

Halliburton Highlands Friendship Force Journey 2019

**Invercargill Southland Feb 28 –
March 7**



**Bus Trip: Invercargill to
Nelson March 7-12th**

Nelson March 12-18th



Wellington/Melbourne March 18-19th

Bus Trip: Great Ocean Road March 20-22nd

**Mt Gambier
March 22-29th**



FFHH: The Journey Begins: Invercargill Southland Feb. 28 – Mar. 7, 2019: Kia Ora

Feb. 28: Invercargill, New Zealand: We arrived at Invercargill airport at different times with pick up by our night hosts. Invercargill with a population of 52,000, is located on New Zealand's South Island and was founded in the 1850's. It is New Zealand's closest city to Antarctica. For all Canadians the Antarctic Ocean is known here and in Australia as the South Ocean.



Before going to the group welcome, we visited E. Hayes & Sons Hardware Store (others did this later in the week). This hardware store had displayed many motorcycles including ones designed, built and owned by the infamous Burt Monroe. He grew up just 30 km away. They have his 1920 Indian Scout Cycle also the red torpedo shaped one that he raced on the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah. His speed was 179 km in 1962 and earned the name "the World's Fastest Indian".

FF Southland welcome with introductions and jokes from the town crier, Lynsey McKerrow. This was held at the home of Russell & May Evans who have had a bird sanctuary and hospital on their property for over 20 years. Unfortunately, they are moving for health reasons and the sanctuary is closing.



Russell showed us around and introduced us to many special birds including parrots and Keas which they have been able to breed. They have rescued and helped many return to the wild. It is truly their passion and the birds are extended family who they will greatly miss when they move to the city.

March 1: The Templeton Fax Mill & Heritage Museum: was a wonderful operational mill. It closed in the 70's because labour costs were too high, and synthetics were replacing flax. The man who gave us a demonstration and ran the equipment was the grandson of someone who was employed there and oiled the machinery, now he does. The flax plants thrive in wet areas. These are not the same plants that we eat the seeds from, those are silk flax. The Maori people who arrived about 1,000 years ago used sharp clam shells to strip the outer green membrane off the fibrous leaves, then after drying the inner layers could be woven for baskets and clothing. The European settlers also washed and dried the pulp that came out of their machinery but used it mostly for rope and twine. Before modern preservatives ships lines (ropes) needed to be replaced every three months.



The Te Hiko Heritage Museum in Riverton was a place to look at whaling and learn about the gold rush and the Chinese who came to continue the work when the Europeans left after it got too hard to find enough gold easily. We learned a lot about the challenge of exploring and settling a new world.

March 2: South to Invercargill and Bluff (oldest European town 1824):

The lookout at Bluff Hill specular views of the port, the sprawling aluminum smelter and Sterling Point sign post. Ocean views of Stewart Island were specular. Our host had their sailboat moored at Stewart Island, but the weather layered on top of the schedule thwarted our plans to go sailing – only needed a 1.5-hour ferry to the island... and back.



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In Invercargill we saw Henry, a 120-year-old tuatara (small lizard) as well as gardens in Queen's Park and the Water Tower, banks and the Victoria Railroad Hotel 1920. The Awarua Communication Museum had an interesting old theatre with movies showing the very challenging dam and hydro line construction to power the smelter, a film about the historic steam train, the Kingston Flyer. For intermission ice cream cones that were made up in advance and stored in baggies in the freezer were served – great idea for a children's birthday party.



March 3: Individual tours with hosts: We did Howell's Point and Harbour, a hike to the top of More's Reserve and views of Stewart island without the fog. Our host were retired farmers who farmed deer (sounds like a great idea for Haliburton), sheep and then on to hiking in the seaside hills and eating fresh Bluff oysters.



March 4: What a surprise to find the enormous Bill Richardson Transport Museum with antique cars and trucks plus costumes from WOW with wearable art. My nephew who races fixed gear bicycles was amazed to hear that Invercargill had a world class Velodrome, which was also attached to a fully funded indoor stadium that hosted everything from large music



concerts to basket ball, net ball, even the Harlem Globe Trotters were about to appear and an international televised sheep shearing competition was a recent highlight.



March 5: East to the Caitlin's: Osaka Museum in Clinton had a history of whaling and shipwrecks. We went on a walk-through forest to reach Purakaanai Falls. Looked for Penguins at Curio Bay but due to lots of recent development like Curioscape RV Park and Restaurant they seem to have left the area. Saw Niagara Falls and had dinner at the Niagara Falls Restaurant celebrating Rebekah's birthday.



