

2/6/13 - Day 31 – Auckland, New Zealand : This was our first full day in Auckland, New Zealand and we wanted to make the most of it. About 8:30am we left the Amsterdam and extracted \$200 New Zealand dollars from one of the many bank ATMs on Queen Street. With four more New Zealand ports coming up we hoped that would be enough cash for taxis, buses, souvenirs and miscellaneous items we might buy. Next we went to the Hop On – Hop Off (HO-HO) bus kiosk (www.explorerbus.co.nz) near the Queens Wharf and bought two tickets for a day of riding around the city. The tickets cost \$40 NZ (\$34 USD) each and would take us over about a 3 hour route through interesting neighborhoods with stops at significant sites in the city.

At 9am we were on the first bus that left the Queens Wharf area and we headed out on the highway leading along the Auckland harbor. It was a beautiful clear day and great for taking pictures, like those shown here.

Looking back toward the city over the yacht basin we got a good view of the skyline with the iconic Sky Tower at center stage.



Auckland appeared to be a prosperous city everywhere we looked.

This is a view across the harbor to the suburb of Devonport, where many of the city's workers live. They commute across the harbor by speedy ferry boats.



In addition to enjoying the lovely sights around Auckland, our immediate goal this morning was to go through the famous Kelly Tarlton's Sea Life Aquarium that is located a few miles east of Auckland on the harbor. In addition to sea life they feature an extensive display of penguin colonies under simulated arctic conditions. We got off the bus at the Kelly Tarlton's and decided that the entrance sign for the aquarium would make a good background for documenting the visit of Barbara's library card to Auckland, as shown below (note the penguin footprints on the pavement, leading to the entrance).



We had a few minutes to spend before the aquarium opened at 9:30 so we took a stroll along a nearby sunny walkway that bordered the harbor. In addition to a few tourists waiting for the aquarium to open, many residents of the city were also out getting a morning walk.



We bought tickets for the aquarium and penguin exhibit (\$24 NZ -- \$20 USD each) and started our self guided tour through the facility. The first thing we saw was a red Snowmobile like vehicle that we remembered riding through the Antarctic – penguin display on a previous visit several years ago. However, we soon found that the format of the exhibit had now been changed to a more user friendly walk-through arrangement so that we could proceed at our own pace.



We had been concerned about huge crowds of people at the aquarium but, apparently because of the early hour, the number of people going through was relatively small so there was no trouble taking our time and closely watching the animals.

Before getting to the animals the path took us through several displays showing the rather Spartan living quarters used by Scott and his team in their 1911 exploration of Antarctica. However, we rushed through to the penguin exhibit that included Gentoos and the larger King Penguins. The King Penguins were our favorites.

KING PENGUINS

Altenodytes patagonicus

Our King Penguins were bred and reared at Sea World in the USA, they arrived in New Zealand in September 1994.

They are the 2nd largest penguin after the Emperor Penguin. Adult King Penguins weigh 12-17kg, females are slightly smaller than the males.

Breeding

King Penguins breed between November and April, producing a single egg. Unlike other penguins, King Penguins incubate the egg on their feet, rolling their brood pouch over the top to keep it warm. Both parents take turns incubating the egg, which hatches after 53-55 days.

At birth, the chicks weigh 180gm and are covered with thick, brown feather down. The parents regurgitate partially digested fish, squid and crustaceans to feed their chicks.

The following is a collection of pictures we took as we proceeded through the penguin and aquarium exhibits.





The attendants in with the penguins were spreading snow and caring for these birds on the left which appeared to be undergoing a molting phase with their feathers.





Barbara finally completed her "Penguin Fix" and we could move on to the shark exhibit. We started with the prehistoric monster shark shown on the right.

