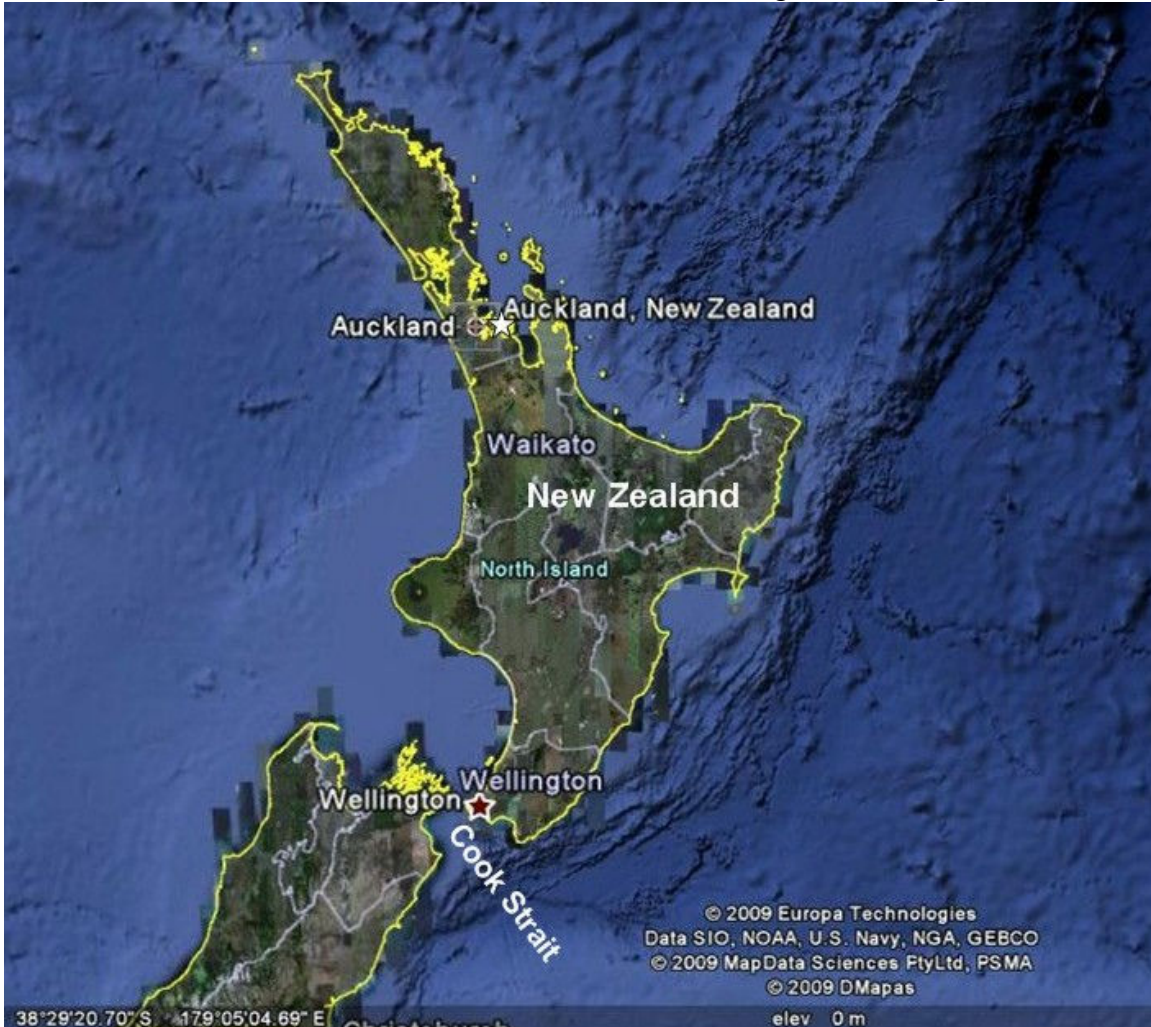


Day 50–Auckland–Penguins–Aquarium–HOHO Bus–Library–15 Nov. 09: The day started as we approached the Auckland, New Zealand Harbor just before sunrise. The sky was overcast and temperature was in the low 60s. The location of Auckland on the North Island of New Zealand is shown on the modified Google Earth map below.