March 6: Riverton & Invercargill: Farewell dinner. Shelly Chainey a Maori and the FF Southland, journey co-ordinator showed us her ceremonial cloak of feathers.

March 7: We left by bus saying goodbye to a lot of new friends.



FFHH: Bus Trip from Invercargill to Nelson New Zealand March 7 to March 12, 2019

March 5: Meeting Peter (Guide/Driver) and New Journey Members: After our week with the Southland Friendship Force in Invercargill we headed out on our 6-day chartered bus trip with Peter Higginbottom. In total we travelled 2500km from the south of the South Island to the north of the South Island.

The first stop was Milford Sound in the pouring rain. Geographically it is not a "Sound," but a "Fiord." Milford Sound is in Fiordland National Park and is a UNESCO World Heritage Sight.



The sound is home to dolphins, seals and penguins. With little or no soil on the mountains, trees interlock their roots and cling to the rock walls, relying on moss and lichens for nutrients. Many tree avalanches leave the



sides of the hills scared creating many waterfalls when it rains. We saw hundreds of waterfalls during our rainy visit, which cascaded down the mountain sides and the wind whisked them off and so many never reached the bottom.



March 8: The second day of our bus trip took us to Queenstown: The trip was along Lake Wakatipu on a clear sunny day with many inspiring views. Queenstown is located on a scenic, curved beach looking across to a treed park and the Remarkables Mountains in the background. The highlight of the day was a gondola ride to Bob's Peak to enjoy the panoramic views of the city, lake and mountains. An amazing buffet was available as we took in all the scenery. Queenstown is located at 45 degrees South latitude.

March 9: The third day we travelled to Wanaka a quiet lakeside town and followed the shoreline of Lakes Wanaka and Hawea before we crossed the Haast Pass to the west coast. The weather cooperated and we had a magnificent view of Mount Cook and walked up the valley to the terminal face of the Franz Josef Glacier.

FFHH: Bus Trip from Invercargill to Nelson New Zealand March 7 to March 12, 2019

March 10: Our fourth day saw us travel back over the Southern Alps via Arthurs and Porters Passes, both almost 1000 meters and on to Christchurch. Peter drove us around the city and showed us the results from the destruction from the 2011 Earthquake. Some buildings had been restored but the two main cathedrals have not been repaired. The city is still not the beautiful city it once was. We had a view of the “Cardboard Cathedral” that was built as a substitute for the time being. The rest of the afternoon was spent touring the Botanical Gardens and Museum along the river. This was only a few days before the Christchurch mosque shootings.



March 11: After leaving Christchurch we travelled southeast to Akaroa. This quaint little town is on Akaroa Bay. It is in the centre of an ancient inactive volcano and the main street runs alongside the beach. There are a few quaint little gift shops and cafes. The buildings are old colonial style. Next, we headed for the Waipara Region, noted for vineyards and agriculture. We travelled through a long valley with varied crops. Waipara is known for Pinot Noir, Riesling and Chardonnay grapes. We stopped briefly at Waipara Hills Winery to do some tasting. We spent the night in Hanmer Springs where several people took advantage of the heated geothermal pools.

March 12: On our sixth day we headed back over the Southern Alps via Lewis Pass headed for Nelson. It has an elevation of 907m (2976 ft.). Supposedly beautiful views BUT due to rain, we were in the clouds for the whole twisty-turny way. We didn't see much through our fogged-up windows.



FFHH: Bus Trip from Invercargill to Nelson New Zealand March 7 to March 12, 2019



The drizzle continued as we made our way up the beautiful coast along the Tasman Sea. The beaches were grey and rocky unlike the sandy beaches that we had seen everywhere else. We came to Punakaiki and the Pancake Rocks which are formed from limestone. The columns looked like layers and layers of pancakes stacked. We hiked along the trail and had many views of the pancake rock formations, blowholes and lush vegetation.



We travelled a long way that day to Nelson where our wonderful driver and guide, Peter, handed us over to our Nelson hosts.



FFHH: Journey to Nelson New Zealand March 12 to March 18, 2019

March 12-17: Our Journey to Nelson rounded out our experiences in South Island. We experienced culture, history, more beautiful scenery and agricultural pursuits.



Highlights included a tour of PIC's peanut butter factory whose founder had a very eclectic career which somehow ended with the establishment of his involvement in making and marketing peanut butter.



We toured the original "World of Wearable Art" museum which also included a very large and comprehensive automobile museum.



The Nelson area is well known for its excellent wine, so we were delighted to enjoy a very informative tasting at a local winery. A boat and short hiking tour of nearby Abel Tasman National Park added to our feast of beautiful South Island scenery and included a sighting of sea lions reclining on a rocky shoreline.



