

NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

Our first few days in New Zealand were in Auckland. Our lodging was an apartment not too far from where we docked and disembarked the ship. We walked from the ship to the apartment, manhandling our luggage in spurts of overexertion and short rest bits. It was "*not too far*" only when not hauling seven months worth of luggage. I won't do THAT again as my back suffered for a few weeks after making that poor decision.

Our central location gave us plenty of options for restaurants, shopping, Situation Rooms and exploring the central district of Auckland.

We made frequent use of Uber for exploring places not within easy walking distance.

We found a convenient Situation Room to start our days at right next to the apartment.



Auckland art of upright motif.

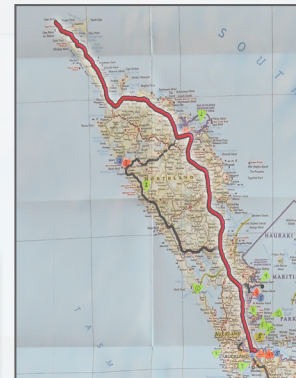


North Island

NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

We found a lot of sidewalk art in the downtown area near our apartment. This a fern motif, a common subject of art in New Zealand. Ferns are a distinctive part of the country's cultural and natural history. Dominant in native bush, there are 194 native species and 35 introduced species of ferns and lycophytes in New Zealand. They are important traditionally to Māori for food and medicine and frequently used as a symbol of New Zealand identity. The fern motif is featured in commercial logos, creative design, and national sports team jerseys as well as all kinds of art.



One of the things we didn't do on this trip was to visit Hobbiton. However, we did visit some of The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings movie related sites and some tours of related things like the Wētā Workshop (more about the Wētā Workshop in a later travelogue).

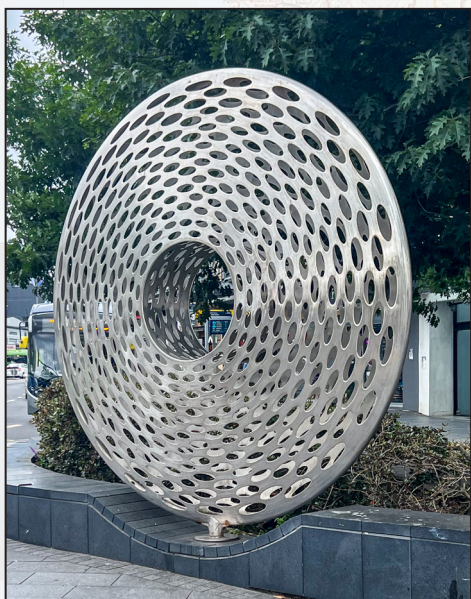
HOBBITON MOVIE SET PRIVATE TRANSFER

Experience the real **Middle-earth** in luxury.. Tour includes private transfers, **Lunch** & 2 and half hour **Guided Group Tour** at the **Hobbiton Movie Set**.

Duration: 8 hours

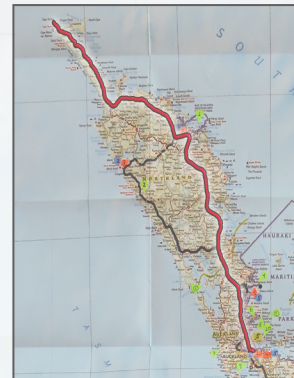
Adult: \$800

Child:\$400



NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE



We did not find many manhole covers of note in New Zealand, let alone one with place names on them. In Auckland, this plaque was about as close as we could find. Later in the trip we did find a couple, but it just isn't a thing in New Zealand.

We did the walk start and finish, just not most of the other 10K stuff between.

This short lived art installation was unique and interesting.

Look for us visiting and wandering around this art in all manner of social media, Internet, print materials and video.

'Answer the call'

by 2degrees

This melting ice sculpture, with phone calls from Earth persistently ringing within, symbolises the urgent need for us all to 'answer the call' on climate change.

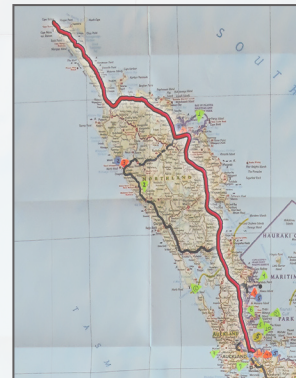
To discover how 2degrees is planning for a fairer future scan this QR code.



NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

We enjoyed frequently walking by this building with all the decorated pottery and ceramics on it. It was only a couple blocks away from our Apartment.



