

Day 47 – Wellington, New Zealand – Cable Car – Library – 12 Nov. 09: The day started with the Amsterdam sailing in the water of Cook Strait and preparing to enter the harbor at Wellington, the national capital of New Zealand. The sky was cloudy,

temperature was in the mid 50s and it was threatening to rain. Across the broad harbor Wellington was visible along the sea coast and up on the hillside, as shown in the picture on the right.

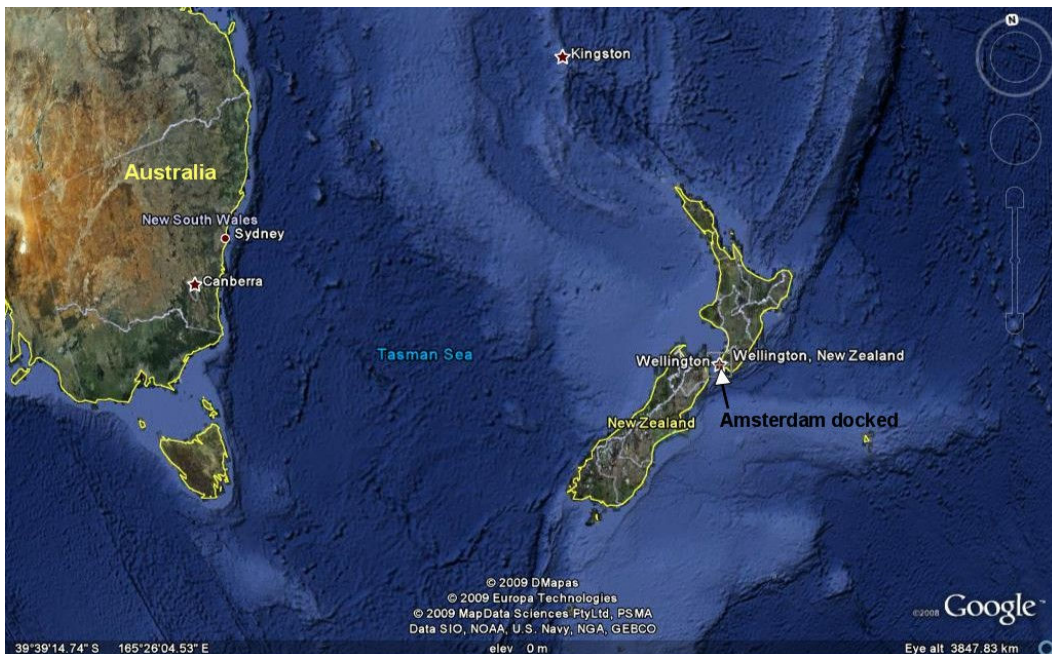


On the right hand side of the channel leading into the harbor were two lighthouses and some jagged rocks with the sea water crashing on them, as shown on the left.



Last night we had left Christchurch in the Southern Island of New Zealand and now we were going to visit Wellington, which is located on the Northern Island of New

Zealand. The modified Google Earth map below shows the location of Wellington in the nation of New Zealand.



The two main islands of New Zealand are separated by the water of Cook Strait and the harbor of Wellington is on the southern coast of the North Island. A map giving the location of Cook Strait between the North and South Islands of New Zealand and the harbor of Wellington is shown below.



The skyline of the city became more defined as we approached. A photograph of the Wellington city center and part of the dock area is shown in the photo below.



The area of the dock where the Amsterdam would be moored came into view. The scene was dominated by a large circular silver colored sports stadium and massive piles of logs being accumulated for export. The tour guide in Dunedin had indicated that forest products were one of the economic pillars of New Zealand and export of pine logs to China was the dominant activity in harvesting the forests. Today the logs accumulated on the Wellington pier gave testament to how important this product is to the New Zealand economy. A picture of the dock as the Amsterdam approached is shown below.



Looking to the right of the piles of logs and between the water and the sports stadium the Cruise Terminal was visible, as shown in the photo on the right. Green buses were parked waiting to take Amsterdam passengers on tours as soon as the ship was docked.



The Amsterdam was docked by 7:30am. The location of the Amsterdam in the Wellington Harbor and several highlights of the city that we visited later in the day are shown on the map below.



