



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



Our first month in Auckland

by Amaru & Suzanne, December 19th 2006

We've now been here in Auckland, New Zealand for a month and we're both doing good. We've found jobs and have just (this past weekend) moved to a much nicer apartment than the one we first stayed at.

It didn't all start out that easily though....and we encountered our first problem at Sydney airport. Suz, being Australian, has no problems travelling and working in New Zealand, I on the other hand had to apply for a Working Holiday Visa before I was allowed to work over there.

I had applied and recieved the visa, all done online on the NZ immigration website with no problems. Since I did it online I didn't get a stamp or anything else in my passport, it was an electronical ticket - exactly the same situation as when I entered Australia originally.

At the airport we had to line up for quite some time (all NZ flights were at the same counter) but we finally made it, only to be told that I needed proof that I had a Working Visa in NZ to be able to travel there on a one-way ticket. I didn't need it because of NZ rules, it was the policy of the airline.



Our first home
In Auckland



Enjoying our first home cooked meal
in our tiny apartment

We searched all over my bag (I had printed out my visa after receiving it) but couldn't find the print-out....it must have been lost during our move. So we had to bite the bullet and buy a fully refundable return ticket for me, right there.....at an outrageous price!

It all got a bit stressed because the time for our departure was closing in, so we hurried along and actually made it to the gate with a few moments to spare.

Our flight took around 2½ hours and it was uneventful. We sat watching some episodes of "Smallville" and "Family Guy" on my Zen, made the ride very easy!

After landing I had to line up in the "Foreigners" line which took 40min, in the meantime Suz waltzed right through it. With all the problems I had in Sydney I was a little nervous now. But I reached the immigration desk and there was no problem at all! They scanned my passport and that was it! We didn't even need to show the return ticket we purchased (we did manage to get most of the money back on it though).

We made it into the city by bus and after an excruciating walk up a steep hill with lots of baggage we finally made it to the place where we would live, Columbia Apartments.

We found this place online and it was, compared to other places, quite cheap (and we obviously needed a fully furnished place). It's near Auckland Uni and filled with students....so it's very basic and small! And unfortunately we also discovered that we weren't the only ones living in our room. We had fleas as well (we could tell by the bites we woke up with - although Suz was convinced at first that they were bed bugs again). Well, we purchased a flea bomb (and were told that there are lots of fleas at this time of the year) and a few hours later the problem was fixed.



After sorting out our accommodation, we just had to fix the other necessities; bank account, telephone numbers and an Internet Connection.



And then.....it was time to go job hunting!

We both lodged our resumes online at the local job searching site and one to two days later we both had offers for interviews. They were with recruitment companies....but hey, better than nothing!

While we waited for some good job offers to come through we passed the days by walking all over the city to learn how to find our way around. After a lot of searching we also managed to find a good supermarket (the city centre only contains what seems like a million small ones - or "dairies" as they refer to them here). The first thing we notice when we enter the supermarket is the price on bananas. In Australia (due to the cyclone earlier this year) the bananas are really expensive. So we were really excited to see them being really cheap

here (they import them). We bought lots of them!!

One of the most famous museums in the city is the Auckland Museum, and even though we don't usually visit many of them we made our way over and it was actually really good. It contains a huge section devoted to the Pacific Islanders and Maori history among other things.

A few hours later after walking and watching lots and lots of artifacts in the museum....we finally called it quits.

We choose a very nice and sunny day to visit Auckland Sky Tower, the tallest tower in the southern hemisphere....and it was really impressive. It provided an awesome view over the city, even contained a glass floor which was a bit edgy to walk over (and especially to jump on).



We also got a close up look at one of the jumpers from the tower. It's sort of a combination in between a Skydive, Bungee jump and a Base jump. You are strapped to a cable and then you jump off the building and fall down along the wire line. Looks quite cool, but it's too expensive for what you get so I'll save myself until we reach Queenstown.



While we were at it we made an excursion a few days later to Mount Eden! The highest volcanic cone in the area, it stands tall at 196m....and yes, it's a nice walk to get up there. And the views over the area are great!! You can see all of Auckland city, its bays and more....

I wanted to climb down to the center of the volcanic crater but since we found signs stating (in several languages) that you weren't allowed to walk down it we just sat down and enjoyed the view. Later on we saw some people doing it anyway...mmm

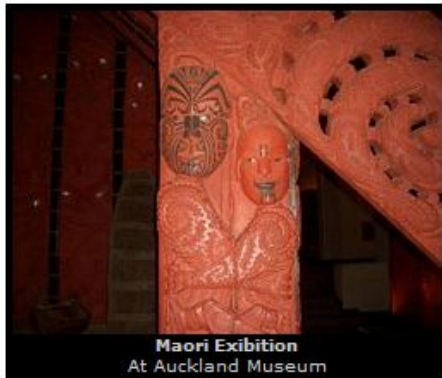
All of a sudden, just before we were to start heading down we spot a cow having a drink and then calmly walking in the middle of the road towards the main observation area.....now, that's something you don't see every day! We followed the cow and were hoping to see some of

the asian tourists freak out, but no such luck.

As most of you now probably know, we eventually found jobs. Suz got off the mark first with a job offer right after the interview (and I mean right after, they asked her at the interview if she could start right away). She is now working for the Auckland City Council and is quite happy with the job.

For me....well, it took a bit longer. First I had an interview with the recruitment agency, then another interview at the company and I was now told that I would receive a call during which they would do a technical test. I was told that the call would come that very afternoon (this was on a Friday).

Friday came to an end and still no call, on Monday I called the agency and asked what had happened. They called around and the next day I was called about the test. It wasn't really a technical test, more to check that I had basic knowledge of Windows, Office and the telecommunications industry (well....I didn't really but I can bullshit nicely).