Along the waterfront one day we saw our eventual ride back to the USA docked and loading victims for their next cruise. It will be another four months before we ourselves become their victims. More on that in a future travelogue.



We happened across this artist's small gallery and became fascinated with his animated digital canvas pieces. We are still trying to figure out a way to get one that is set up for USA electrical (120 vs 220). We have a perfect place in our new Poulsbo home for it.

Here is a link to his web site:

<https://www.kemelyen.store>

NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

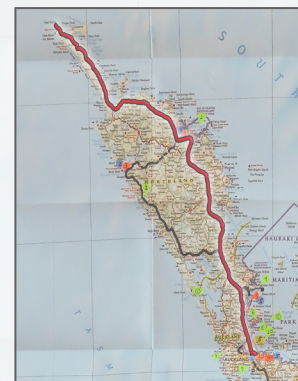
We picked up our brand new Chinese made Haval Jolion rental car just a short walk from the apartment. The Haval Jolion is a compact crossover SUV produced by Great Wall Motor. The name Jolion is an anglicized name from its Chinese market name "Chulian", meaning "first love".

Returning back to the apartment we stuffed our luggage into the Haval Jolion and readied for our exit north out of Auckland to the Bay Of Islands.

This would be our first day of driving on 'the other side' of the road and Wendy was not hiding her apprehension of my 'the other side' driving skills very well. Starting out in the middle of New Zealand's largest city, navigating the busy downtown streets and then the crowded and clogged highways through the center of Auckland as the first day of driving on 'the other side' was a trial-by-fire affair.

The Haval Jolion had lots of driver safety features. It would track my eye movement to detect what it felt was inattentiveness, then beeping and displaying alarms... obliterating the GPS road guidance on the monitor that we were relying on to get out of the city. It started beeping when it felt the car was not sufficiently centered in the road and moving the steering wheel to help with placing the car where ever the Haval thought it should be on the road. There were a myriad of other less than helpful features attached to various beeping and alarms.

It was an hour of so before we could find a safe place to pull the car over and figure out how to adjust the Haval's settings to turn off the most annoying features of the Haval's help. Over the next weeks we would come to an understanding with the Haval that we would prefer little of the help it offered us. However, as sophisticated as the Haval thought it was, it could not remember many of those settings once we turned it off. So.. we had a preflight checklist of settings we would have to adjust each time we started the Haval in order to avoid the annoying beeps, alarms, displays, auto steering, etc. And yes, we would forgot more than a few times to do that, only to be promptly reminded via beeps, alarms and displays.



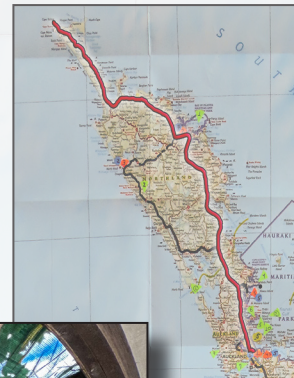
This is how we stuffed seven months of luggage and supplies into our rental cars. First the big stuff, then the daily stuff (chilly bag not shown), and then a cover for it all.



NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

After our escape from Auckland traffic and silencing most of the screaming alarms of the rental car we pulled over for a slight rest and pit stop at the famous public toilets in the town of Kawakawa. These famous public toilets (as there are several toilets of tourist attraction quality in New Zealand) were designed by Austrian artist Friedensreich Regentag Dunkelbunt Hundertwasser (1928-2000) and built with recycled materials like bricks, bottles, tiles and colorful pottery.



We visited several other public toilets of note too. Some you can see on this web site:

<https://thecuriouskiwi.co.nz/blog/2016/13-unusual-toilets-in-the-north-island/>

New Zealand even has public toilet design competitions. And just in case you were wondering, there are international competitions for public toilet design as well. Here is a link to one of the most prestigious ones:

"Shh...It Matters - 2023 Public Toilet Design": <https://www.archiol.org/result/shh-it-matters-2023>

NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

Late that afternoon, surviving our first and one of our few long drives of the New Zealand trip, we made subtropical Paihia on the Bay of Islands. This would be our base for exploring the Bay of Islands area for a few days. It wasn't long before we found a nice Situation Room. It was a much nicer view and more tranquil environment than being on the ship anchored out in the bay a couple weeks ago.

In Paihai we had our first experience at being served by a robot. Through out New Zealand we found that young people, in particular Europeans, came to New Zealand to work in the service industry for the summer. I don't think we ran into a single US citizen doing this though. All of this is arranged via the Internet from their home countries. We felt it was a great opportunity for young people that we didn't have when we were that age and that we would have taken advantage of.