We didn't have any tours scheduled and our plan was to just take the complimentary shuttle bus in to the center of Wellington and browse around the downtown area to get a feel for this capital city of New Zealand. We were joined by our friend and East Tennessee neighbor, Jean, while husband Doug took an organized tour. We took the picture shown on the right before parting ways with Doug.



We left the Amsterdam and proceeded through the Cruise Terminal. There was a nice surprise when a young Boy's Choral Group met us in the terminal and sang a song of greeting and good wishes. The sign on their tee shirts said "We 'heart' WGTN" or, in other words, "We Love Wellington". This was all part of a well orchestrated effort by the city of Wellington to make us cruise ship passengers feel welcome and comfortable in Wellington today.



There were no Detector Dogs at Wellington to check our bags for fruit or other food. However, there was this yellow plastic container, shown on the right, promising Amnesty from penalty if you would discard any contraband agricultural products as you passed by.



We got on the shuttle bus and it whisked us in to town in a matter of about 15 minutes. We got off at the bus stop on Brandon Street, in the middle of the district filled with all the commercial activity typical of a large city.



We had a map that indicated the Kelburn Cable Car was nearby and we thought that would be a good first thing to explore. We found the Cable Car entrance on Lambton Quay and went in. The fare was \$5 NZD round trip which seemed reasonable so we bought tickets.

Soon a red Cable Car came into the station as shown on the right. The cars are built to run on the strait track that runs with a constant slope up the hill out of the heart of the city to a community of apartments, small businesses and sporting fields.

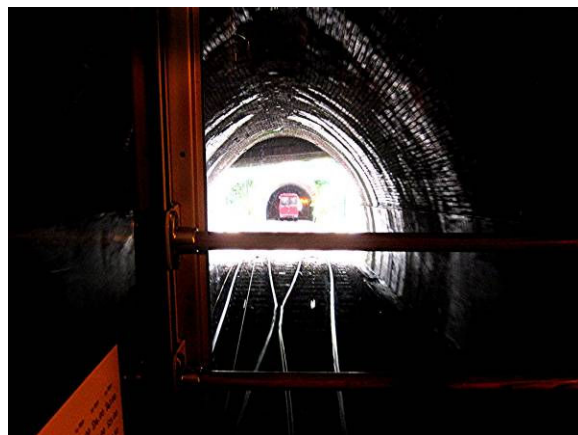


The route of the cable car is shown in the map of Wellington shown above. At the top of the hill there is a residential and shopping area as well as an old observatory and wonderful botanical garden. Since the cable car track has a constant slope the seats are canted so that the passengers can sit up straight while the car is tilted at a fairly steep angle climbing the hill. We climbed on board and soon the cable car moved smoothly out of the station and up the hill.

At the halfway point we met the counterbalancing car coming down the hill. The tracks are designed to provide for the two cars to be diverted onto a double set of tracks at this point so one car can pass going up and the other car passes going down the hill. The picture on the left tries to capture the moment after we had been passed by the downhill moving car.



There are a couple tunnels to pass through. In the picture on the right, we are in one tunnel while the car that just passed us is headed into a tunnel lower down on the hill.



As we climbed the hill a wonderful view of Wellington opened up before us, as shown below.



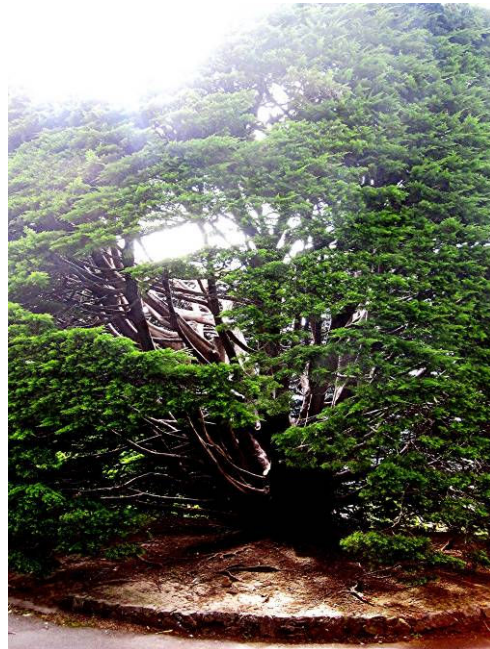
We arrived at the top of the hill after about a 10 minute ride and were rewarded by another wonderful view of Wellington below. In this scene the Wellington business district is in front of us and the Amsterdam, sitting at the dock, is visible on the left.