And I got the job, I'm now working for Vodafone as a technical support analyst...and from what I've seen so far it's a really cool job, and the best part.....there's no dresscode, yes!! I can dress how I want!!

Once we knew that we both had jobs it was time to search for a better place to live in. We searched online and managed to find a good deal, it's a good time of the year, lots of students go home for summer and lots of apartments drop their prices.

For about the same amount that we were spending at the last place we now have a two-bedroom apartment. It's located 5 min from the Sky Tower and offers a great view over the harbour bridge. And the best part.....it takes Suz and I around 10min each to walk to work (in two different directions).

So what's next?

Well, I'm actually working during most of Christmas and New Years, but we didn't want to travel anywhere during the holidays. The roads are just too full and dangerous to be driving on at those times.

We will wait until the holidays are over and then we'll start doing some small weekend trips along the north island and start to work our way around New Zealand.





**The Civic Theatre with the cinema
& Town Hall in the background**



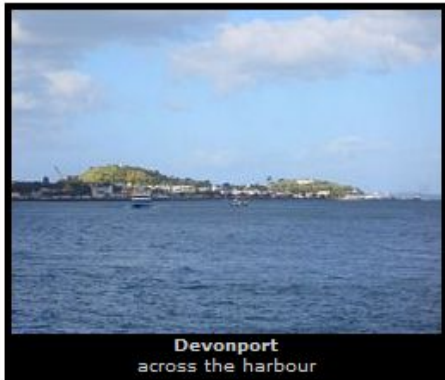
**That's a Huge Santa!
Right along Queen Street**



**Vulcan Lane
...very trendy!**



**Walking along Auckland
Harbour**



**Devonport
across the harbour**



**Auckland Harbour
and the Sky Tower**



**Yup.....
they really like their Rugby here!**



**Suz and her cider at the
Shakespeare Hotel**



The Shakespeare Hotel
Where we had our first drink



That's Santa again....
As seen from Victoria Street



Auckland Sky Tower
Highest tower in the southern hemisphere



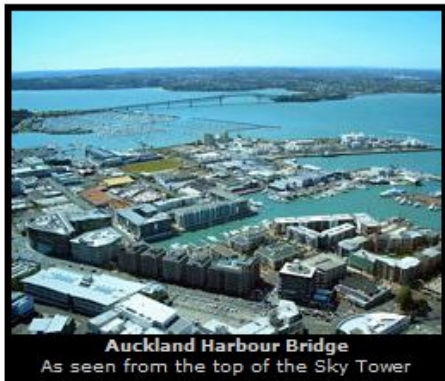
Odd!
Some weird art we found in a park



In Ponsonby
...we found another Belgian Beer Cafe



Auckland City
on our way to do some grocery shopping



Auckland Harbour Bridge
As seen from the top of the Sky Tower



It's a long way down...
bloody oath....



Suz
At the top of the Sky Tower



Looking down the glass floor
Quite cool!



That's our new home
The big apartment structure at the bottom



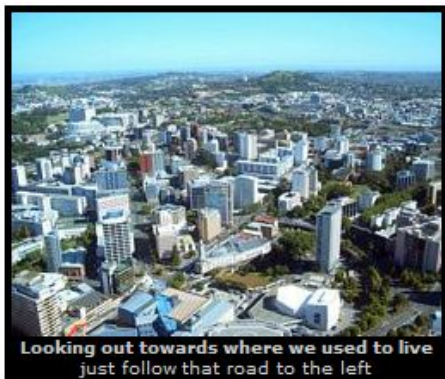
Auckland Museum
On the top of the Domain



Auckland Harbour
As seen from the top of the Sky Tower



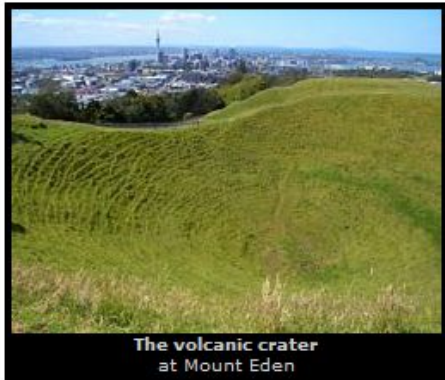
Amaru
At the top of the Sky Tower



Looking out towards where we used to live
just follow that road to the left



Auckland Sky Tower
As seen during the day

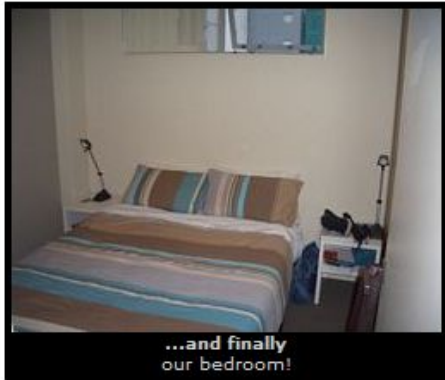




Our new livingroom
"It's nice!"



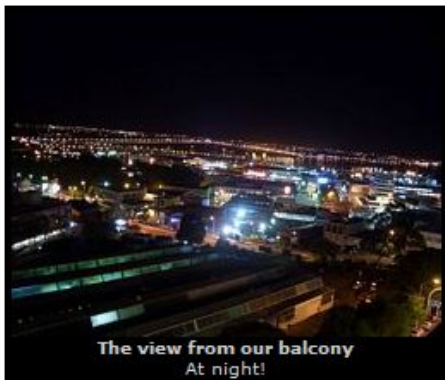
The kitchen
...also good



...and finally
our bedroom!



The view from our balcony
During daytime



The view from our balcony
At night!



The view from our balcony
During a great Sunset!

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