

## DAY 19 – Tauranga & Rotorua, New Zealand

What an adventure today was! We docked in Tauranga at 8 this morning.



Probably one of the most beautiful cities we have been to thus far. It is located on a small peninsula with several mountains all around. Actually, they are not mountains - they are extinct volcanoes and we sit amidst a giant caldera!

This is a beach resort city and as we already live in one, we decided instead to head inland to Rotorua (we called it Roto-Rooter, but not to the locals!). This city

was an hour and 15 minutes by bus and is located on a large lake. The lake is the volcano mouth (head? Top? Whatever you call it) which has been filled with water naturally by floods, rains, etc.



We started with a Gondola ride up the mountain overlooking the city and lake.

Views were pretty impressive but our main reason for going up was to ride a luge.

They have several luge tracks – a luge in this case is a single seat cart you sit in and ride down the mountain using gravity as your power. You have steering and brakes.

What a load of fun that was! We felt 10 years old again! Once you get to the bottom you take a chair lift back up to the top again to either ride again, or take the gondola back down the mountain.



The luge track with the top station of the gondola in the background.



Pretty basic, pull back handle to brake and hang on!



There were stop off places on the down track with statues of dinosaurs.



Speeds are pretty good and you sit low to the ground – what a lot of fun!



Here we are riding the chair lift back up again.

Off to our next adventure – by now we'd left the bus behind us and were given a private driver in a comfortable mini-van just for us!

So hungry after our adventure we, with the help of our driver, embarked upon our two favorite missions:

1. Find the best meat pie in New Zealand
2. Buy more booze for our secret stash in our cabin.

Both goals were easily achieved with the help of our local driver who was most accommodating! We ate our pies next to the lake and they were



the BEST by far – the pie shop he took us to has apparently won several awards for the past several years. YES! We finally found THE BEST pies in NEW ZEALAND!!!

Time to move on.

Along the drive we saw Kiwifruit farms. Now I had always thought kiwifruit grew on a tree and it was a New Zealand fruit. I was wrong on BOTH accounts.



Kiwifruit originally came from China and were a type of Gooseberry. Kiwis were brought home by New Zealanders and made into a Big Huge Deal! Kiwifruit is now exported all over the world including back to China – they changed the name to Kiwifruit, I guess to spite the Chinese! They grow on vines, that look just like grapes.

Who would have thought? We originally thought they were grape vines – which New Zealand is known for their fantastic wines.



Next we went on a hike through the New Zealand forest to see some fauna and also a thermal pool created by the volcanic activity in the area.

As we drove around we saw steam coming up from the ground everywhere.

This lake is steaming hot, well over 100C degrees and the blue color is caused by the cobalt mineral content in the water.





We arrived for our next adventure – a riverjet boat ride up to the thermal pools!!!!

Somehow we just cannot stay away from boats!

The river jetboat was invented in New Zealand and just something you HAVE to do when over here.

What a rush!



The river is stunningly beautiful. The boat drafts 4 inches when on plane.



The boat seats 22 people and has twin 350 V8 engines, developing almost 800HP.



The thermal pools – water is BOILING







Riding back was amazing! Now he poured on the power and spun the boat around in circles, narrowly missing overhanging trees, stumps in the water, anything he could do to scare the living sh\*t out of us. It was a major rush. The boat spins in a complete 360.



I have portions of this ride on video, but the file is too big to upload through the extremely expensive and slow internet connection we have on the cruise ship. So when we get to LA I will upload it to YouTube.

While Yellowstone National Park it isn't – it was very interesting to see the similarities and the differences amongst continents - - It's a small world after all. ☺

We finished off the day with a visit to a volcanic mud pool where the mud itself was boiling away.

Quite amazing. Here are some of the photos Wendy took with funky bubbling and gurgling formations from the two pools above:





The toilet at the Geothermal pool – LOL!