

New Zealand Discovery

cruising the land
of the long white clouds



Mike and Donna Hill circumnavigated in their Oyster 56 *Baccalieu II*, completing the second half of their journey with World ARC 2008. Whilst enjoying the Pacific they opted to take time out of the traditional warm water route and head south to explore New Zealand.

Having just completed a passage from Fiji...

We barely got a glance at the northern most point of New Zealand before night fell. It appeared like a dusty mirage on a bleak grey cloudy horizon then the night sky consumed it and all we could see of it were the orange squiggles on the radar screen. But we knew it was out there and it was great to see it even in that state.

Opuia is highly organized to receive international boats and encourage boaties (we were known as boaties here, yachties in Fiji), to fax ahead all necessary information required to enter the country before arriving. As well, they prefer recreational vessels to check-in with one of the coastal marine radio stations at least four hours before arrival and encourage the use of one of the local radio freelancers who standby on various stations to assist approaching boats with advice.



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In turn, these stations will contact the necessary authorities and arrange for them to meet new arrivals at the Customs Clearance Wharf.

Our arrival around midnight was too late to receive clearance from customs resulting in having to tie up to the floating quarantine dock located off shore in hopes of eliminating any agriculture contamination by arriving international boats. We were happy just to go to bed and have at least part of a good night's sleep in a stationary bed.

When quarantine arrived at nine the following morning they headed straight for our freezer. They were very efficient there too. They removed all our frozen meat and prepared food we had not eaten on passage; prepared lasagna, chicken cannelloni, beef stew, chili, and soups, even my stuffed breads because they contained either cheese or corn beef. All of it went straight into green garbage bags where it would stay until it received a sterilizing steam treatment and eventually a burial. Believe me that was sad.

I had already dumped the dairy products and honey and had been forewarned before leaving Musket Cove about emptying the vacuum bag and cleaning the soles of our shoes. I had done all that before leaving Fiji. Prior to entering the 30 mile New Zealand perimeter, I had cleaned out the vegetable storage areas under the floor boards tossing over potatoes, onions and garlic including any dirt that may have fallen off. Before leaving Mike had spent hours cleaning the boat's bottom in anticipation of an inspection which we were informed would be carried out on arrival, but never was.

The quarantine officer looked through our canned goods identifying items produced in Ecuador, especially milk or milk products including mayonnaise. Apparently Foot and Mouth disease can be carried in these products as South America does not have the necessary high standards to eliminate the possible contamination. Those were directed to their fiery death as well.



Bay of Islands

A few days later we took our boat south to where we docked on the northeast side of the North Island in Gulf Harbour, a large well serviced marina about fifty minutes from Auckland; a good place to sit out a cyclone season. While there we drove to Auckland several times to order more navigation charts, shop in some real chandleries and to pick up parts for the boat. If you can't find a boat part in Auckland, you can at least find an operation that will order it and have it there within a few days.

In the following days we flew to Queenstown where we rented a car to spend two weeks traveling throughout the South Island, hiking virgin rainforests, climbing glaciers, visiting Fiordland in Milford Sound and engaging in some pretty exciting left hand driving up the west coast. New Zealand is so exciting to visit.

Before heading back to Fiji we spent a few days at Great Barrier Island, New Zealand's fourth largest island in the Hauraki Gulf and where you can find several good bays in which to anchor. Port Fitzroy presents itself with rugged rock formations falling deep into the sea, soon to resurface bare and threatening in the path of the approach, but once in, spreads open to a large bay offering many smaller bays in which to drop anchor.

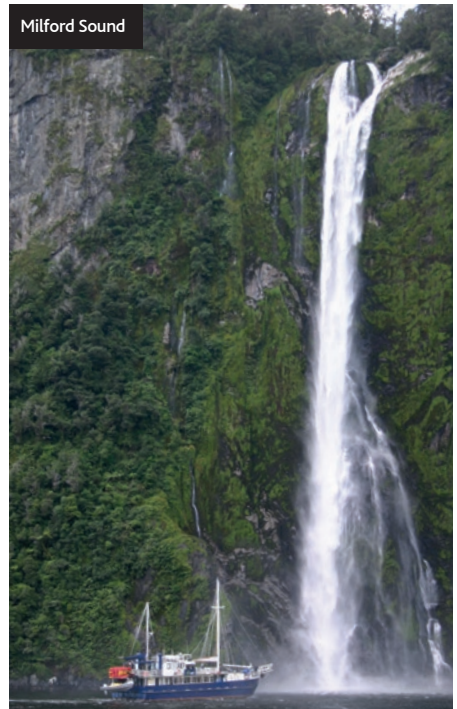
They say New Zealand has the greatest variety of ferns in the world and Kaikora Island is amass with tropical ferns coloured in a wide palate of greens sweeping with camouflaging beauty, underbellies curled brown and spent, some standing ten feet tall like nature's own patio umbrellas. Paths thick and softened with brown pine needles lead through dense forests, hills and gullies protected by stairs, deep gorges spanned by bridges, streams slowly filling a series of pools, each lower than the other like a planned botanical garden.