Air tours are popular but we kept our feet on the ground, but there were many who didn't.



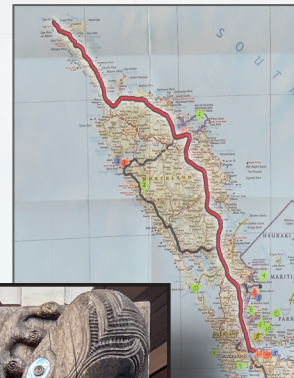
Paihai has a public toilet of note as well.





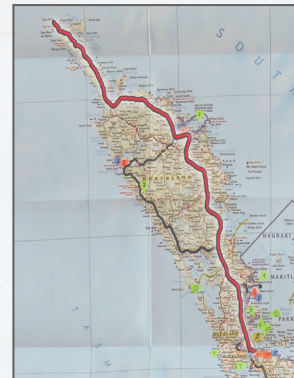
NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

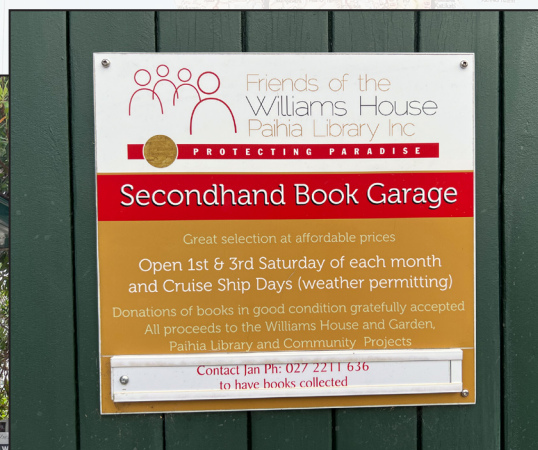
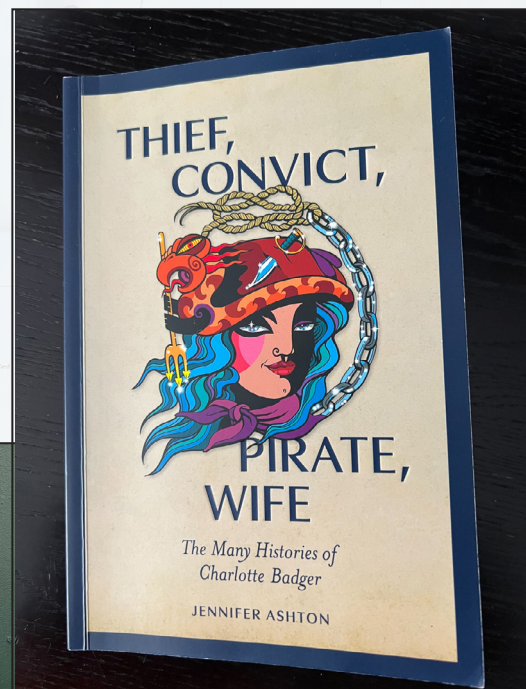


NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE



We had a nice meal at Charlotte's Kitchen. It was named after local legend Charlotte Badger. Charlotte Badger (1778 to after 1843) was a former convict who was on board the *Venus* during a mutiny in Tasmania in 1806. Taken to New Zealand, she was rescued by Captain Turnbull of the *Indispensable*, and eventually she returned to Sydney. In the intervening centuries, a number of writers have contributed to the fiction that she took an active role in the mutiny and she became known – erroneously – as Australia's first female pirate. I found a book about her to read as we explored her territory. It was filled with interesting stories of Charlotte Badger, both fiction and non-fiction.



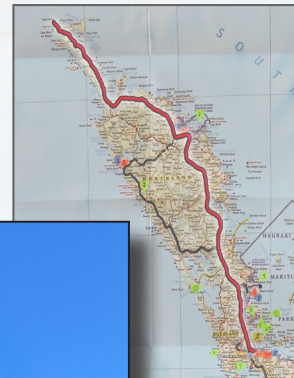
I could hardly see Wendy from behind my chicken sandwich meal. There seemed to be an "Enormous Chicken Sandwich Contest" in New Zealand. I had one of these a couple of times and the theme always seemed to be *bigger* is better.



NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

The Williams Memorial Church of St Paul is an Anglican church built in 1925 / 1926 to commemorate the Anglican missionary Henry Williams. Williams established a mission at Paihia and converted many local Maori. Built of bluestone, the church is the fourth to be built on the site. The oldest grave dates back to 1826.



Waitangi Golf Club course offers great views while searching for your little round ball.



