

# New Zealand – North Island Tour 2009

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This trip was such an amazing opportunity and the fact that I got to experience it with Girl Guides made it so much better. I had so much support from my unit, district, division, area and provincial councils it helped out so much. I have walked away from this experience with so many memories, friends and even learnt some new things. In April our group of girls met for the first and last time before the trip actually started. We had this meeting just to ask questions about the trip and get a feeling about who we would be traveling with.

My trip started on July 15 2009 with my group from all over Alberta. Our leaders Kristie Smith from Calgary and Dorothy Boras from Pincher Creek. Then there were the 5 of us girls; Alyssia Strandlund from Athabasca, Laina Oldford from Lacombe and Emily Kennedy, Jennifer Robinson and me from Calgary. We flew 3 hours from Calgary to LA where we had booked a hotel room since we had a 12-hour lay over. Then we flew 13 hours from LA to Auckland, New Zealand. In New Zealand it was actually winter when we were there so it wasn't as cold as our Canadian winter but the average temperature was about 15°C. There were some days that it got much colder than that and also days that it didn't even feel like winter. But compared to the winter weather we are used to this was very nice.

For the first 4 days the 7 of us were on our own. We took this time to explore the city of Auckland and learn some history of New Zealand. We took in the main shopping streets of Auckland, the War Memorial Museum and Victoria Park Market. A friend of Kristie's who lives in Auckland took us around for a day. She took us to a Girl Scout camp, saw lots of countryside and to the Auckland zoo.

Then on July 21 the tour actually started. We transferred to new Auckland accommodations where we would be for 2 nights. We had a chance to meet some of the other girls on the tour with us; there was a group from the UK, Philippines and 4 groups from Canada. We also met our bus drivers and guides for the tour. In the next few days we further explored Auckland. We went up the Sky Tower – the tallest building in the southern hemisphere. The view was amazing. One of the ladies from Nova Scotia from our tour group, skydived off the top of the Sky Tower, it was cool. We also went to Kelly Tarlton's Underwater world and Antarctic Center. We got to see penguins and many types of fish, sharks and other underwater creatures. That night we went and had dinner and took part in a campfire put on by the North Shore Girl Guides of New Zealand.

July 22 we drove north to the Bay of Islands. We went on a boat cruise through the Bay of Islands looking at all the big houses and the beautiful scenery. We were lucky enough to come across a pod of about 30-40 dolphins that we had fun watching for a while. We made our way to the famous "Hole in the Rock" which we went right through. It was pretty sweet.

July 23 we rode a special Cape Runner bus that took us right up to the tip of the north island. We went tobogganing on this huge sand dune. We got sand everywhere! It was such a crazy experience. We also went right out to the lighthouse at the cape of the island and drove on 90-mile beach. We went to so many beaches that day it was so much fun! Although it was winter and we couldn't go swimming we still had a blast playing in the sand and also putting our toes in the ocean.

July 24 we headed back south towards Auckland. On our way we stopped at the Waitangi Treaty House. We learned about the treaty and more about the Maori culture. We stopped at Whangarei for lunch – the home of the largest collection of timepieces in the southern hemisphere. That night we stayed another night in Auckland at the same place as we had stayed before.

July 25. Today we continued our journey south, our destination being Rotorua. On our way we stopped at the Waitomo Caves. We went down into these caves that were just beautiful, then we got into a little boat in a very dark part of the cave. We went deep into the cave and got to see the amazing glowworm grotto. Glowworms glow just like fireflies and looking up at this glowworm grotto was like looking up at the millions of stars in the Milky Way. So cool! Then we finally arrived in Rotorua known world wide for its geysers, boiling mud, and hot mineral pools. That night we were lucky enough to go to a New Zealand Guiding family's home for dinner. It was so nice to get out and have our family show us a little bit of Rotorua and also to have a fabulous home cooked meal! Kristie's family taught them a game that they know called the Toffee Pop Challenge. It's where you take a Toffee Pop, which is a chocolate covered cookie, and you place it on your forehead and try and get it into your mouth but only using your face muscles. We had so much fun playing this game.

July 26 was started with a visit to the Agrodome to see the sheep show. This included 19 breeds of sheep and learning about the big sheep industry in New Zealand. Then we proceeded to Te Puia – Arts and Crafts Industry. We learned about the Maori carvings, weavings and more about the culture. We watched a Maori cultural show demonstrating their

traditional song and dance. It was such an awesome show! Then a guide from Te Puia took us on a tour and showed us the boiling mud and all the geysers. It was so interesting, never seen anything like it before!

