the beginning of May went without a hitch, no scratching of the newly painted topsides.

Winter in New Zealand:

While the three West Coast of America couples wintering in the Marina considered the weather very cold Olivia and I and the two Canadian families thought it quite mild. We wore long trousers and at times a jacket when going out. On the marina we were connected to shore power and a halogen heater brought from home proved exceptional. We used the heater at the 400 watt setting most of the time and only occasionally used the 800 watt setting. This heater gave a lovely warm glow and unlike a blow heater was silent, it would also switch off if knocked over, we would highly recommend this type of heater. As electricity was included in the marina fee we bought a small electric oven complete with a hotplate for \$50

and thus saved on our gas bill. Our center cockpit, with the sides closed, cushioned and with carpet on the floor gave us an additional, very comfortable, “upstairs” room.

House Sitting:

At the end of May, while I moved to Auckland for six days to help at the Auckland Boat Show, Olivia house sat, or should I say “cat sat”, for Bruce and Lucy Goodchap, owners of the local boat yard. Earlier while we worked on our boat in the yard we met Keith Alloway and Gay, kiwi orchard farmers from Te Puke about 30k from Tauranga. Keith was working on his 40ft launch. We got on very well with them and as a result they invited us to spend time with them at their timeshare at Lake Taupo and also at their home. For three weeks in August/September, while they were in Thailand on holidays, we house sat, or again more correctly “cat sat” their two lovely Burmans. Sharing our bed every night with another couple, the pair of cats, made movement in the bed difficult. Every night as soon as we switched off the TV in preparation for bed the female cat, Mishi, made for the bed ahead of us. The male, Magnum, would spend most of the night hunting the orchards arriving on the bed about 2am, wet and mucky. Believe me I have never been a great lover of cats, and I think that stems from being a racing pigeon fancier.

A successful evening:

On 17th July we gave a talk and slide show at the Tauranga Yacht Club attended by one hundred and fifty. It appears to have been very well received as a large number of people who were unable to attend or did not hear about it wanted to know when we would be giving another one. Unfortunately for them we only gave the one.

The South Island:

Towards the end of July we drove to the South Island, crossing the Cook Straits on the high speed Lynx ferry returning 3 weeks later on the slower Inter Islander ferry.

Skiing:

Our first South Island adventure was the three days we spent at Methven, the ski village for Mount Hut. Traveling down the east coast with magnificent sea views and inland the snow capped mountains was a very rewarding drive. As arranged we met up with Matt Matson of the yacht Aeventyr, berthed with us at Tauranga. Matt was spending the whole ski season there. The village of Methven is some 40 minutes from the ski fields requiring a four wheel drive or the use of chains. Matt collected us for each of the two days we spent skiing and as a member of the local Ski Club invited us to use the club facilities. We enjoyed the skiing but found that after two days we had covered the area well and so decided to continue South.

Christchurch was our next stop. We only spent a few hours sightseeing there before continuing south to Oamaru and out to Nugget Point. So called due to the large nugget shaped rocks off the point. It was here towards sunset we watched, for the first time, penguins come ashore and by waddling and hopping climb the cliff for the night. The area south east of the island is known as the Catlins. The majority of the roads are unsealed (gravel), they call them “metal roads”, the terrain is beautiful and completely different to the milder North Island.

Stewart Island:

Arriving at Bluff the most southerly point of mainland New Zealand, famous for it's oysters, we took the ferry to Stewart Island about 20 miles offshore. The three night spent at Jo & Andy's B&B for \$25 each will always remain as perhaps the most memorable part of the whole South Island adventure. They were most hospitable, albeit a little eccentric.

Our first full day on Stewart Island saw us visit the smaller Ulva Island, a wildlife sanctuary, with Petr Tait as our guide. We traversed the short distance to Ulva on Peters' 56 ft steel yacht “Talisker”. Peter and his wife Iris run “Talisker Charters”. The \$35 each we paid for the tour was money very well spent, especially

when you consider they gave us a lovely lunch of smoked fish. We would highly recommend them, but do not expect the lunch at that price.