The Amsterdam proceeded into the harbor and docked at the Princess Wharf. As the ship approached the Princess Wharf we got this photo below which shows the Princess Wharf on the right, the skyline of Auckland in the center and the ferry terminal on the left.



Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand with a 1.4 million population. The soaring skyline with the iconic Sky Tower is the grandest we had seen so far in the cities we have visited in New Zealand.

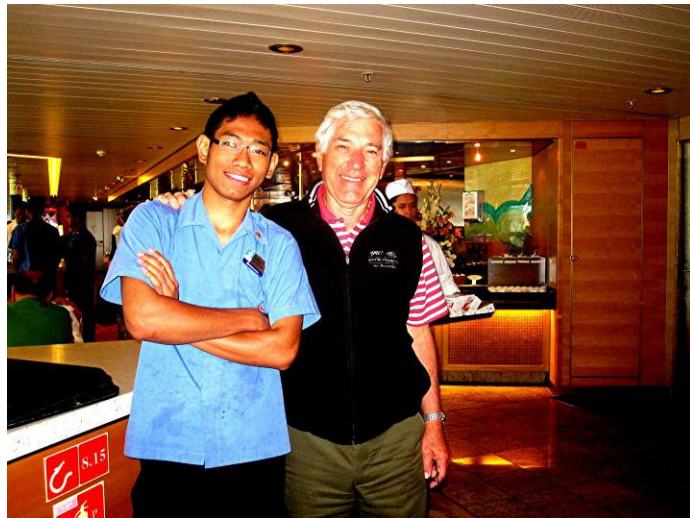
The location of the Amsterdam relative to the city of Auckland is shown on the map below. Also shown on the map are several of the sights around Auckland that we saw later in the day.



We were safely docked by 7:30am across the pier from the Hilton Hotel which had rooms that were at the same level as our stateroom on the Amsterdam. We waved to our new neighbors in the Hilton Hotel and joined them for morning coffee on the verandah.



We eventually got dressed and went up to the Lido for breakfast. In the Lido we met up with Pas who is a steward always there with a cheerful greeting and offer to help with getting things from the buffet. Like us, this was his first visit to Auckland. He has done some reading about the cities we have visited and was excited about his plans to get off the ship today to explore Auckland. We had our camera handy and took this picture of our friend.



We didn't have any tours booked for Auckland. The plan was to buy tickets on a Hop-On Hop-Off (HOHO) bus and jump off when the bus stopped at a site that looked interesting. However, there was one destination that we had heard about and was a must for us. That was the Antarctic Encounter and Aquarium at Kelly Tarlton's place in Auckland.

About 9am we left the Amsterdam. On the way out we glanced over at the loading operation on the dock below us. We saw that Chef Bernie Ruis was checking out a large stack of boxes containing some new supplies that had just be delivered for his galley, as shown on the right.



We walked down to the Tourist Information Center at the head of the pier where the Amsterdam was docked. There we found everything we needed. Luckily Kelly Tarlton's place was on the HOHO bus route. At the Information Center we purchased our HOHO bus tickets and tickets to Kelly Tarlton's with a significant discount for seniors. That got the day off to a good start.

We have found that the HOHO buses can get crowded late in the day in the big cities and we were glad to be able to get an early start today. We



walked a couple blocks to the old Ferry Building that is the tall brown building shown behind Barbara in the photo on the right.



We caught the first HOHO bus that came by and got settled in, as shown on the left.

It turned out that Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter and Aquarium was the second stop made by the bus so we got off and proceeded to the entrance. Along the way we were distracted by the free shuttle bus that Kelly Tarlton's runs from various tourist sites around town. We exchanged picture taking roles with some fellow tourists and got this photo of us about to be chomped by the shark on the shuttle bus, as shown on the right.

