

AOTEA ROA

The land of the long white cloud. That's what the Maori's call New Zealand.

Having spent four weeks working non-stop in an office in Auckland, including weekends, we decided to take a break for a weekend. I was working there with a Swedish lady, Christina, installing new computer systems.

We had not seen any of New Zealand. We decided to go to Rotorua where there are hot springs bubbling out of the Earth.

Before we left, various people in the office warned us not to go near the Maori's; we would have a bad time. So we did not know quite what to expect as we drove down **on Friday night**.

Rotorua is very much a tourist place but we didn't do much on the first night, just had a quick meal in the motel and slept.

Next morning, we got up early and found each of the rooms had a hot bath just outside the window of the room, heated by the natural springs. That was quite a strange way to start the morning. After breakfast we set off to find the delights of Rotorua. The town smells like raw rotten eggs. It's sulphur.

You have to take care walking round the springs because they're not all going at the same time. When one starts another one stops. Boiling water is coming up out of the ground. There is no need for central heating in the house, all is heated naturally. After a day sightseeing, we decide to go for dinner. We found a very nice restaurant and enjoyed a lovely dinner for two. We were careful because over one side there was a whole party of thirty Maori's having a raucous birthday party. Remembering what they said in the office we kept to ourselves. Near the end of the meal, we found we were the only other people in the restaurant.

One Maori came to our table, asking us to join them. “No,” we said, “we are too tired.”

The rest of their friends called, “Come on, come on.” We still said no, whereupon they all picked up their plates and cutlery and joined us. We had no option. I found them delightful.

We spent the rest of the evening with them. This developed into a houseparty. “Come back with us we're going back to her house for a party” “Yes, yes, you must come.”

So we went. We stayed until four in the morning, singing to guitars, dancing, jumping in the hot tub outside.

Amazing, what a wonderful time.

Next morning – no, afternoon in fact, we drove back to Auckland.

When we went in the office **on Monday morning**, they asked did you have a good time this weekend?

“Just delightful, wonderful.”

“What did you do?”

“We went to a party with the Maori's.”

“You didn't.”

“` We did.”

They are wonderful friendly people We had a wonderful, lovely time. A perfect weekend.

The land of the long white cloud belongs to the Maori's.

499 words (without title)