It was at Joe & Andy's that we met Rosie Gowran from Dublin. She was backpacking on a world ticket with a girl from Holland. During the inevitable conversation that such situations produce it transpired that Rosie is the niece of long term friends of ours, the Fitzpatricks who live in Sutton Park behind us.

Rosie and her friend organised the hire of two double sea kayaks for the following day. With Olivia and I in one and Rosie and Talia in the other we paddled off over a mirror like sea, and this in the middle of Winter. The remainder of the day including the picnic on a beach, visiting an old whaling station and exploring the various inlets, fulfilled another great day on Stewart Island. The cost for the day was \$40 each, great value.

Homeward bound:

Yes, on Saturday 3rd August we began our return journey to Ireland, because on leaving Stewart Island and heading north back to the main South Island we were heading nearer home. Stewart Island would be the farthest south we would travel on our circumnavigation.

South Island, West Coast:

Arriving back on the Mainland, despite only having quarter the population, that's what the South Islanders call the South Island as it is the bigger of the two islands. we drove towards the west coast.

Te Anau, "Gateway to the "Sounds" was the base we used for exploring the popular Milford Sound. A night boat trip across Te Anau lake to visit a very large Glow Worm cave was followed next day with a drive to **Milford Sound**. What the first half of the 120km drive lacks in scenic beauty is more than made up for on the second half. It was stunning. The tight steep winding road through the snow capped mountain peaks with the many avalanche warning signs and the long unlit tunnel is a truly memorable drive.

The last thing we intended doing on arrival at Milford was to take a boat trip. However after talking with a bus driver he convinced us that a trip on the 60 seater Mitre Cruiser, would be well worth it. He was absolutely correct. For \$56 each and with only eight other passengers, all English speaking, unlike most of the other larger boats which are multi-lingual, we had a very informative tour of the sound right out to the open sea. There is nothing in Milford other than a café and of course the usual souvenir shop.

Continuing North we visited Queenstown, the most popular tourist and ski resort on the South Island, Arrowtown and Cromwell with their mining history. Prior to Cromwell we stopped at the famous Kawarau Bridge credited as being the birth place of bungee jumping, I think the first person to try it may have been trying suicide, it looked terrifying. Before crossing the mountains through Haast Pass to the West Coast we spent three enjoyable hours at the Wanaka Puzzleworld. Trying to extricate ourselves from the maze took most of the time.

Left in Charge of a Town:

High on the popular list of tourist attractions is the Fox Glacier that we viewed from a distance before stopping for the night of Wednesday 7th August at PUKEKURA. Twenty miles South of Hokitika, PUKEKURA, a former busy timber milling centre, is New Zealand's smallest town with a population of two. The "town" is recognised by the "PUB" on the right hand side and "THE BUSHMAN'S CENTRE", a café/restaurant and museum on the left. The two residents are Pete and Justine. We stopped for a quick beer and ended up booking into one of their cabins for the night at \$40. They have a lovely "hot rock pool" and allowed us use it after they deserted the town for the night leaving us as **the town guardians**. Basking in the hot pool, in the "all together" under a cloudless star studded sky will remain high on the list of our memorable Kiwi experiences.

The following day in Greymouth we had our first rains in over two weeks and were thus “forced!!!” to partake in an excellent tour of the local brewery and “forced!!!” to sample all their many brews. Just as well I had to drive or they might have had to carry me out. A great \$5 worth.

Continuing north visiting “The Pancake Rocks and Blowholes”, Westport, the Bulla Gorge, The Abel Tasman Reserve, and Nelson we finally arrived back at Picton from where we took the return ferry to the North Island on 12th August and thus ending our memorable South Island experience.

We arrived back on ALDEBARAN at Tauranga on Wednesday 15th August after 4,446kms in our \$700 car that performed without a hiccup.

Our next report, the 34th, will cover the second half of our stay in New Zealand including our cruising from Tauranga to the Bay of Islands prior to departing for Fiji.

Please keep your e-mails coming we very much appreciate them.

Pat & Olivia, aboard ALDEBARAN in New Zealand