FFHH: Journey to Nelson New Zealand March 12 to March 18, 2019

We also visited a kiwi and apple fruit farm and got a tour of a family farm growing and producing hops. We were reminded of how a focus on export markets is a central theme in New Zealand agriculture.



On our final day we focused on the many sights in downtown Nelson which included historical South Street, a spectacular cathedral and a fascinating city market.

...and a fine Farewell Dinner



FFHH: South Ocean Road to Mount Gambier March 20 to March 22, 2019

From Nelson to travelled to Wellington New Zealand, flew over to Melbourne Australia, ...and now we are to the Great Ocean Road is the next phase of our adventure!

March 20: We set off from Melbourne under cloudy skies. Our driver and guide, John Stapleton, navigates through the busy streets with a running commentary on the growth and development of this beautiful city. The streets are humming with people grabbing a quick coffee on their way to work. The elegant Georgian architecture speaks of the city's 19th century gold rush wealth.



Our first stop is the Old Treasury Building which was constructed in 1858. This fine Renaissance Revival building was designed by nineteen-year-old J.J. Clark who went on to achieve great fame as one of Australia's foremost architects. Our group enjoys exploring the exhibits detailing the Victorian gold rush. We are especially amazed at

the 'largest gold nugget' found during this period.



As we head out of Melbourne, the glittering city gives way to an industrial landscape and then on to the dry, barren countryside. We pass through Geelong and Belles Beach, home to the world's longest running surfing competition. Alas, no big waves today!



Our lunch stop is the Narana Cultural Center. We are greeted by Eastern Gray Kangaroos, Wallabies and Emus who wander through the adjacent fenced enclosures. Lunch includes our first taste of Kangaroo meat. We found it lean and flavourful.



FFHH: South Ocean Road to Mount Gambier March 20 to March 22, 2019

We are all quite excited to arrive at the Memorial Arch marking the gateway to the Great Ocean Road. These 243 kilometres stretch of road was built by returned soldiers between 1919 and 1932 and is dedicated to those who died during WW1.

During this stop we meet a group from Orangeville. It's fun sharing space in each others' photographs.



The scenery along the road is spectacular. The road hugs the cliff side with sheer drops on our left and towering walls of rock on our right. Beautiful lookouts along the route presents fantastic photo opportunities.



Along our route we stop for about twenty minutes as we wait for construction crews to give us the 'all clear' to continue.

High up on the cliff are workers in full climbing gear dealing with unstable rock outcrops.

It makes us appreciate the formidable task of building this roadway almost one hundred years ago.



FFHH: South Ocean Road to Mount Gambier March 20 to March 22, 2019



Our next stop at Kennett River provides us with our first Koala sightings. The elusive animals are tricky to spot and even more difficult to photograph.



However, the King Parrots and Crimson Rosellas are present in abundance and land on our outstretched hands and even our heads!



At the conclusion of this wonderful day we arrive in Apollo Bay. This beautiful town is sometimes referred to as 'Paradise by the Sea'. This idyllic coastal town marks the halfway point on the Great Ocean Road. We stroll through the town and most of us end up in a wonderful casual seafood restaurant for our evening meal.

March 21: Apollo Bay to Warrambool: We awake the next day to fog and light rain. Our first stop is Maits Rest which is a spectacular 800 metre walk through a cool temperate rain forest of Beech trees and Mountain Ash gum trees. Many of these giant trees are over 300 years old. The gentle rain that is falling seems quite appropriate in this setting. We had been alerted to watch for the black carnivorous snails. We did find one and it enjoyed being the center of attention for many photographs.

We continue inland through Lavers Hill. Along the way we keep our eyes peeled for Koalas in the trees. The Koalas are quite elusive but the tree damage they have caused is very evident.



FFHH: South Ocean Road to Mount Gambier March 20 to March 22, 2019

As we return to the coast the fog seems to intensify. This is unfortunate since we are so excited to arrive at the viewpoint for the 'Twelve Apostles'. These are the iconic limestone sea stacks that rise from the Southern Ocean. Currently there are only eight Apostles left, the ninth having dramatically collapsed in 2005. However, the weather is not on our side. The heavy fog enables us to see only two or three pillars.



Thanks to our wonderful guide, we return later in the day when the skies have cleared, and we are able to enjoy the spectacular views that we had been looking forward to. Our next stop is the Loch Ard Gorge. This point marks the far end of the Apostles. This is the location of a famous shipwreck 'the Loch Ard'. The Loch Ard had departed from England with 54 people on board in 1878. The crew encountered heavy fog and ran aground on a reef. The only survivors sought shelter in the Gorge below. By descending the Gibson Steps, we are able to view this amazing setting from the beach.

