



## Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



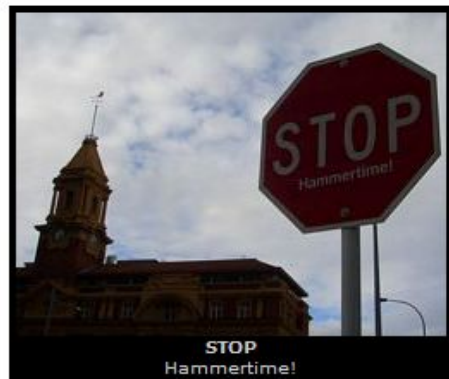
### Another year, another blog!

by Amaru & Suzanne, January 7th 2007

Well, another Christmas and New Years have come and passed, we haven't really done too much during the holidays but if you really must know, this is what we've been up to so far in Auckland.

A few days before Christmas Eve Suz and I went walking, together with lots of other Aucklanders, up and down Frankling Road, which is famous for its Christmas decorations. We saw quite a few nicely decorated houses, saw people standing around in groups singing carols and also some people selling tacky Christmas decorations.....very festive indeed!

On Christmas day I was working, so it never felt all that festive (that and the fact that we don't have any family here), but we still had a very nice time together. I came home from work and we had a very nice dinner together...just the two of us!



**STOP  
Hammertime!**



**Christmas Celebrations  
Along Franklin Rd**

On Boxing day we did what many Australians and New Zealanders do, we watched some cricket....and we watched it live at Eden Park. Suz and I went to go see a Twenty20 game (i.e. a very short game of cricket, only takes about 3 hours) between New Zealand and Sri Lanka. The game was interesting but it was hard to really get into it since we didn't really know who to cheer for. Either way, New Zealand ended up winning the game and almost everybody in the crowd (a small one to what we're used to) were happy about it.

New Years Eve....once again I had to work (that's what they use us new guys for), but as soon as I finished I hurried home where Suz and I had a nice dinner together, a bottle of champagne and then we made our way towards the Viaduct to watch the celebrations.

We walked along the area which was packed with people who were all out to watch the fireworks, so it was a good thing that Suz and I had already found the spot we wanted. It was along the harbour, but just a little away from all the bars and people. It was beside some apartments and there was only around 10 of us standing there waiting for the clock to strike midnight.

And then it started... Auckland Sky Tower erupted with fireworks and it was great to watch with lots of different colours and formations. The only downside was that it was over way too fast. Another 10min with fireworks would have been nice =)

The next morning we had a lazy start to the new year and weren't quite sure what to do. At first the weather seemed to be a bit clouded and boring but it cleared up and actually turned into quite a nice day. So we decided it was time to go for a nice walk.



**The famous Franklin Rd  
...during Christmas!**



**New Zealand vs Sri Lanka  
At Eden Park**

Our goal for the day was Mission Bay, a very popular beach in Auckland, which is located around 8km away from our apartment. To get there we made our way down to the shore and then started walking along Tamaki Drive. A very beautiful walk along the water with some beautiful trees along its sides.

After a looong walk we ended up in Mission Bay where we, for the first time in Auckland, could observe that this city really has a very large population of Pacific Islanders (it's supposed to be the city with most Pacific Islanders in the world). It was quite fun to see that in the famous fountain in the area (which has signs saying no swimming) the kids were happy swimming and playing away!

The long walk caused hunger pains, so we decided to get some food, and the largest queue was found outside the local "Fush & Chups" shop. Well, whatever is good for the locals is good for us.

The food was actually one of the best we've fish & chips that we've had, the fish had the perfect consistency and the chips were yummy =))

The perfect dessert after our meal must be some icecream, and we found the perfect place (it also had a huge line up in front of it). After purchasing the icecream we decided that now we needed to walk back home as well to walk all this food off.

Said and done, we started out way back home!



**A Twenty20 Game  
...that NZ ended up winning**



**At the Viaduct  
just before the New Years**

We arrived home very tired after our long walk and discovered that we don't have the best shoes for this sort of thing, so we will have to get some new ones soon. The first thing we did after arriving home though was go down to the gym that our appartment offers and jumped into the pool and then the steambaths. They do wonders for tired muscles...

Before Christmas Suz was given some free passes to the Auckland Zoo and we decided that the next day was the right one for us to head out there and explore the place.

Since we were still in the middle of the holidays, the park was filled with families...and us =)

We walked around the Zoo for quite some time seeing all the animals.

As far as a Zoo goes, it wasn't bad. The highlight of the day must have been the lions, it was fun to see them come out and not really bother that much about the food. The first thing they did was to jump in the pile of Elephant dung and have a nice roll. He looked very happy doing it though....

While the Christmas sales are on we managed to find some nice trekking shoes for both of us (we are planning to do some day hikes around the country later on) and since we had them we needed to break them in. And what better than to do a local walk at Rangitoto Island. This is Auckland's newest volcano, it erupted some 600 years ago, and it's just a 20min ferry ride from the city.

It's a great walk to the top of the volcano, and the views from the island towards the city are awesome. It's also great to be walking along old lava streams and volcanic rock. And the contrast between black rocks and green vegetation is very pretty.

The walk to the top didn't look very hard but the sun was very strong and it reflected on the volcanic rock, so the hike to the top was actually quite strenuous.



