

DAY 20 – Auckland, New Zealand

An early arrival in New Zealand's largest city saw us waking up to sky scrapers and the sights and sounds of a large city.



We had docked right downtown and the view was very different to what we have become used to in New Zealand.

Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand with a population of 1.4 million, showing that over 1/3 of New Zealand's residents live in Auckland, as NZ has a

population of a little over 4 million.

Auckland is the fastest growing city in NZ and has been voted one of the best cities in the world for lifestyle.



We did not book any tours instead choosing to buy tickets on the hop on hop off bus that travels around the city.

Our first stop was Mission Bay which gave us a nice view of the bay and the city in the distance. This is the closest beach to downtown and we took a long walk along the seaside.

After an hour long walk we picked up the bus again and went to the oldest shopping area in the city with two goals in mind (and this might start sounding familiar!!!)

1. Find the best meat pie in New Zealand
2. Top up our secret booze cabinet in our cabin as we have three days at sea before returning to Sydney.



We had a really nice meat pie for early lunch (but not as good as yesterday) and found a Liquorland – a liquor chain store. We are now all set for the rest of the cruise between yesterday and today's shopping. 2 bottles rum and 2 whiskey should get us to Sydney without a problem! We had to shop 2 days in a row as we decant the booze into water and iced tea bottles to hide it from security and too many bottles of iced tea looks suspicious. Because of our clever planning we have never yet been caught (unlike others we have met!!)

Our next stop was to go up the Sky Tower, the tallest structure in New Zealand – and in all of the Southern Hemisphere. It's taller than the Eifel tower and almost as tall as the Empire state building. The views from the top were quiet stunning.



Auckland is nestled in a natural harbor, once again created by an earthquake. The island you see in the distance only rose out of the sea as recently as 600 years ago!



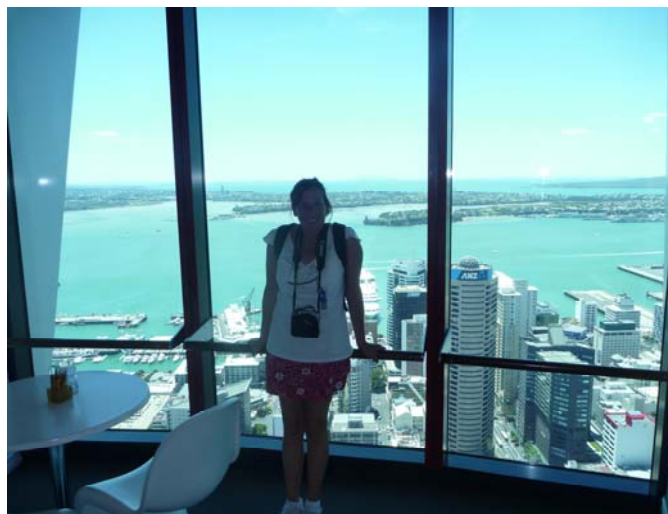
If you look to the left of the bridge you will see a large marina of private boats – these marina, one of many has over 2000 slips. Auckland holds the records for the highest boat ownership per capita in the world.

They do offer two "fun" things to do from the Sky Tower, you can bungee jump all the way down (\$250 – not for me and it ain't about the price) and you can also take a sky walk, that is walk on a 6' wide ramp around the top of the tower

with no hand rails on either side. Needless to say I did not do that either. Wendy was keen, but at \$145 we figured it wasn't worth it.



Wendy standing on the glass floor



A room with a view



After descending from the tower we jumped back on the bus and headed for the waterfront district. This is where the America's cup sailing competition was held in 2000.

New Zealand was the first country in the world to win the America's Cup away from America.

It's a very trendy area with restaurants and bars on the waterfront.

Here I am drinking a 750ml beer, the largest they can legally sell in New Zealand! We also saw some of the most beautiful yachts we have ever seen.



How convenient is this sailboat. The transom folds out into steps and a swim step/loading platform.

You don't realize how big this yacht is until you look at the size of the person standing on the deck in front of the "companion way" (and I use that word in the loosest sense, as it is hardly a companion way).