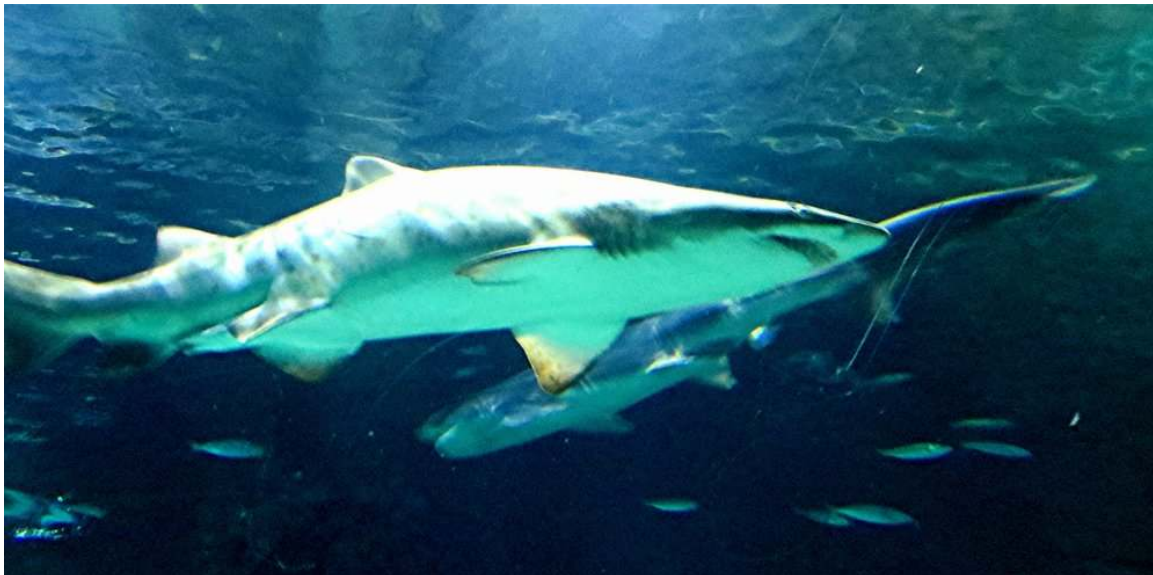




The aquarium utilizes a very nice display technique where visitors have a choice of a moving sidewalk or stationary walkway as they proceed through a glass tunnel through the aquarium exhibits.

Barbara was starting to feel self conscious about being in so many of the pictures so we gave her a break.

Sharks were hovering overhead.



We finished up the tour in the part of the aquarium showing a variety of colorful fish, lobsters and sea horses.



Leaving Kelly Tarlton's we caught the next HO-HO bus and were off to the Auckland Museum. Along the way we spotted a sign posting the price of gasoline here in Auckland. A liter of regular gas cost \$2.139 NZ (\$1.78 USD) or about \$7 USD per gallon. Diesel sells for about \$5 USD per gallon.



The streets of Auckland were lined with attractive houses and we got a few pictures of some typical examples.





We got off the bus at the Auckland Museum and waited to catch a connecting HO-HO bus that would take us through another part of the city and then back to the Museum. We

didn't go through the Museum because our main objective here was to catch another bus and get on with our tour around the city streets. However, we couldn't help but be impressed with the expansive grounds around the Museum. Much of the space is dedicated to sport fields for soccer and rugby. It was a beautiful day and many teams of young people were playing on the fields as shown in this picture on the right. The Sky Tower can't be missed in the background.



Our connecting bus arrived and we were off to see more parts of Auckland. A consistent theme around Auckland neighborhoods is that much attention is given to sport activity such as soccer (they call it football) and rugby. On the right is a picture of the huge Eden Park Stadium. A dynamic moment in a rugby game is portrayed by this wonderful Eden Park statue shown below.



The bus took us by the Auckland Zoo and several charming neighborhoods. We were then deposited back at the Auckland Museum. Another HO-HO bus soon picked us up and returned us to Queens Wharf while passing by the

Civic Theater, the Sky Tower and the America's Cup Yacht Harbor.