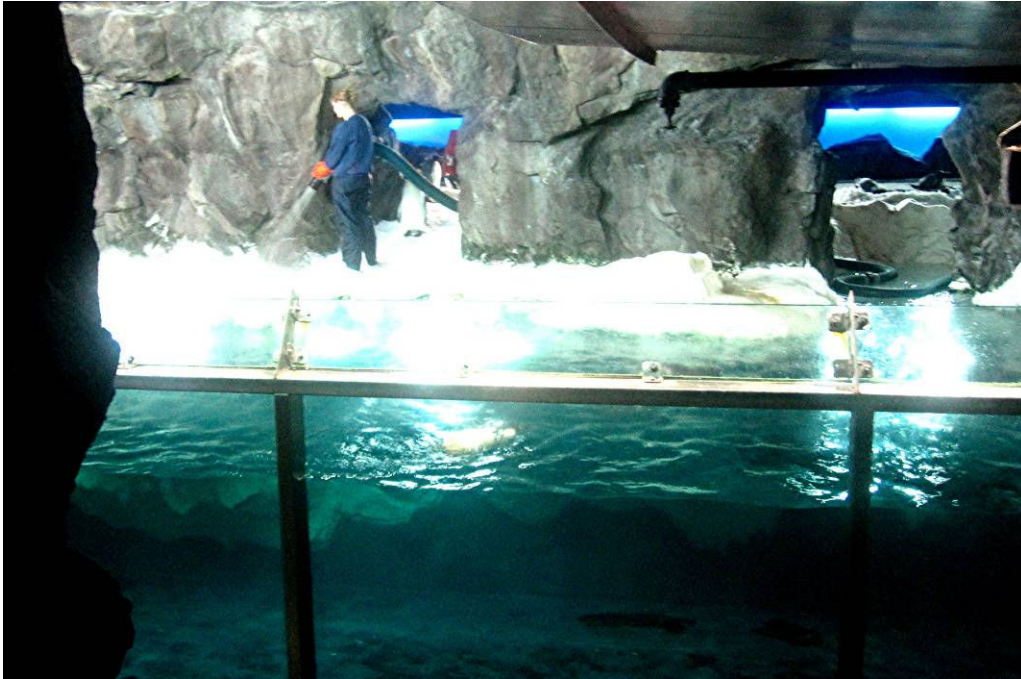


On the left and below are some signs from near the entrance to Kelly Tarlton's.

It took us a while to figure out what was in the mouths of the fish shown in this sign on the right. We concluded those are pacifiers.

