

2/9/13 - Day 34 – Napier, New Zealand: We arrived in Napier about 11am which is later than usual and it made for a short but adequate visit in this lovely little town. Napier is located on the East coast of New Zealand's North Island, as shown in the map on the right.

As soon as the Amsterdam was docked and we could look around we were struck by the huge amount of logs stacked on the dock in preparation for loading onto waiting ships. It turns out that the logs were harvested from pine forests in the New Zealand mountains and were destined for export to Japan, Australia and Asia. The wood is used to make construction material and pulp for making paper. The photos below show the extent of logs stored on the docks and being loaded into ships.



These views show some of the logs on the dock and a ship partially loaded with logs. The logs had a very uniform length so that packing into the holds of ships could be done efficiently.

Obviously, export of timber is a major industry for New Zealand. The claim is that the forests are managed so that the industry can be sustained.





We have been to Napier before and we find the active small town atmosphere to be most enjoyable. The main feature touted by Napier for the tourist industry is that many of the downtown buildings have Art Deco architecture and Napier is called the Art Deco capital of New Zealand. The reason for the abundance of Art Deco in the town starts with a devastating earthquake in 1931. The concrete and masonry buildings making up most of the downtown were destroyed. There was a building boom in Napier over the next 3 to 5 years as the city was rebuilt. Since Art Deco was the architecture style receiving world wide acclaim at the time that style was chosen for most of the buildings that were put up in Napier. Although the Art Deco is an attractive feature of Napier we were looking forward to just spending our time walking around and revisiting some of the enjoyable sights we had seen on our previous visit.

We caught a shuttle bus that took us the 2 or 3 miles from the docks to the Visitor's Center located near the beach that forms the eastern boundary of the city. Unlike the last time we were here, today there was a high level of activity with competition between different New Zealand bagpipe bands underway for regional championship and awards. In addition, there were signs and people in 1930s costumes circulating to publicize Art Deco Weekend. Next weekend there would be a huge celebration of the history of Napier and the rebuilding of the city in the Art Deco style in the 1930s. The event is called the Art Deco Weekend and this will be the 25th anniversary of the celebration.

Before getting caught up in the celebrations we wanted to walk down the street that parallels the beach and check out some of the village stores we had visited before. These pictures show some of the views we got as we strolled along.



This large modern hotel on the left appeared to have taken the place of some of the quaint little shops.



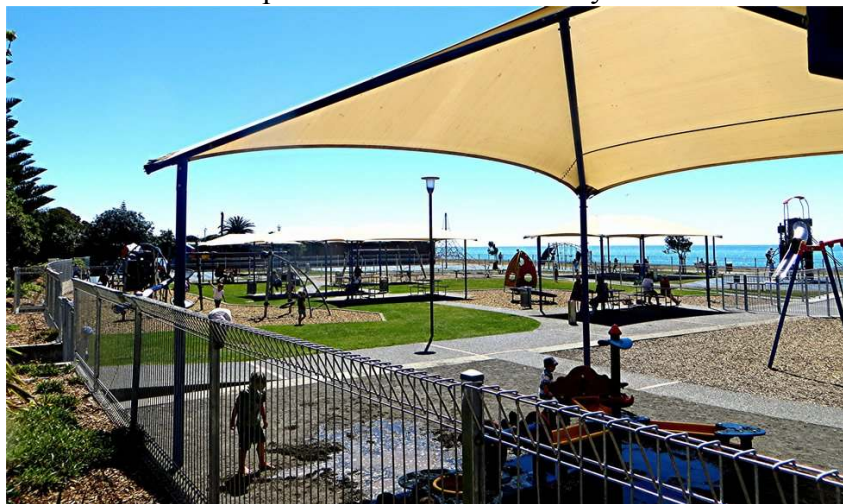
We came upon a familiar store as shown on the right. Ever since Barbara discovered "Possum Wool" here on our previous visit she



has wanted to return and collect some more of wonderful soft material. Possum wool is slightly controversial in that opossums are killed in order to harvest the wool. Here on the left is a picture of the type of opossum that provides the wool.

The opossums of New Zealand have long soft fur and are a distant relative of the opossums of North America. These opossums are marsupials that were introduced into New Zealand from Australia. The opossums reproduced rapidly and soon became a pest. They compete with farm animals because they eat a lot of vegetation. Some trees are killed because the opossums eat the bark and young sprouts. In the Opossum World store there was a sign saying “70 million opossums were eating 21,000 tons of vegetation each night in New Zealand”. In order to control the opossums some people hunt them professionally and harvest the pelts and wool as a commercial product. On the other hand, the killing of opossum is illegal in Australia so opossum wool and pelts can’t be marketed in Australia. In spite of some objection to the killing of opossums the cloth made from their wool is soft and warm so it is doing well as a commercial product.

