



## Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



### A day trip to the Coromandel Peninsula

by Amaru & Suzanne, February 24th 2007

About two hours away from Auckland you'll find the Coromandel Peninsula, we had been planning on going there for a while but hadn't gotten around to it since we usually go away for a whole weekend. Well, this time we finally made it!

Our original plan was to rent a car for just a day but a friend from work heard about our plans and just let us borrow his car for the day (thanks Darren!).

What we really wanted to see on this trip was the Hot Water Beach - this is a place where you'll find thermal waters just below the surface. You only need to dig down a little bit and you'll find it. The trick is to be there two hours before and after low tide so that you can actually reach the hot waters.

Unfortunately the day when we decided to go there low tide could only be found either at 7am or 7pm. And since we wanted to be back in Auckland between 6-7pm we had no choice but to try and go for the early tide. And let me tell you, it's not very often that you will see us rise at 5am....



**It's very very green**  
...with some water in the background



**Suz is thrilled...**  
over finding the Hot Water Beach

But we did, we then left to pick up the car and after a while made our way out of the city. We were running a bit behind so we knew that we wouldn't really make it for low tide so we didn't bother rushing it. After about two hours we reached the Peninsula, now we only had another hour to go until we hit the actual beach.

We finally made it to the beach and rushed out to see if we could catch any of the thermal activity at all. It turned out to be no problem, even though it was now after 9am the tide wasn't all in yet. And there were still plenty of people at the beach digging so we didn't have to rent any spades ourselves.

We had been told by friends that had been to the beach that we needed spades if we wanted to reach the thermal waters and make our own spa. They told us stories of tourist they've seen who were digging with their hands. Now, first of all, digging with your hands won't do much, secondly, you'd burn the crap out of yourself digging in the hot hot water.

Don't think that the water was just lukewarm.....oh no! It's Hot!

It's so hot that you also need a bucket to be able to pour some cold water in your hole (or just have some water sipping in at regular intervals). We were standing with our feet in one of the holes, having warm feet when I got the brilliant idea of digging my feet in under the sand....not my greatest moment but hey, I had to get up at 5am remember!

I quickly got them out of there and into the cold ocean, luckily they weren't under the hot water for too long so they were just fine.....so I put them back in the nice hot water, I just made sure I didn't dig them in this time.



Looking down at the water you can actually see small bubbles coming up from here and there....

We didn't linger for much longer after this, we had seen what we had come to see. I can also mention that the ocean off the beach is quite wild, it must be a good surf beach. Unfortunately many people don't realize that strong surf means that there are going to be some very strong rips. This is one of the more dangerous beaches in New Zealand. People steaming from the hot water rush to the water to cool off and then are dragged out to sea. So if you aren't a strong swimmer.....stay out of the water!

(Sorry about that....must have been the Rescue Diver in me talking).

Well, from here we made our way to Cooks Beach where we found a nice local café to have brunch in. Not far from here we found a small passenger ferry that could take you over a small bay to Whitianga. Unfortunately they only had passenger ferrys so we got back in the car and headed around the bay.

An hour later through some very winding small roads and with Suz feeling sick, we arrived on the other side and could see the passenger ferry from the side we'd just come from... That was one of the longest routes we've taken to be 100m from where we started!

From here we continued inland to the eastern side of the peninsula (yup, more small winding roads), stopping here and there at some view points to admire the view.



We reached and left Coromandel Town and made our way north to a small place that we just had to visit....it's called Oamaru Bay! And of course we had to pay this place a small visit, it's not too often that I almost see my name written down somewhere =)



Anyway, after taking the obligatory photo of me in front of the sign (yes, tacky I know) we got back on the road and headed south this time since the road to the very top of the peninsula is not sealed and we didn't feel like driving all the way there with a borrowed car.

The road on the eastern side of the peninsula was very different than the one on the western side. We had been driving along hills on small winding roads earlier. Now we were driving on a fairly straight road right alongside the ocean.

It was a nice and relaxed drive and it was almost a shame to leave the peninsula and head back to Auckland, but hey, what can you do?

We've actually done a few other things besides this tour to the Coromandel Peninsula, I've done my first dive in New Zealand, we've seen the most interesting Cricket game you'll see here; Australia vs New Zealand and last but not least, we've done Spookers!

But let's take one thing at a time shall we?

I left for my dive at Goat island by myself, Suz was at work and I had the day off. Since Suz doesn't dive it all turned out for the best. I was picked up in Auckland and then we drove north for about an hour. After getting fitted out with all the equipment we jumped on the boat and headed out to Goat Island.

The ride out to the island was probably one of the roughest boat trips I've been on so far, the sea was very very choppy and we all had to hold on for our dear lives just so that we didn't bounce around on the boat. Once we reached the secluded cove of the island the sea was a bit calmer.



There were around 6 divers and since 4 of them were doing their course dives me and my assigned buddy, a German guy, ended up doing the dive by ourselves. After being given a compass each and told of the bearing that we should hold we jumped in the water and swam away. The visibility was very poor, not more than a few meters, and there was quite a strong rip in the water so it was hard to stay in one place to try and find some life under all the vegetation.



