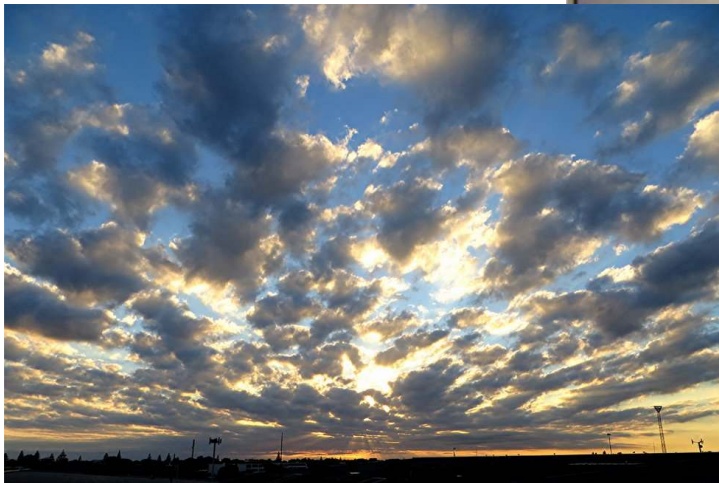


2/8/13 - Day 33 – Tauranga, New Zealand – Mount Maunganui: The large city of

Tauranga is located on the northeast coast of New Zealand's North Island, as indicated by the map on the right. About 8am the Amsterdam sailed into the well protected harbor and docked at a suburb of Tauranga called Mount Maunganui. The town of Mount Maunganui is home to many resorts and is a popular place for New Zealanders and other folks to spend their summer vacation days (we are in the summer season here).

When we stepped out on deck this morning to take a look at Mount Maunganui we were greeted by a marvelous radial cloud pattern spread across the sky, as shown below. We took that as a good omen for the day and made our plans to explore Mt. Maunganui.

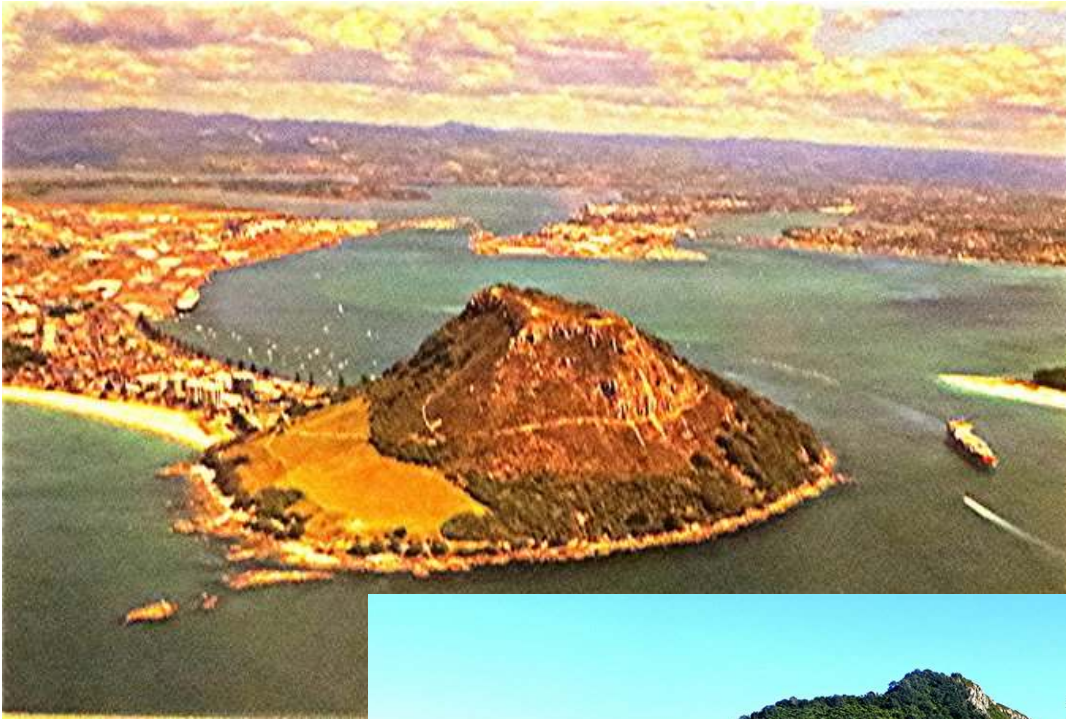


About 9am we joined with our friends Roy and Gayle and set out to walk around the imposing extinct volcano named Mount Maunganui and

also the shopping area of the town. As we were leaving the port area we spotted a prominent sign for the port of Tauranga that served nicely as a backdrop to document the arrival of Barbara's library card in Tauranga, New Zealand.



Shown below is a picture of the area showing Mount Maunganui and the town that lies at the foot of that extinct volcano. On the strip of land to the left of the mountain there is a white ship tied up at the dock where the Amsterdam was moored today. Our plan was to walk to the mountain and then take a clockwise route along the path that leads around the mountain near the water. After the mountain hike we would walk back to the ship through the town.