**Auckland during New Years  
Nice Fireworks!**



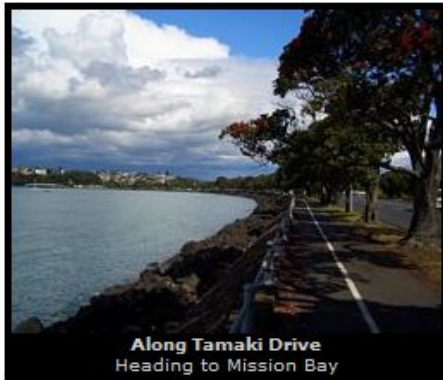
**Suz**  
On our way to Mission Bay

Once at the top we were able to admire the gorgeous views over the city and the area surrounding it. We stayed up there for quite some time just looking out and after a while we walked down a bit to a nice shaded area where we could enjoy our packed lunch before we started the hike down again.

After our lunch we saw the signs leading towards the lava caves and decided to have a quick look at them....a closer look at them indeed. Two of the caves were quite small but one of them actually goes on for quite some time and I tried to see how far down the cave I could make it. The answer is; not very long. Without a torch it's impossible to see anything after just 7-10 metres.

So... next time maybe. We walked down to the pier and caught the ferry back to the city again and went home, quite tired, but at the same time quite satisfied. And our new shoes were great, they both have good grips and were very comfortable.

Now we just have to do lots of walking with them to be able to do some big hikes later on during our time here in New Zealand.



**Along Tamaki Drive**  
Heading to Mission Bay



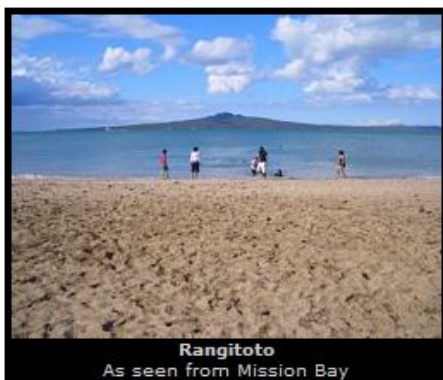
**A beach in Auckland**  
With the city in the background



**Mission Bay**  
The most popular beach in Auckland



**"No Swimming"**  
We guess the kids can't read huh!



**Rangitoto**  
As seen from Mission Bay



**Quite a long queue**  
....must be a very popular place



**Two local specials**  
L&P and our "Fush & Chups"



**Yum!**  
Time to dig in



**Suz and I**  
Devonport and Rangitoto in the background



**Auckland Zoo**  
Time to check it out!



**An Orangutan**  
They are always fun



**A Lion rolling around**  
in fresh Elephant dung....



**The Lion**  
going for the frozen food



**Girafs, Ostrichs and Zebras**  
All in the same area



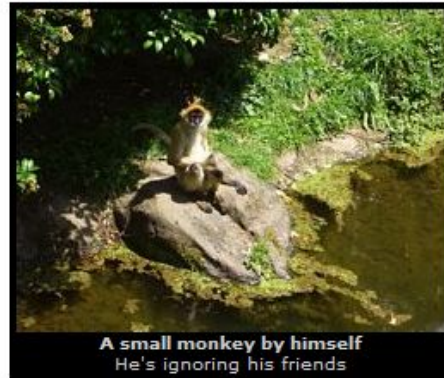
**Some Elephants**  
Having a snack



**Some great acrobatics**  
by the Sealions in the tank



**Happy Hippos**  
...the only one we saw above the water



**A small monkey by himself**  
He's ignoring his friends



**Cheers!**  
Time for a nice drink



**Our ferry**  
It'll take us out to Rangitoto



**That's me on the ferry**  
...with Rangitoto in the background



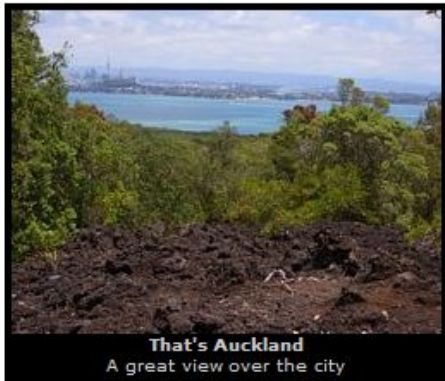
**Welcome to Rangitoto**  
Time to start the hike



**Walking towards the top**  
Suz leading the way



**...and I'm not**  
very far behind



**That's Auckland**  
A great view over the city



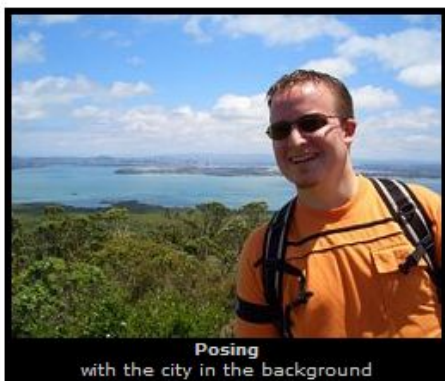
**Suz**  
With the city in the background



**Auckland city**  
A great day



**On the summit**  
At the top!



**Posing**  
with the city in the background



**Suz**  
happy at the summit



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