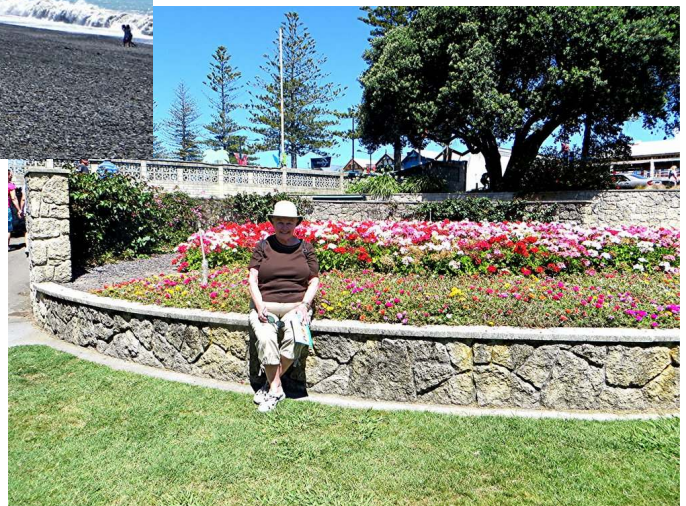
After completing our procurement mission in Opossum World we crossed the street and went into a small park-like area next to the Napier beach on Hawkes Bay. A lot of investment has been made by Napier in facilities for children. The picture on the right shows one of the new playgrounds we saw near the beach today. This observation seems consistent with the claim that 40% of New Zealanders are under 30 years of age.



The Napier beach is not ideal for recreation because it is made up of black pebbles. It is not pleasant to walk on and becomes very hot in the sun. We saw these boys on the left trying play on the beach but they soon gave up.



We proceeded back toward town through a nice garden area that bordered the beach.



We then left the beach area and headed into the main part of Napier. We were near the center of activity for the bagpipe competition which had drawn a large crowd. We were approached by two young ladies and a man dressed in 1930s clothes that the Great Gatsby might have worn. They were there to advertise the upcoming Art Deco Weekend festivities coming up next week. It turned out all three of them were college students on their summer break and doing this fun little job before returning to school. Before we moved on Orlin managed to get a picture with the Art Deco team.

There was a collection of vintage cars parked nearby to enhance the 1930s theme.



We walked down one of the main streets into the heart of town. We soon came to a pedestrian mall with shoppers going from store to store and, like us, enjoying the wonderful weather.



At the end of the mall was Clive Square identified by a prominent sign describing how the use of the square evolved over the years and played a role in the recovery of Napier after the 1931 earthquake.

There were beautiful flower displays in the square.



After enjoying Clive Square it was now time to check out some of the Art Deco buildings around town.

We are not experts in art deco but we made some assumptions and took pictures of what we thought represented the style. The following is a selection of photos we took in Napier today.



Note that the building on the right was built in 1934 during the recovery from the 1931 earthquake.



This collection of pictures above represents just a small sample of the art deco style buildings around Napier. While concentrating on the art deco theme we came upon the headquarters of the group sponsoring all the Art Deco Weekend activities. They had a nice poster mounted in a convenient location so Barbara took advantage of the situation to use the poster as documentation that her beloved library card had visited Napier today.



We had walked back to the park area that lined the Napier beach. In the park we came across the Pania of the Reef statue.



This statue commemorates an old Maori legend about how the maiden Pania was lured into the sea by beautiful siren voices. She swam out to meet the sirens. She then attempted to return to her lover but the sirens restrained her and turned her into the reef that now lies beyond the Napier breakwater. With regard to cultural significance the local Napier people place Pania of the Reef on an equal plane with The Little Mermaid in the harbor at Copenhagen Denmark.

We were now close to where the competition between various bagpipe bands was being carried out with gusto. Here are some photos of the kilt clad musicians doing their best to win the trophy.



This may have been an official play-off for these bagpipers with a timing clock set up.

It looked like there would be plenty of prizes and trophies to hand out when the bagpipe competition ended.



It was getting close to our time for returning to the Amsterdam. We caught the shuttle bus at the Visitor Center and took the short ride back to the Napier harbor and the Amsterdam.

While waiting at the harbor gate for the security check a gaily painted amphibious “Duck” pulled up and we spotted our friends, Roy and Gayle, who had taken the “Duck Tour of Napier”. Here on the right is the happy touring couple after seeing Napier from land and sea on the Duck.



Back at the Amsterdam we got a good picture of this “Ducky” flamboyant and versatile mode of transportation.



We finished our tour of Napier today with a warm feeling towards the many fine citizens. The city is clean and vibrant with active people promoting traditions associated with the vigorous recovery from the 1931 earthquake destruction. Napier is one of our favorite cities to visit.

The Amsterdam got underway about 6pm on a course down the east coast of the New Zealand North Island. When the ship gets to Cook Strait, which separates the North and South Islands of New Zealand, we will sail into the straight and dock in Wellington, on the North Island about 8am tomorrow morning. Wellington is the capital of New Zealand and we look forward to exploring that city.