FFHH: South Ocean Road to Mount Gambier March 20 to March 22, 2019

Other spectacular views include 'London Bridge'. This limestone archway used to look like a bridge but in 1990 the center collapsed. Two visitors had just crossed the arch and had to be rescued from the now isolated outcrop.

We take time for a group photo at the Grotto. This is a spectacular collapsed sinkhole with an arch to a ledge with a marine pool a few metres above sea level.

We now leave the spectacular coast road. At the lovely Allansford Cheese World, we stock up on picnic supplies for tomorrow. Warrambool, our destination for the evening, marks the western end of the Great Ocean Road.



March 22: Warrambool to Mt Gambier: Once again, we wake up to a grey, overcast day. We are happy when the sun breaks through the clouds a little later on.

Our first stop is the Merri Marine Sanctuary. A wonderful boardwalk leads us along the shoreline. It is renowned for fabulous snorkelling and scuba diving...too bad that we could not have experienced this. The nearby Tower Hill Reserve is one of many volcanic calderas in this region. A short walk to the summit provides us with fabulous views in every direction.



Then on to Port Fairy. This is the last destination on Victoria's famed Shipwreck Coast. This charming fishing village boasts wide streets lined with Norfolk pines and old stone churches. It is the perfect location for our picnic. All the cheeses and goodies purchased yesterday are unveiled and everyone digs in.

A most fascinating stop is next on our agenda. We walk through a surreal 'petrified forest' which, in actual fact, is not a petrified forest at all but the remnants of a collection of hollow limestone tubes eroded over millions of years.... or so says the sign. Andy is not convinced!

A short stop at the Piccaninne Ponds follows. These are karst "sink holes" containing the clearest water you can imagine.

We are now travel to Mt. Gambier for the next phase of our adventure. The Great Ocean Road was even more spectacular than many of us expected. Thanks, John, for being such a great tour guide!

FFHH: Journey to Mount Gambier March 22 to March 29, 2019

We were hosted March 22-29 by the wonderful members of Mount Gambier FF club.

The kick-off was a potluck tea (as they called dinner) in a hall, the first of many great potlucks.

Our first day was cool and cloudy, but we enjoyed a morning cruise on the Glenelg River, complete with Devonshire tea—scones with jam and cream, a treat that we enjoyed often during our visit.



Following the cruise, we had a picnic lunch at Princess Margaret Rose Cave park, where some walked paths with river views.



After a free day, we explored downtown Mount Gambier. We learned of the history of the area and about the Boandig, the Indigenous people, now extinct. We saw the city's modern library, arts centre, and city hall, and planted a Friendship rose in a special garden where other international FF clubs have planted rosebushes. Mount Gambier's mayor, Lynette Martin, was on hand for the planting, regal in her fur-trimmed robe and chain. Gusty winds and cold weather did not deter the hardy group



from the task, but we were all thankful to go inside city hall for a lovely reception with the mayor and staff, complete with red and white balloons to honour Canada.



FFHH: Journey to Mount Gambier March 22 to March 29, 2019



At the arts centre we watched an informative film about the volcanic eruptions and ocean incursions that have shaped the region's landscape, and on the next day we visited one of the many caves found in this area.

Tantanoola Cave is 300,000,000 to 500,000,000 years old, and on our visit, we saw its amazing stalactites and rock formations. A walk around the nature reserve and bird sanctuary at Lake McIntyre and a visit to see the vintage machinery and displays at the museum in Millicent rounded out the day.

Mount Gambier is famous for its cobalt blue-coloured aquifer, Blue Lake, and the following day we had a tour of the plant that manages the city's water supply from the lake.



Next up was a visit to the centre commemorating Australia's first saint, Sister Mary MacKillop, in the charming town of Penola. MacKillop and Father Julian Woods founded the order of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart in 1866, and at the centre we toured displays and visited the stable that they turned into a schoolroom.

FFHH: Journey to Mount Gambier March 22 to March 29, 2019

On our last day we visited a limestone quarry and watched with interest the stonecutter at work before travelling to Port MacDonnell for lunch and a chance to explore the coast.



The next day, ambassadors said a fond farewell and went their own way to further explore Australia, taking with them memories of new friends made in Mount Gambier, as well as in Invercargill, South New Zealand Island, Nelson, Wellington, Melbourne, along the GREAT South Ocean Road

See you all in Haliburton Highlands.

