



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



We're back in New Zealand for some skiing!

by Amaru & Suzanne, August 17th 2010

Why would we fly over to New Zealand to go skiing when we can do that here in Australia? Because we can of course ;)

It helps when you have enough frequent flyer miles to get the return journey for free... Unfortunately, as we only had enough leave to do a very small trip the plan was to go skiing for two days and then catch up with some friends in Auckland!

It all started very early... It's good to get an early start to the day but a flight at 6.15am meant that we had to be at the airport at 4am. Which of course is way too early for the trains to be running so we had to get a taxi. At least it was there on time to pick us up and at that time in the morning there wasn't any traffic either so it was a very quick trip.

After flying for 3 hours we landed in Auckland, picked up our rental car and approximately 5-6 hours later we had arrived at our destination, Ohakune!



After a 3 hours flight and 5 hours drive, we've finally arrived at our destination!



Main street in Ohakune
A nice little ski resort!

On arrival in Auckland the weather had been perfect, nice and sunny and pretty warm too. We arrived in Ohakune to clouds and rain, which made us wonder how that would affect our skiing for the next few days.

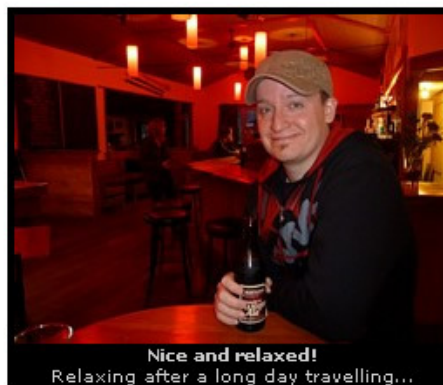
We checked into our accommodation and then went into one of the many ski rental shops where we were told that the mountain would more than likely be closed for the next two days due to gale force winds and heavy snow, but we should be ok to ski on Friday! The only problem with this was that we only had Wednesday and Thursday available so we were a bit down...

What can you do... it's not like we can control the weather so we just had to make the most of it!

We woke up the next morning and found out that as suspected, both ski fields were closed down due to bad weather. So with nothing else to do we took a drive over to the other side of Mt Ruapehu. It's the same mountain but with two different ski resorts. One is Turoa Ski Field (close to Ohakune where we were staying) and the other one is Whakapapa.

We thought that we might at least be able to drive to the top of the mountain and this way see some snow, but we were advised not to try it unless we had a 4WD or chains on your wheels (which of course we didn't).

So it was back to Ohakune for us... As the weather was getting slightly better after lunch, we decided to drive up the mountain towards the Turoa Ski Field. We knew that the road was closed at the 13km mark but figured that we could at least get high enough to see some snow =)



Nice and relaxed!
Relaxing after a long day travelling...



We made it up as far as the 11 km mark before the road started getting too icy to continue. We stopped and had a quick walk around in the snow. I grabbed some snow, looked over at Suz and was ready to throw a snowball at her but she was quicker than me and fled back into the car before I even got a chance to start a snowball fight ;)

The rest of the afternoon was spent using out hotel's gym, sauna and spa pool facilities... not a bad way to spend a rainy and cold afternoon!

The next morning we woke up, opened the blinds, saw that the weather was still horrible and started thinking about heading out of town earlier than planned. Before we did anything, I walked over to reception to check the weather report and the ski fields were apparently open!

So as it looked like we were going to get a day of skiing after all, we headed off to the rental shop, picked up all our gear (skis, boots, poles, jackets, pants, gloves & goggles) and made our way up the mountain.

On our way up the mountain the weather got worse and worse, we had a mixture of rain and snow coming down on us and the fog wasn't helping either. We literally couldn't see more than 10 meters ahead of us which made the drive up a bit nerve-wrecking...

We eventually made it to the parking and there it was time to try and get suited up whilst sitting in the car (not easy). From the car park to the entrance it's only 200-300m, but in full gear that's far enough so we were happy when a minivan passed and asked if we needed a lift to the entrance =)



As neither of us had skied for quite some time (about 9 years for Suz and over 15 years for myself) we started out in the kiddie slopes together with the other beginners ;)

2-3 runs later we felt ready to get on the chair lifts and do some more serious skiing (bring on the green lanes...hehe) in which we did ok, the only issue was the weather. By this time it had started snowing quite heavily and it was difficult to see where we were going.

It didn't help either that the ski path was quite narrow and you had a bit of a drop-off on the one side and the mountain on the other! But, we made it down safely and once down I wanted nothing more than to start heading even further up the mountain...