We kept on swimming trying to keep our bearing but due to the tide we noticed that we were a bit off course, but we didn't pay too much attention to it. At the end of the dive we were swimming at 7m (it was never deeper than 14m) and since my buddy was running out of air we decided to surface.....and we were waaaaay off target!

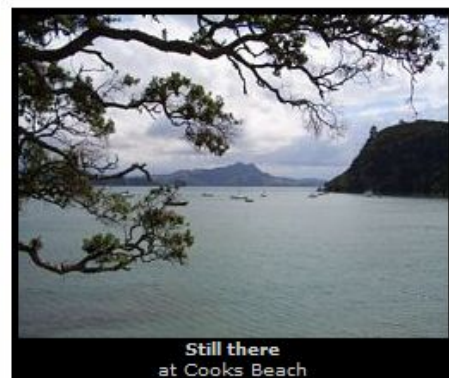
We had drifted so far off course that we were out of the secluded area and in the rough sea.....great!

It took us a good 20min to swim back to the boat and it was hard work, we were exhausted when we arrived at the boat. The worst part of it was that I was feeling quite queasy by now. Some of it was because of the rough sea but most of it I must admit was because of the party we had been to 2 days prior to the dive.

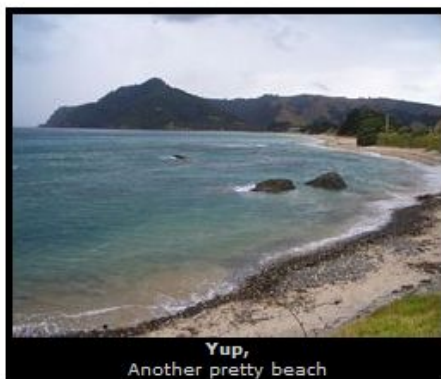
Yup, I was still feeling the effects from the party two days on....and because of this I didn't go back in for the second dive. Not that I really feel that I missed anything, the first dive was not that good anyway.

Well, we've also been to the Cricket like I mentioned, it was a nice sunny and hot day and for some reason I chose to wear pants instead of shorts.....

It was quite hot at first but once we got into the arena we had seats in the shade....to protect us from the sun you know. What we hadn't counted on was the cold wind that was blowing through the stadium. By the end of the game (remember, these games go on for around 8 hours) both of us were freezing!!



It was pretty obvious that we weren't the only ones that were cold, the lines to buy the coffee were a lot longer than the lines to the beers.....go figure, being cold at a cricket game!



Oh the game....yeah, we lost! After Australia achieved a very nice score of 336 runs - we still ended up losing.

....and like I mentioned, we've done Spookers!

What is Spookers you may wonder, well....it's pretty much a horror house around 30min south of Auckland. It's an old hospital that has been made into a fun attraction, it's a bit spooky arriving there in dusk and seeing all those abandoned buildings. We went there with a few people from work, a group of 5 in total and there we decided to do the Haunted House and the Freaky Forrest.

The Haunted house was awesome and if you ask Suz, it was very scary. She was jumping out of fear here and there....quite fun to watch =))

And the Freaky Forrest was, well.....freaky! You walk in the dark through a forrest and people jump out in front of you here and there. At one occasion a guy jumped out with a chainsaw and started chasing us....hilarious!!

Well, that's pretty much what we've been up to lately, not too much but we still wanted to let you all know that we are still here.



**The bird is fighting  
again the wind!**



**The Fern  
Very typical for New Zealand**



**That's Coromandel Town  
...all the way down there**



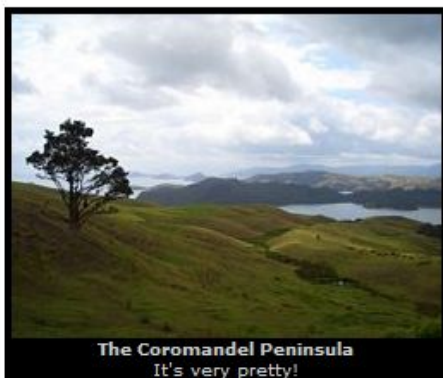
**Suz  
and a very tired biker in the background**



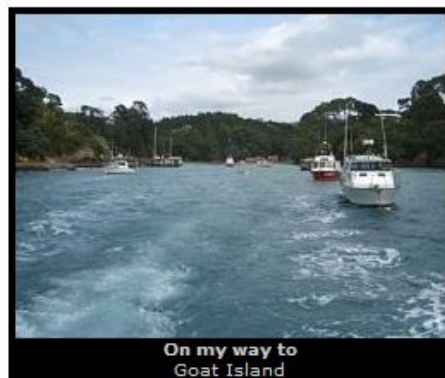
**Oooo Amaru!  
Yeah, my Bay!**



**Green rolling hills  
Plenty of them on the peninsula**



**The Coromandel Peninsula  
It's very pretty!**



**On my way to  
Goat Island**



**The weather could be better**  
At least the water is fairly calm



**Visibility is crap though**  
Couldn't really see much more than this



**Found something nice though**  
...underwater mushrooms?!?



**Back at Eden Park**  
for another cricket game



**Australia vs New Zealand**  
Can't get much better



**An awesome score by Australia**  
...and still we lost!



**Spookers**  
at dusk!



**The gang**  
in front of an old fashioned hearse



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