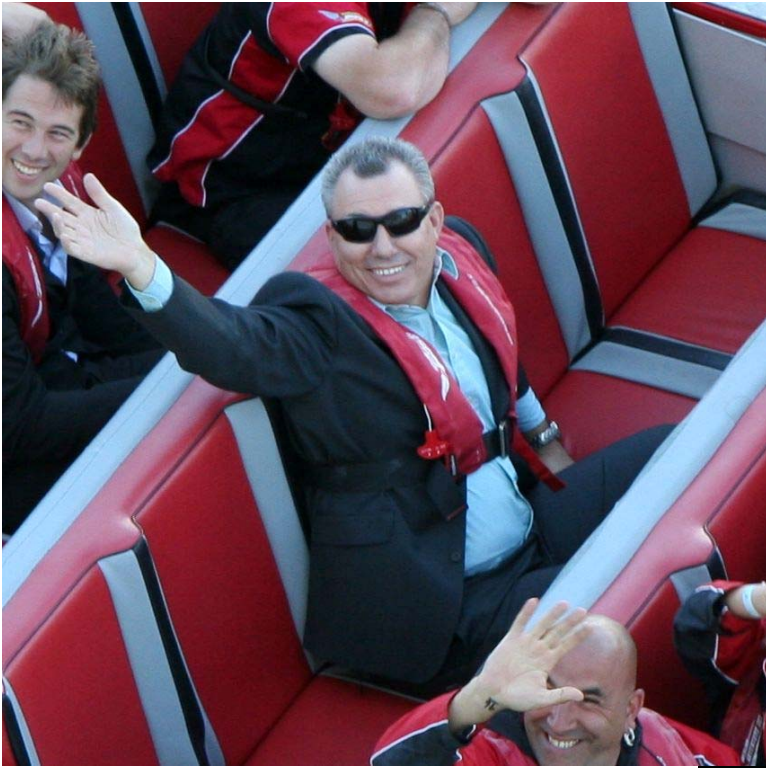
After walking around downtown a little longer it was time to return to the ship for a relaxing drink on our balcony before leaving for our final stop in New Zealand.

Our balcony overlooked the ferry terminal right below us, and as we sat enjoying a cold beer, we were fascinated by the coming and goings of ferries. Literally every five minutes a ferry arrived or left.



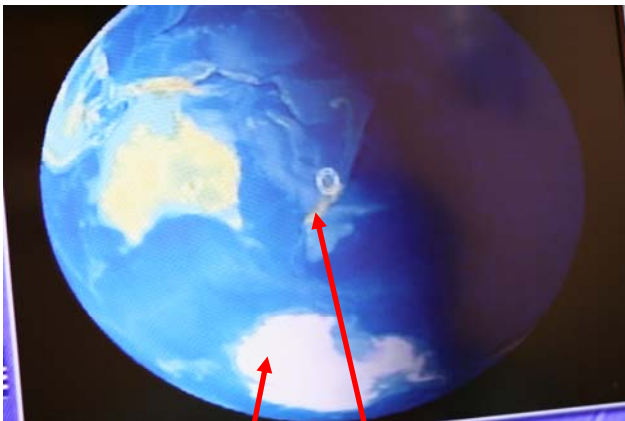
As we left port once again choosing a port side cabin paid off as we had the absolute best views. This is the part that I love – leaving port in the late afternoon. We can sit on our balcony and see the most beautiful vistas. As usual, I brought my trusty binoculars with me (the ones my dear mother-in-law gave me as a birthday present many years ago) and sitting on the balcony watching life and nature as the ship heads out is just freakin' AWESOME!!





Anyone know who this dude is? Apparently he is some big wig that did a jet boat adventure today. Who goes boating in a suit??? (Left)

Why does Wendy think standing over 1000 ft in the air is fun for me?? I don't care if the Plexiglas is stronger than concrete – I'm NOT going there! (Below Right)



Antarctica

Us

Final Note: Heading off to dinner this evening and a last look at the sea - a dolphin gave us **quite the show!** Jumping, breaching, arching and playing in front of our cabin. It was so quick we did not have a chance to get our cameras, but it was truly the most beautiful sight ever seen!

