



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



The Overlander to Wellington

by Amaru & Suzanne, April 3rd 2007

The day had finally arrived, our trip down south!

But first there were a few small things that we had to take care of, first of all the apartment, we realized that it would be better for us to leave the apartment and just get a new one once we returned (we were quite sick of it anyway).

We now had to figure out what to bring on the trip and what to leave behind and also where to store our stuff. Luckily my mate Daren from work kindly helped us out (again!) by letting us store a bag (or three) at his place.

The Saturday before our departure from Auckland we spent on our knees, cleaning out the place and once we were finished we said goodbye to it, handed in our keys and headed downtown to a city hotel for our final night in Auckland.

The rest of the day we spent hunting for a used book shop (I needed a book for the 12 hour train trip), we walked along K-road and eventually onto Ponsonby road where we found a great shop where I managed to get a book that I actually wanted to read.



The Overlander
Where we spent 12 hours



Suz and I
At the beginning of the journey

Walking back to the city we found a small asian foodcourt where we decided to have dinner, and it was great!! Both of us had Thai dishes and they were both very authentic and cheap (and very very spicy!!).

The next morning we got up early and headed towards the train station, along the way we saw some of the remains from the previous night (big night out on Saturday I guess) lying in the gutter. At the train station we waited for around 30min until our train arrived, checked in luggage, got our seat numbers, boarded the train and we were now away.

The Overlander travels from Auckland to Wellington in 12 hours, it makes a few short stops here and there to drop off and pick up and also has a longer 45min lunch stop in the Tongariro National Park.

The first 3 hours or so of the journey were quite boring, just industrial and other non-scenic areas. It's not until you've cleared Hamilton/Waitomo Caves that the scenery really changes and offers some great panoramic views. The train has a small viewing platform at the front where you actually get to stand on the outside, only large enough for around 6 people at the same time, luckily we managed to sneak in there and admire the view without the obstructions of windows.

When we arrived at the Tongariro National Park for lunch Suz and I had planned to make a quick dash to this great Burger/Pizza place we had been to when we were last here (thus escaping the crowds all lined up waiting to be served at the station cafe). Unfortunately our plan backfired, "Basecamp" was closed during the day which meant that we now had to join the back of the queue at the station cafe (and we were first off the train!!).



After lunch the train ride continued and we passed many more tunnels, bridges, viaducts and mountains. There was always something to watch....except when we got close to Palmerston North and were hit by some bad weather. We couldn't see anything at all.....so we passed some time by watching some tv-shows on the Zen.

Towards the end of the journey Suz and I sat at the back of the train in the viewing lounge where we could watch the tracks behind us as we moved.

Finally after 12 hours we arrived in Wellington, the train trip didn't seem as long as a flight of the same length would, there was always something to keep you entertained (I didn't read any of my book by the way). We really enjoyed the journey and considered ourselves a bit

lucky. The Overlander was actually going to be cancelled forever but after a big public outcry they decided to keep it.....for now!

Once in Wellington we made our way to our booked accommodation, the YHA hostel and there we were quite impressed, the hostel is almost as good as a hotel, by far the best hostel we've stayed in yet!

That night we went out searching for dinner along "Courtenay Place", a street filled with bars, cafes, restaurants, cinemas and shops. After dinner we strolled down to the waterfront where we got some great views of the city by night!

For breakfast the next morning we followed a tip from the "Lonely Planet" and found "Wholly Bagel" where both of us got bagels with cream cheese....and these were the BEST bagels we've had since leaving the USA (the best bagels can be found in Fair Lawn, NJ =))



From here we walked along the main business street in the city, the "Lambton Quay", all the way to the Parliament house and the "Beehive", this building is part of the parliament and it's in the shape of a, well....Beehive, quite odd!

We tried out the cable car in Wellington which took us up to the Botanical Gardens, not that we went to the gardens but the views from up there over the city were great (and riding the cable car was kind of fun as well =)).

Lunch hour had arrived and we made our way to "Cuba Street" and a place called "Fidel's" (makes sense to have a place with that name on that street I guess...). "Fidel's" is a very funky cafe, its interior is filled with memorabilia, photos of Fidel and Che and everything is made to

look a bit more authentic in a Cuban way....all the way down to the bullet holes....