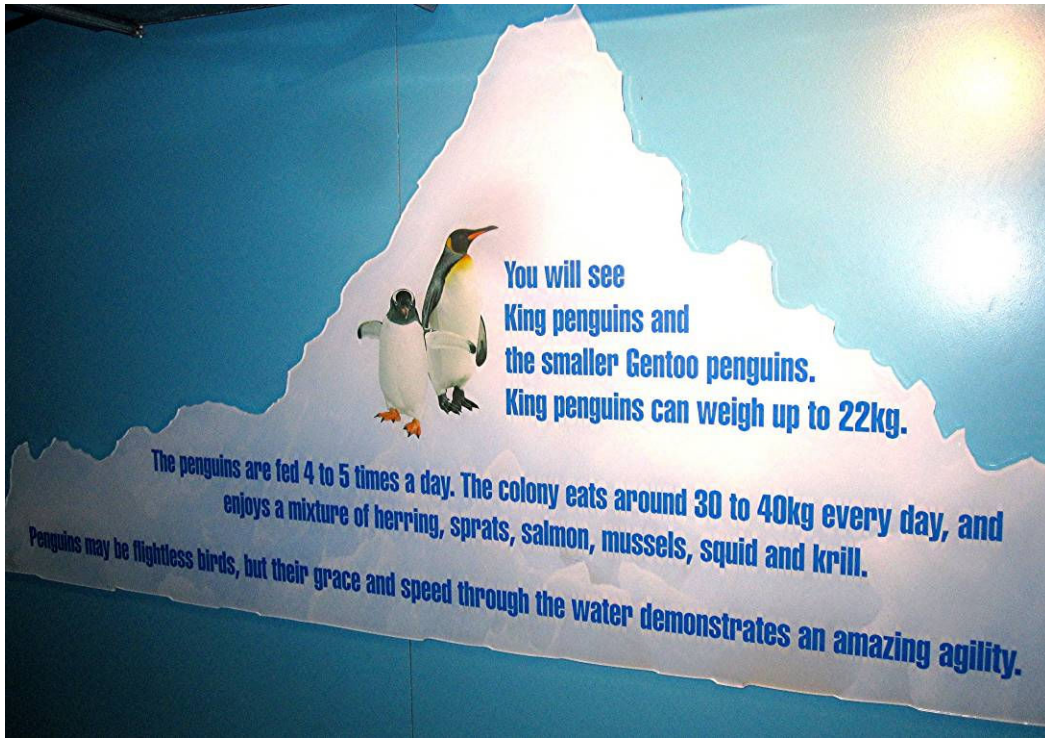


The main attraction for us in the Antarctic Encounter was the colony of about 80 penguins that they maintain under refrigerated conditions. They have a glass sided pool of water for the penguins to frolic in and a rocky shelf simulating a seashore that they keep covered with artificial snow. The worker in the photo below is blowing artificial snow unto the shelf area.



They have an innovation at the Antarctic Encounter that keeps the penguin watchers both warm and also moving along through the exhibit. They run rubber tread Sno-Cats on a concrete track around the Encounter with attendants that help people get in or out of the Sno-Cat. We got in line for the Sno-Cat and read these signs, shown below, as we waited our turn for a ride.

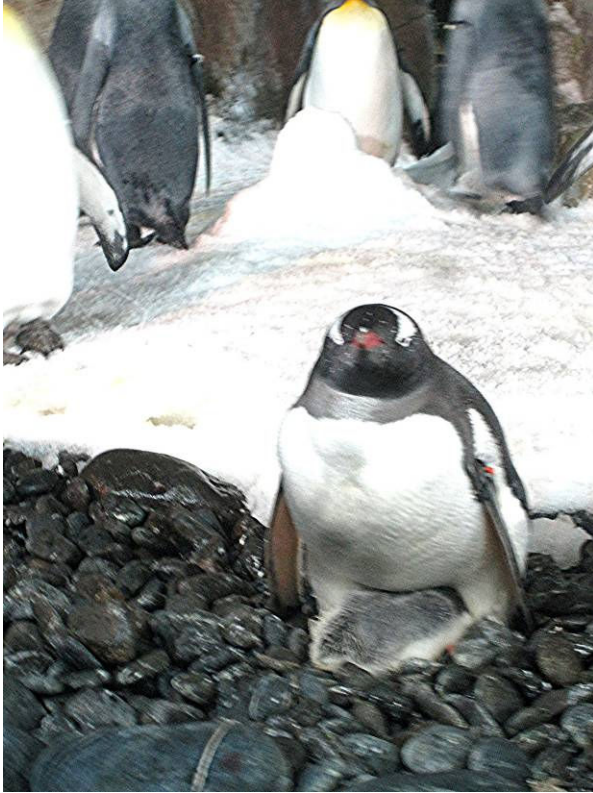




Our turn came up and we climbed in along with another family. The Sno-Cat trundled along at a slow pace about 30 feet behind the one in front of us. We could clearly see the penguins through the glass windows of the Snow-Cat. The following photos provide some idea of what the Encounter consists of.

In the photo on the right, the penguin on the black rocks is probably sitting on an egg or a newly hatched chick.





This penguin on the left has a fuzzy new chick under it on the rocks. The white stripes on the head identify this one as a Gentoo Penguin. The King Penguins have orange-yellow markings.

We took the Sno-Cat ride around the Encounter twice in hopes of getting some good pictures of baby penguins. We saw two other chicks under an adult penguin but the photos were not good enough to use.

The attendants in the photo below are fascinated by something under the penguin, probably an egg but more likely a baby chick. Unfortunately we couldn't get a good view of it.