The clouds were still threatening rain but our luck held and we were able to walk around without getting wet. We walked through a portion of the Botanical Garden on the top of the hill. There was a nice selection of plants there for us to see. A few of the ones we saw are shown on the right and below.



In addition to the Botanical Garden, the



facilities at the top of the hill include an observatory. It was established in the 1800s to assist in navigation which was extremely important for commerce in these southern oceans. We didn't go into the observatory but they had an interesting Sun Dial exhibit that was designed to tell the correct standard time during any month of the year. The hour markers were in a fixed arc on the ground. A person could stand at the current month indicated on a brass plate embedded in the grass at the center of the Sun Dial. The shadow cast by the person intersected the arc of hour numbers and indicated the correct time.

The brass plate with month positions is shown on the right.



Orlin positioned himself in the November position on the brass plate and raised his hands over his head in accordance with the instructions on the plate. Luckily, the weather was improving and there was enough sunlight to cast a weak shadow.



Like magic, the shadow indicated the correct time of day. Before the days of reliable clocks this device would probably have been a lot more useful than it is today.

Duly impressed with this display on the grounds of the observatory we proceeded to the nearby museum that was run by the cable car company. The museum had displays of all the different cable car designs and concepts that had been used over the years to help people cope with this very steep hill that borders the main commercial area of Wellington. One of the most interesting displays was an old cable car that ran on the tracks we used today. This car had seats on the outside that were cocked in a way that allowed you to sit up straight while the car was moving. This was similar in concept to the chairs in the modern cable car where the seats face in the direction of the car movement but the legs of the chairs are of different length so the seat is actually level when the car is moving up the steep hill. The museum car was in a level position so, as shown on the right, we had to lean to our left to demonstrate how a person would look as they were pulled up the hill. Jean took this picture to document the effect.



As we exited the building we saw that the Amsterdam's visit to Wellington today may have impacted the plans of some grammar school field trips. This sign, shown below, gave the bad news to visiting school groups without reservations at the Cable Car Museum.



We got back on to the cable car and took the ride down the hill to the station on Lampton Quay. We were sitting next to Danny, the conductor of our cable car, shown on the right. He was very friendly and proud of his job. He gave us running comment as we descended the hill. For example, he pointed



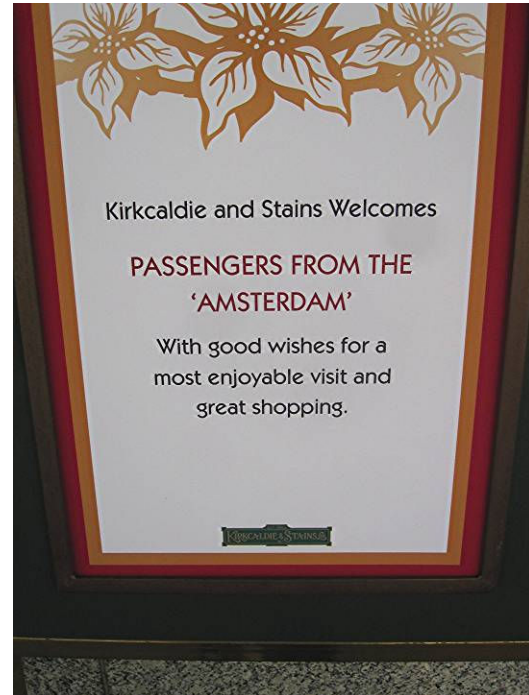
out that a couple old cable cars located in a nursery school yard next to the tracks, were real cable cars that were used when horses pulled the cars. Those cable cars, with some children playing on them are shown in the picture on the left.



We exited the cable car station onto Lampton Quay. We were looking up and down the street trying to decide what to do next when Danny, the Cable Car conductor, asked us if he could help us find what we were looking for. He had just gotten off his shift of work and had followed us out of the station. We asked him for directions to the City Square and he pointed us in the right direction. We thought this was another example of the New Zealand hospitality that we have been getting used to. We asked Danny to have his picture taken with us and Jean did the photography shown on the right.