Smoke House Bay, named for the smoke shack standing amongst trees just back from the beach, offers a chance to smoke up the days catch over

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Meeting the local inhabitants



Milford Sound

a fire of fallen branches. A water tank waits for a sailor hankering for a bath and can be heated with a little patience and the help of an outdoor wood fired stove. The bathtub rests inside a shack behind a large picture window overlooking the bay. Candles left by previous bathers sat on a shelf. If an outdoor bath is more to one's liking, there is one of those too. If laundry is the need of the day, five hand wringer washers connected to well water sit near picnic tables while a lengthy rope-swing dangles from a tall branch. All with a view of the bay.

Before returning to Opua where we would clear customs for our return to Fiji, we enjoyed some leisurely cruising in the Bay of Islands, one of the most popular cruising grounds in New Zealand. With 144 islands to choose from, we chose what we had time for.

Our last anchorage was Robertson Island, one of those long narrow islands, offering an inviting beach with a bay wide enough to handle several day cruisers who often escape the city in good weather on weekends.



Exploring ashore in Fiordland

That evening, after the last boat gathered enough mussels from the side of the cliffs to head back home to the mainland for a feed, we had the bay to ourselves. The sun was not far from setting as we drove the dinghy to the abandoned shore. Following a path that led to stairs, we reached the top of the cliff. Ocean swells blasted with fury against the rugged windward coast while Baccalieu sat peacefully waiting for our return in the sheltered bay below. In my back pack was a bottle of wine and two glasses.

It was the perfect anchorage to say goodbye to New Zealand and all she had given us.

Excerpts from an upcoming book "Yes, the World is Round" by Donna Hill.



New Zealand - Profile

New Zealand is a favourite place to spend the cyclone season in the South Pacific and it has a good reputation among cruising sailors as the place where everything can be fixed, upgraded or replaced. Marine facilities are of a high standard in the North Island, particularly around Auckland, Whangarei and Port Opua in the Bay of Islands.

The Bay of Islands in the north is a favourite place of entry and the cruising there is so pleasant that some visiting yachts never leave this large protected bay dotted with the many islands that provide its name. In addition, Port Opua and the Opua Marine Park offer a comprehensive service for refit or to safely leave a boat.

Sailing south from the Bay of Islands or Whangarei, it is worth taking an offshore tack to call at Great Barrier Island before heading for the Hauraki Gulf and busy Auckland. Auckland is branded the City of Sails because it has a huge local fleet and excellent cruising grounds. It is the yachting capital of New Zealand and virtually every marine facility, service and brand is available in the central city Westhaven-Viaduct area.

Tauranga in the Bay of Plenty has also become popular as a port of entry with yachts arriving from Tonga, as well as a stopover for yachts during the cyclone season.

Other highlights of a southbound trip are the capital Wellington and, across Cook Strait, picturesque Picton and the Marlborough Sounds.

Sailing conditions around the lower South Island are more challenging and those who are short of time can enjoy the majestic scenery by cruising on

four wheels. If however you have plenty of time to wait for suitable weather windows, January and February are the best times of year to attempt cruising around the South of New Zealand and to Stewart Island. It is particularly difficult to cruise beautiful Fiordland on the remote south west coast because of exposed open-ocean approaches and deep water anchorages in the fiords.

The east coast of the South Island has several attractive harbours such as Dunedin, Timaru and Lyttelton, but none rival the beauty of the Marlborough Sounds, which also has the advantage of being more accessible when sailing down from the north.

Cruising yachts are increasingly visiting Nelson, at the northern end of the South Island in Tasman Bay. Nelson is the country's biggest fishing port; with a good range of marine facilities

Weather

The climate is varied from subtropical in the north to snowy mountains and glaciers in the south. The summer from November to March is the more pleasant season, while the winter is wetter and windier. The South Island is generally cooler in both summer and winter. Although out of the tropical cyclone area, occasionally the tail of a cyclone reaches the North Island (in February or March). Lying in the westerly wind belt, the east coast is more sheltered and the main yachting centres are along that coast.

Russell Radio, located in the Bay of Islands, provides weather information for the Western Pacific

Working 7 days a week all year round. All times are NZST or daylight saving time as appropriate.

www.russellradio.org.nz

New Zealand Weather or
www.metservice.com/national/index

New Zealand and South Pacific weather
www.metvuw.com

New Zealand Metservice
www.metservice.co.nz

Main Ports

North Island: Auckland, Gisborne, Gulf Harbour, Napier, New Plymouth, Opua (Bay of Islands), Tauranga (Bay of Plenty), Wellington, Whangarei, Whangaroa, Whitianga

Off-lying Islands: Chatham Islands, Kermadec Islands, Stewart Island

South Island: Christchurch (Lyttelton), Dunedin, Fiordland Greymouth, Invercargill (Bluff), Nelson, Picton, Timaru.

Further information at
www.noonsite.com/Countries/NewZealand