Suz unfortunately didn't quite share my enthusiasm and decided to stay at the bottom of the mountain, in the cafe, while I went crazy for a few hours!

I did a few trips to the top (as far as I could as some lanes were still closed off due to the weather) and on one of them I noticed that the sky was starting to clear up a bit, I could actually see as far as the car park...nice! 20min later, the clouds were all of a sudden gone and the sun was out. I now had slopes filled with fresh snow, great weather and hardly anyone skiing (it's great to ski mid-week).

The rest of the afternoon went quickly and with tired legs (I'd forgotten how much skiing takes out of you) I eventually joined Suz, walked to the carpark where we once again struggled to change in the car and then tried to leave....





At Turoa Ski Fields
The weather is a bit foggy!

Unfortunately all the snow that had arrived meant that our car was dead stuck... and we were not the only ones. A few other guys came over and asked for some assistance to push their car out of the snow. The problem was only in the parking area, as soon as we managed to push through it the car was free... We helped them, they helped us and after driving back to the village to hand our rental equipment back, we were back on the road, this time towards Rotorua.

As we'd been in Rotorua a few times before we didn't need to do the "touristy stuff", instead we headed straight off to the Polynesian Spa to soak and relax for a few hours (does wonders for sore muscles). The next morning we finally got the chance to try out the Luge here (every other time we've tried to Luge in Rotorua it's been raining).

We've done the Luge run in Queenstown before and the main difference is the view... Driving down the lane in Queenstown is just spectacular, saying that... the luge run here is almost more fun! Suz and I had a few runs racing each other down the hill!

We headed off to Auckland not long after that and were making quite good time when all of a sudden the traffic literally stopped! The final 10km into the city took us over an hour to drive (and this wasn't even during rush-hour) so by the time we reached our hotel we had to rush in, drop luggage, have a quick shower and then head out to meet old work mates for drinks.

So, we spent the weekend in Auckland, during which we met up with a few friends. We had some drinks on Friday night with Gary, John and Daren, then spent Saturday with Max and Elena and finally made it over to Devenport (can't believe we never did that while we were living here). Finally on Sunday we had brunch with Daren in Mission Bay before we got ready to head off to the airport and back home again.

Coming back to New Zealand was great! It was good to meet up with friends again, but also to travel in the countryside... NZ is such a beautiful country to drive in. We had a great time and will definately be back in the future... maybe a wine tour or just some more skiing... who knows!



Suz all geared up...
Ready to hit the slopes!



After a few test runs
it was now time to tackle the chair lift!



Suz
Making her way down the hill...



It's really coming down now...
Lots and lots of heavy snow!



Made it all the way to the top...
Anything higher is closed off right now!



It's clearing up...
I can see more than 10m ahead of me...



Clear skies and fresh snow...
It just doesn't get much better!!



A beautiful day!
We only got one day but what a day!



It was very foggy here 2 hours ago
Just a slight difference...



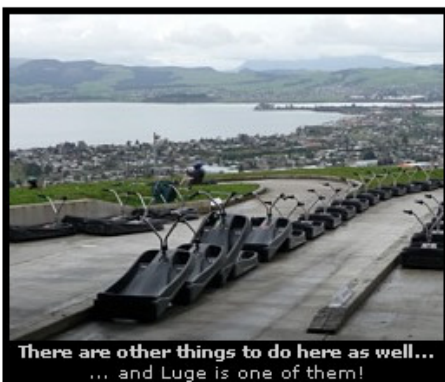
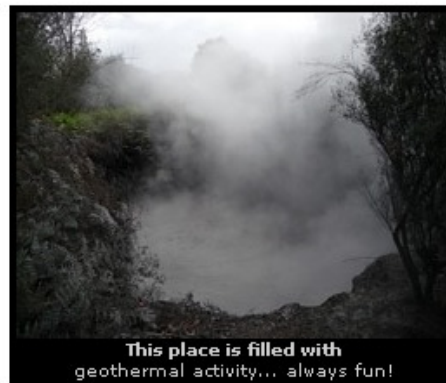
This was the busiest
the chair lifts got this day!



Going back up again...
Suz stayed behind though...



Almost all clouds are gone...
Just the one on the top left!





Great helmets aren't they?
You had to keep them on in the lift...



We're doing quite a few
chair lift rides during this trip!



Meeting a few of my old work mates
for a few drinks at O'Hagans



Auckland Sky Tower
We're back in Auckland for sure...



Devonport
We finally made it over across the bay!



Great view over Auckland
from the top of Mt Victoria!



Suz and I
at Mt Victoria!



Max and Elena
Same hilltop, different background!



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