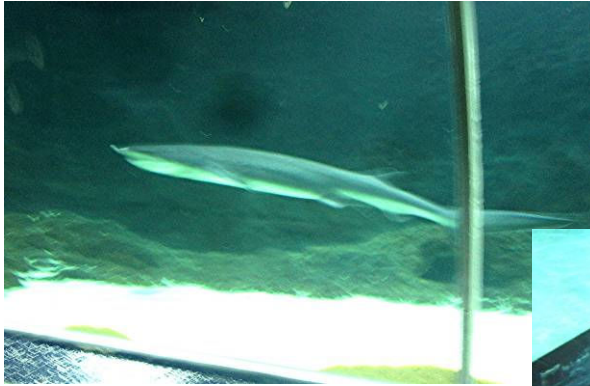
The impression we got was that the attendants were happy in their work and took good care of the penguins.

Near the end of the Sno-Cat ride there is a written discussion on the wall about how killer whales like to eat penguins and seals. Then a huge killer whale model came surging up out of the water with a seal in its mouth, as shown on the right. It's enough to get your attention.



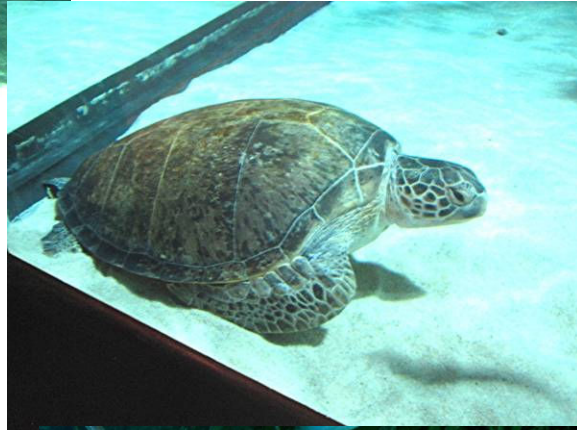
After doing the Penguin Encounter we turned to the aquarium side of Kelly Tarlton's. The aquarium is built in a location where they could take advantage of some of the infrastructure left over from an abandoned city sewer line. There is a large diameter pipe laid in the form of an oval on the bottom of an enclosed part of the harbor. The upper side of the pipe is made of a transparent plastic material. A moving sidewalk takes you through the oval and you can look up through the clear plastic and view the fish swimming above you. At any time you can step off the moving sidewalk and stand on a stationary sidewalk while you look at whatever is above that part of the pipe. At each end of the oval you can get off and go into other parts of the aquarium that has exhibits in flat glass walled tanks. Here on the right is a picture we took on our way through this underwater transparent tunnel. Fortunately it wasn't crowded so we could experiment with our camera to get a photo.





The view of the sharks and other fish was great but the curved surface made getting a good photo difficult. The picture on the left is about the best one we got of a shark.

There was also a turtle in the exhibit as shown on the right



We walked into the aquarium with the flat glass walled tanks and got a few pictures. An eel is shown on the right and a lion fish below.



There were also some large crayfish on display, as shown below.

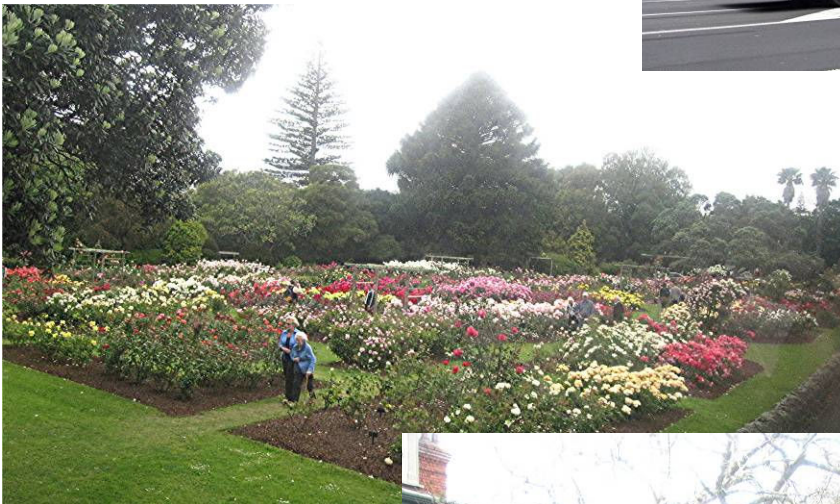


We left Kelly Tarlton's after seeing what they had to offer. The Antarctic Encounter probably wasn't close to what you might get from a visit to Antarctic shores but it was kind of special and we were happy with the experience. The aquarium was nice but nothing special compared with many of the modern aquariums in large cities. The main claim to fame for this facility is that while many large aquariums now boast this style of walk-through clear overhead tube, the one at Kelly Tarlton's was the first one of this type.