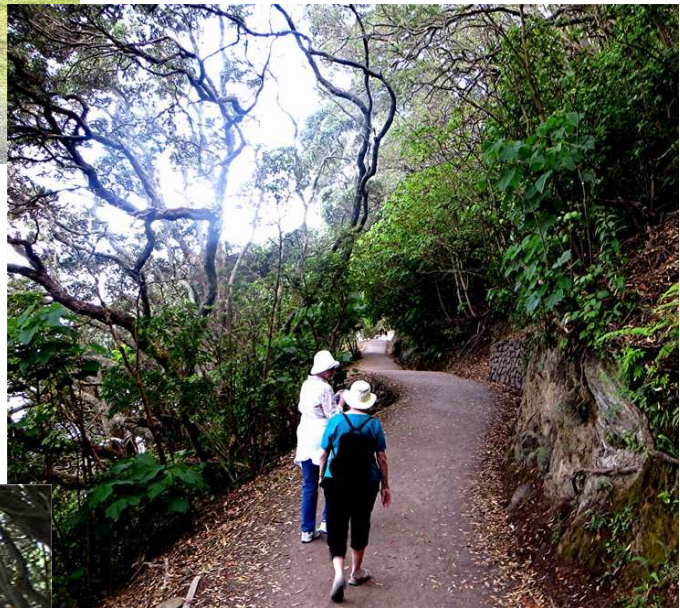
The picture on the right shows how the mountain looked as the hikers approached by following the beach line.



As shown in this picture on the left, there was a nicely arranged camp ground in place where the beach met the mountain. Many people were enjoying these economical vacation homes while more up-scale resort accommodations were available in the high rise buildings in the background.

By the time we reached the mountain, Roy decided to spend his time just enjoying the beach area while the rest of us did the hike. We estimated it would take about an hour to take a leisurely walk around the mountain and then we would join up with Roy.

The path around the Mount Maunganui was well maintained and covered with crushed gravel. There were a lot of people using the path probably because of the Amsterdam being in port and also because it was an absolutely beautiful day. Here is a picture on the left taken at a spot near the start of our hike around the mountain. The photo below shows the path in a more wooded section further on. The natural beauty of the place made for a very enjoyable experience.



Orlin briefly considered making a sprint up one of the trails to the top of the mountain. However, considering the risk of triggering a medical emergency and ruining the whole day, those plans were not carried out. Domestic tranquility was preserved.



There was what seemed like an unusual number of people, like these two young women on the left, pushing baby carriages along the path. We learned that about 40% of New Zealanders are under 30 years old and they are apparently getting on with building their families. They don't let caring for their babies interfere with this enjoyable kind of physical activity.

As can be seen in the above aerial photo of the mountain, the wooded part of the path gives way to a more barren section as one proceeds around the mountain in a clockwise direction. The lava from the extinct volcano started to make up more of the shoreline, as can be seen in the photo below.



Near the end of the trail we came across a few hundred sheep grazing on the grassy slopes of the mountain, as shown below.



After about an hour we completed the circuit around the mountain and exited the gravel path onto a board walk that took us back into the residential part of the town.

We joined up with Roy and headed into town to get more acquainted with the little town of Mount Maunganui.

We took some pictures of the homes along some of the city streets. Many of the single family homes and condos were rentals for the resort industry and some were occupied by full time residents. The New Zealanders were very friendly in all of our ports and today a local citizen working in his yard took time to chat with us about life in Mount Maunganui. It appears that the residents are happy with their lives here.

We noticed that many of the single family homes and condos had huge windows, scant evidence of curtains and no window screens. Here are a few photos to illustrate the point.



Some buildings along the beachfront were ostentatious, like the one on the left. Most homes were more modest like the one shown below.

We proceeded into the shopping district of town and did a little browsing.



The picture below shows the main street in town looking back at Mount Maunganui. Many commercial firms that are familiar to US folks, like Subway and Coca Cola shown in this picture, were in evidence in all the New Zealand cities we visited.



Gayle and Barbara satisfied their instinctive shopping urge while Roy and Orlin found some shade and watched the passing scene.

We meandered along the pleasant streets and eventually ended up back at the Amsterdam.



About 6pm the Amsterdam got underway from Tauranga and Mount Maunganui. From the deck the welcome sign on the roof of the cruise terminal was clearly visible and although we were leaving now it symbolized the friendly, inviting reception we have experienced in all the New Zealand ports. If one cared to search for it this roof sign is probably visible on Google Earth.



Earlier in the day while hiking around Mount Maunganui we had talked to a local couple who recommended climbing to the top of the mountain so we could see the smoke plume from an active volcano, known as Mount White, that is sometimes visible in the distance



off the coast. We passed up that opportunity but later the course of the Amsterdam took us fairly close to Mount White. About 9pm this evening we were out on deck and saw the volcano. The lighting was deep into twilight and really too dark to get a good photo but we tried anyway and got the picture shown on the left. There was no glow from lava, just the occasional puff of smoke.

This was a nice way to end our day in Tauranga and the volcanic area of Mount Maunganui. We were underway to Napier, New Zealand which is about 300 miles south of Tauranga by sea. We should arrive there about 8am tomorrow morning.