We were now ready to take on the massive "Te Papa", or also called "The Museum of New Zealand". On our way there we passed along Civic Square and saw what looked to be a floating ball in the air. As we got nearer we could see the wires and it was actually a Silver Fern ball sculpture.

At "Te Papa" we strolled around for a few hours, looking at the different exhibitions and watching a few movies about the history of New Zealand and its people. All in all it was well worth it (well, admission was free).

That evening we finished up by getting some food at the local supermarket (which is located across the road from the hostel, awesome!!), cooked dinner together with a lot of other people from lots of other places which was quite interesting in its own way and then an early night to bed (we're getting old!!).



Approaching the viaduct
A loooooong way down...

The next morning we started out with.....bagels!! Again?! Yes, they were that good!!



On another viaduct
offering us great views

We caught the local bus up to Mt Victoria which offers great views of the city, and here we could also see over to the other side of the mountain and discovered where the airport was. The bus ride up the mountain was an adventure in itself. The roads are very tight, steep and narrow and it gets interesting when the bus meets other traffic!

The rest of the day we spent by doing a tour of the Parliament house (another free tour), having some lunch at the weird "Backbenchers Pub & Cafe" across the road from the Parliament house where they have 3-D puppets of NZ politicians and sportsmen.

Well, that's pretty much it for Wellington, we really enjoyed the city and what it has to offer. Due to its architecture, atmosphere and food we actually feel that we like Wellington a lot more than Auckland, but it

could be different if we actually lived here.

I especially liked that its got cafes all over town serving great coffee. Apparently there are more cafes here per capita than in New York City..... and that says a lot!!

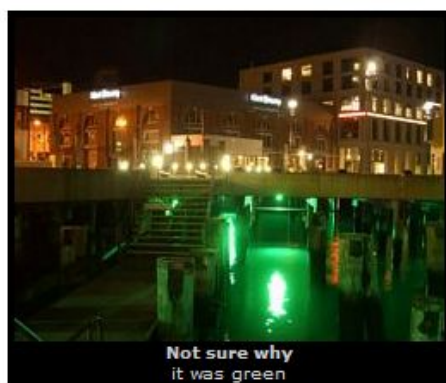
Tomorrow morning we're catching a ferry that will take us to the South Island and then by train down to Christchurch.....



At the back of the train
Great perspective from here



Wellington by Night!
Small but pretty



Not sure why
it was green



Cuba Street
The Bohemian street



Wholly Bagels!
Delicious!!



Yum!!
Looks good doesn't it?



The start of Lambton Quay
A long street...



A man and his dog
...still here the next day =)



Cable Car lane
Cute sign



"In Helen We Trust"
Weirdo....!!



The Parliament
and the Beehive



The Parliament
Library



Wellington Cable Car
and the city in the background



Suz
overlooking the city



The two of us
...and Wellington



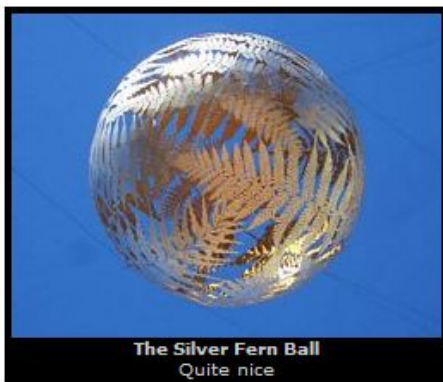
Just chilling...
On a nice and sunny day



At "Fidel's"
A very cool place



Civic Square
And the Fern Ball



The Silver Fern Ball
Quite nice



Te Papa
On our way inside



A Marae
...meeting house



The Waitangi
Treaty



Amaru
Enjoying a cold one



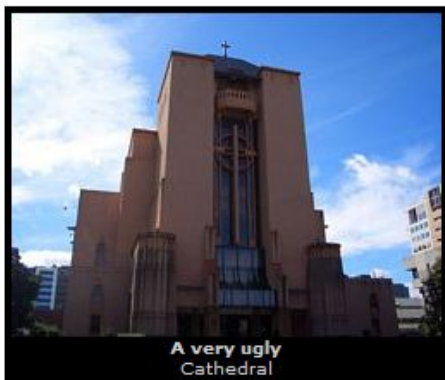
The city to sea
footbridge



Wellington City
as seen from Mt Victoria



The two of us
....again!!



A very ugly
Cathedral



The Backbencher
Pub & Cafe

[Back to Top](#)