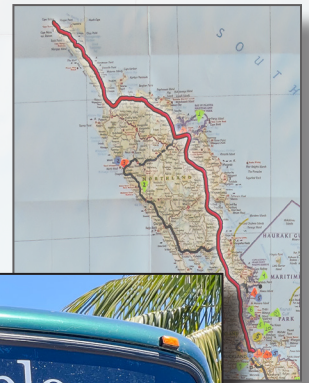
Waitangi Treaty Grounds to the right marks New Zealand's start as a bicultural nation, where Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed by Māori chiefs and the British Crown on 6 February 1840. It is considered New Zealand's most important historic site by many.



NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

We did not see many large (by North American standards) motor homes in New Zealand, most are smaller class C or class B. This one in Paihai was a class A, about 35 feet in length. We really liked learning a new word that seemed applicable to our lifestyle.



NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

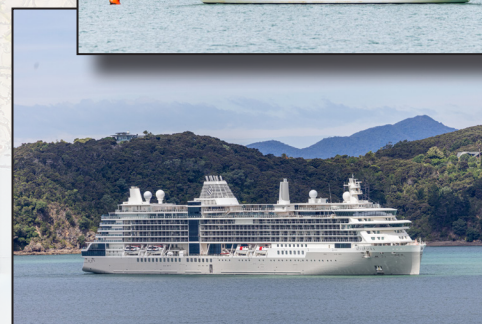
AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

One of our side trips out of Paihai was the small village of Russell, One get there by a variety of small ferrys.



There were plenty of other boats to admire and lust after as well. The twin masted catamaran to the right was unusual to me. I can't remember ever seeing one with masts on each hull in this fashion before. At first I thought it was two separate mono hulls.

My favorite though, was the one below named *Wild Duck*, anchored dock side in the small Russell bay, (Koroareka Bay). AND, wouldn't you know it... it was for sale. Day dreams a plenty as I watched it beckoning to me over and over throughout our visit to Russell. It seemed to be visible from nearly everywhere we walked along the Russell waterfront. *Wild Duck* was built in 1937 as a fishing boat. It was made of kauri wood, is about 42 feet long and has had several restorations.



NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

The walkway along the Russell waterfront was enjoyable with a perfect Situation Room, under a large Pohutukawa tree, looking out onto the bay, and with a view of the anchored *Wild Duck* as it continued beckoning to me. It was almost too much.



Refreshing Rascals & Reprobates since 1827

QUAL MARK
SILVER

NO VACANCY



Typical of many post offices we saw, especially in smaller towns, the boxes were accessible from outside of the building.





NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE



Another day trip out of Paihai was to the very northwestern tip of New Zealand's north island, Cape Reinga or Te Rerenga Wairua in Māori, meaning *leaping-off place of spirits*. Reinga is the Māori word for *underworld*. Both refer to the Māori belief that the cape is the point where the spirits of the dead enter the underworld.

According to mythology, the spirits of the dead travel to Cape Reinga on their journey to the afterlife to leap off the headland and climb the roots of the 800-year-old pōhutukawa tree and descend to the underworld to return to their traditional homeland of Hawaiki, using the Te Ara Wairua, the '*Spirits pathway*'. At Cape Reinga they depart the mainland, turn briefly at the Three Kings Islands for one last look back towards the land, then continue on their journey.

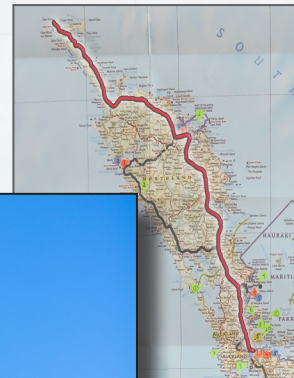
We were told that this tree hanging on the cliff to the right was the tree they lept from, but it sure doesn't look 800 years old.

The lighthouse in the above image was built in 1941, replacing the lighthouse in the image below, which was built in 1879 on the nearby Motuopao Island.



NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE



We drove down 90 Mile Beach (actually 55 miles long) on our way and watched fellow tourists do some bodyboarding down the Te Paki dunes. There were a few of the obligatory face plants in the sand of course.



NEW ZEALAND 2024 /2025 - PART VII

AUCKLAND - BAY OF ISLANDS - NORTH CAPE

In addition to our normal birding activity as we went along, we did make a day trip to Urupukapuka Island. Birdlife is abundant thanks to ongoing conservation efforts that have made the island predator-free.

Later in our series of New Zealand travelogues, we will devote one or more issues entirely to our resulting New Zealand birding images.



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