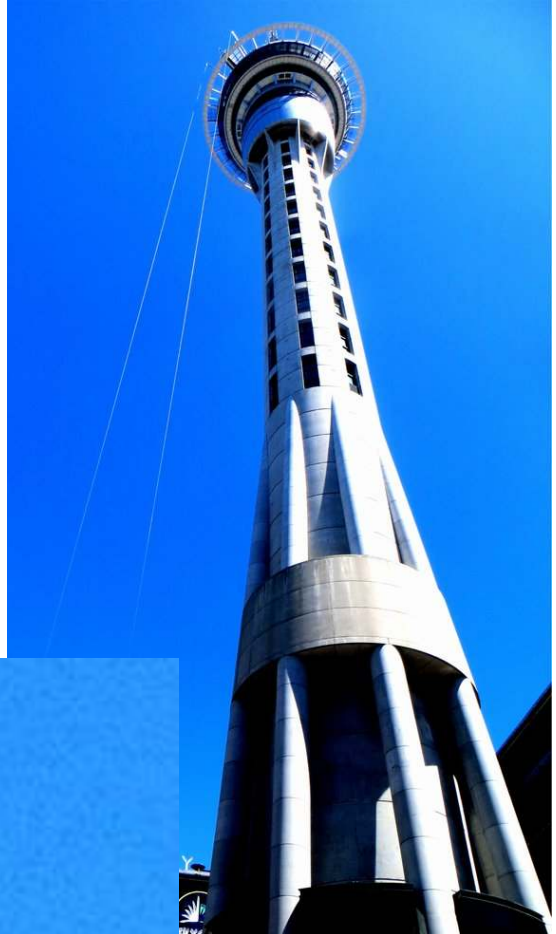
After lunch we continued to explore Auckland by walking from the Amsterdam up to the Sky Tower. Along the way we saw where it was possible to catch a free ride to Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium in this rather exciting looking shuttle bus. There were huge lines of people waiting for a ride. We could imagine the crowds at the aquarium had grown significantly from when we passed through this morning.



Earlier in the day, while we were on the HO-HO bus, we had passed by the Sky Tower and actually witnessed a person do their bungee jump from the top of the tower. This experience for real thrill seekers is offered at a cost of \$250 NZ (about \$210 USD). We were returning to the Sky Tower hoping that we might be able to photograph one of these heart stopping adventures in progress. We were successful in getting some pictures that give some notion of how they pull this thing off.

This view on the right shows the Sky Tower with two stabilizing cables connecting the top platform with the ground platform. During the initial jump the diver falls about 50 feet and then is stopped by the bouncy bungee cords while still fairly near the top of the Sky Tower. There are cameras located on the two stabilizing cables that photograph the diver who is suspended on a third cable and bungee cord. After the bungee bouncing has stopped the diver is rapidly lowered to the ground platform.

We got a photo of this lowering process for one happy lady (probably happy because she survived).



With our thrill seeking needs fulfilled by watching the bungee jump we continued our walk around the downtown part of Auckland. Eventually we returned to the Amsterdam at the Queens Wharf.

One of the sights along the port that fascinated Orlin was the absolutely massive amount of new cars that arrived in Auckland. We had a good view of other wharfs where three car carrying cargo vessels came and went while we were there. Soon after each of these ships was tied up crews of drivers would rapidly drive cars off the ship and park them on nearby wharfs. Another team would be simultaneously removing cars from the wharfs as the whole operation proceeded like a well oiled machine. A picture of the scene at one point in time is shown below.



The boxy looking blue and white ship is one of the three car carriers and the off loaded cars parked on the wharf are shown. The importation of cars that we have seen in Lima, Peru and here in Auckland suggests the global economy for automobiles should be in good condition.

In the evening on the Amsterdam there was a show put on by a local Maori dance team, as shown on the right. After the show we turned in for the night, looking forward to more sight seeing around the area tomorrow.