July 27 was a short travel day. We went just a little further south to Taupo where our first stop was the Huka Falls. We rode on a Huka Jet, which is like a big jet ski for about 15 people. We rode it down the Waikato River right up to the Huka Falls. It was such a fun and crazy experience! Then we went to our accommodations for the night.

July 28 every one was doing something different. Today our options were skiing, Rocks & Ropes, and Horse Trekking, which I did. This morning was rather cold to be sitting on a horse for 2 hours but we did it and had a blast. Jennifer, Emily, Kristie and I all went horseback riding and had lots of fun. We went all the way up this big hill where we could see so many geysers it was so cool. At a few points on the trail we split into 2 groups – one that wanted to continue to walk and one that wanted to go faster. I choose the faster group both times because I love riding and have quite a bit of experience. It was such a fun 2 hours I really enjoyed that day!

July 29. Today was a long travel day. We drove 5 hours from Taupo south to the capital of New Zealand, Wellington. On this drive we watched a few movies. The Whale Rider and The Worlds Fastest Indian. They were really cool to watch because they had some relation to New Zealand or the Maori culture, which we had learned all about. Once in Wellington we went to the “Te Papa” Museum, did an orientation drive of the city and went on a Cable Car ride. We concluded the night and basically the tour with a dinner out with every one on the tour, all 64 of us. It was so nice to actually see the whole group together as it didn't happen too often during the tour. This night gave us a last chance to talk with the other groups, trade badges and just to enjoy the last night with all our new friends from all over the world!

July 30 was the day most groups were heading home. But our group of 7 was spending one more day in Wellington on our own. We had a lazy morning of sleeping in and just hanging out at the hostel that morning. We ended up going out for the afternoon to do some last minute shopping and just exploring downtown Wellington. After dinner we spent our night packing all of our things, making sure they all fit into our bags! We were all very sad to be leaving the new and exciting country we had gotten to explore but also looking forward to getting home and seeing our family.

July 31. Today started extremely early! Dorothy and I calculated it out that today was about a 30-hour traveling day from when we got up to when we arrived in Calgary! We first left Wellington, the capital of New Zealand and flew to a rather familiar city still in New Zealand, Auckland. We had a 6-hour lay over in Auckland that gave us time to have some breakfast and do some airport shopping. I was able to find the perfect sweater that I had been looking for the whole trip! Then we flew 13 hours from Auckland, New Zealand back to LA, USA. We had a 5-hour lay over here, which we got some food and also played cards for a long time on the floor of the airport. Then we were finally on the last leg of our trip home. Only 3 hours! This seemed like such a short flight. Kristie and I read our books and played crib for the whole flight and as soon as we knew it we were home and re-uniting with our families! We said good-bye to our new friends and all headed our separate ways. We drove Kristie home and Alyssia came home with us for a few hours because she had to fly out at 1am that morning to go to Montreal to meet up with her family. We went back to my place and had fun showing my family my pictures from the trip. It was fun thinking back and remembering all the memories that were tied to all the pictures. We drove Alyssia back to the airport so that she could catch her flight to Montreal and said our final good byes!

Going to another country that is totally new to you is such an experience in itself but being able to experience it to the absolute fullest with Girl Guides makes it that much better! This trip was such a learning experience and let me discover an entirely new part of this world I had never seen before. Meeting new people from my own part of the world and many other parts was a big highlight to my trip. And the fact that we were all sisters of Guiding, with that in common made it even better.



We took in a few Maori Cultural shows while in New Zealand. They demonstrated traditional song and dance from their culture. In this picture they are doing a traditional stick dance from the Maori culture. It was so cool to see them perform.

The most northern tip of the north island was a cool place that we visited. That is Alyssia and I holding our jackets up because the wind was so strong we could totally lean into the wind and we wouldn't fall over. It was lots of fun! You can also see a white line in the water and that is where the Pacific Ocean and the Tasman Sea meet.



FUN



Friends

The 7 of us in the Alberta patrol in front of a big geyser in Rotorua. Us 7 became like family while on this trip and I miss them all. I have fabulous memories with all these girls that I will keep and remember for the rest of my life! ☺