We caught our HOHO bus and continued on the circuitous route that the brochure outlined. Unlike the open top HOHO buses of Sydney, these buses were covered as shown on the right. That was a good idea today because of the intermittent rain and cool temperatures.



The bus took us by an extensive rose garden that was in full bloom of spring. It was beautiful on this rainy day and would have been spectacular on a



sunny day. We got a photo of it anyway as shown on the left.

We drove through the Parnell Village part of Auckland and we were impressed by the attractive home town look of the place, as shown on the right. If we were going to be in Auckland longer we would spend some time browsing around the Parnell Village section.



Shortly after passing through Parnell Village we passed the city library on Wellesley Street. We made a mental note of it so that we could track it down later for a photo opportunity with Barbara's library card.

We continued on with the HOHO bus until it came to the base of the Sky Tower. We got off there because we wanted to explore this central part of downtown Auckland. Because of the drizzle of rain and low visibility we didn't want to go up in the Sky Tower but we went in to the large building adjacent to the Sky Tower. This building had a huge Christmas tree in the foyer. It still seemed a little early for a Christmas tree but we took a picture of it anyway, as shown on the right.



We still were harboring the notion of finding the city library in order to get a picture with Barbara's library card. We threaded our way through the



canyons of the business district in the direction of the library. We came across this interesting bit of sculpture on the left that was in the entrance of a large hotel. It had the whimsical name of "Nobody Here but Us".

During our visit in Napier, New Zealand, we

became aware of the love for Art Deco style of architecture in this country. Walking the streets of Auckland today we found a wonderful example of Art Deco in their Civic Theater on Wellesley Street, as shown on the right.



We located the library on Wellesley Street and found a way to get Barbara, her library card and the name of the Auckland library in the same photo. The results are shown in the photo below.



After successfully getting the library card photographed we walked back to the Sky Tower and caught the HOHO bus back to the Ferry Terminal. By this time it had begun to rain in earnest. We have been very lucky regarding rain and bad weather on this cruise so today was an exception. We took the photo on the left to record this wet day of touring.



Later in the day it stopped raining and we ventured out again. This time we turned away from the ferry terminal and toward the boat basin where some of the boats are kept that give Auckland the nickname of "City of Sails".

Shown on the right is just one of many small boat harbors around the harbor in Auckland. It was in this area that successful campaigns were launched in the past to win the America's Cup for New Zealand. Sailing is really serious business in Auckland. On the recorded commentary aboard the HOHO bus this morning there was a mention of New Zealand's sad loss of the America's Cup race several years ago.



We stopped by a store named Auckland International because it looked like a souvenir store. We were surprised to find that all the customers and clerks were Japanese. In addition there was no English being spoken. The store was crowded with customers and all conversations were in Japanese. Apparently this store catered to Japanese tourists who come to New Zealand in large numbers. The large number of Japanese visitors and workers in Australia and New Zealand has been a surprise to us on this cruise.

We checked a local gas station for the price of gas. It was selling for \$1.659 NZD per liter which is equivalent to \$5.18 USD per gallon. This is the same price we observed in Rotorua yesterday. This suggested that gasoline prices may be stable in this northern state of New Zealand.

The weather still wasn't great so we brought our touring of Auckland to a close and returned to the Amsterdam. The ship got underway at 8pm. The people in the Hilton Hotel across the pier from the Amsterdam gathered on a corner deck area to see us sail away, as shown on the right. As usual the Amsterdam blew its powerful horn and shook the buildings around the port. That seemed to liven up the party watching us from the Hilton.



The Amsterdam sailed out of Auckland Harbor and turned north towards our last port of call in New Zealand, Bay of Islands. We expect to arrive there tomorrow about 7am. We have a tour arranged by Karen with Indigenous Tours Company.