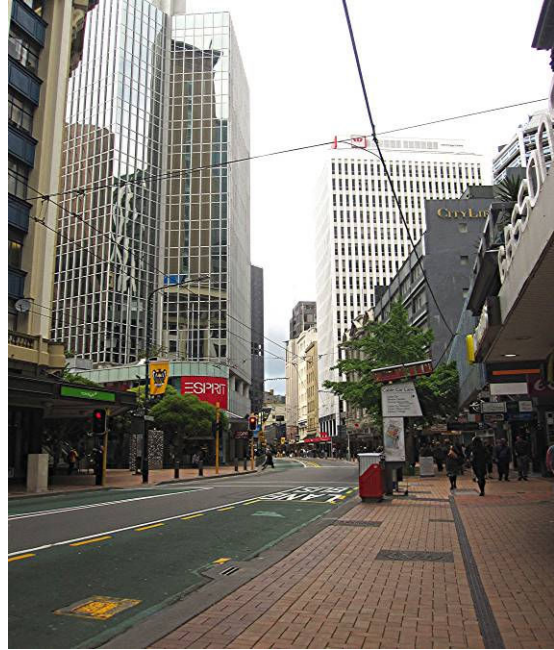


Walking along the city streets we saw several signs, like those below, welcoming the Amsterdam passengers. It was interesting that merchants in this large city would acknowledge our arrival. New Zealanders have been wonderful hosts to us, perhaps encouraged a bit by the difficult economic times in the world.



About this time we parted with Jean who had her own shopping and exploring agenda and we took off looking for the city library so that we could document the visit of Barbara's library card. We were also looking for some Maori carvings but so far we had found few craft or souvenir shops on the Wellington streets that carried the souvenirs we wanted.

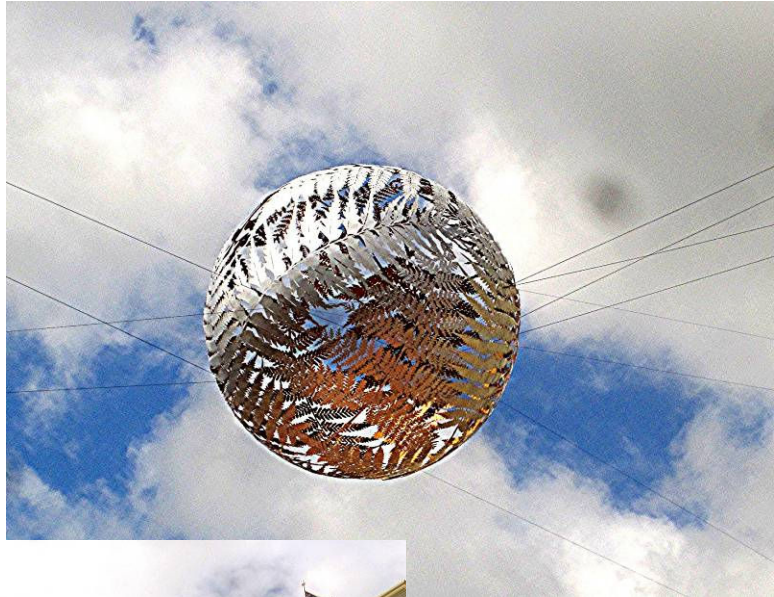
We were headed to the Town Hall – City Square complex where the library was located. Along the way we got pictures of the towering buildings and canyons of the thriving business district, as shown below.



The Old Bank Shopping Arcade caught our eye because it still looked like a bank but it had been converted into a shopping mall. The ceilings and walls inside, shown in the picture on the right, gave a sedate atmosphere to the place, not found in most modern shopping malls.



We found the Town Hall and City Square complex and a wonderful piece of artwork. They had taken large pieces of metal in shape of the silver fern leaf and constructed a huge globe out of it. The silvery sphere was suspended on thin wires above the City Square and, with just a quick glance, appeared to be levitated without any support. These photos show this marvelous orb suspended about the Square.



It was just a short walk to the Wellington City Library. We quickly took the cherished photo of Barbara's library card visiting Wellington, New Zealand, as shown below.

With this task completed we decided bring our Wellington visit to a close. We had to be back to the ship by 5:30 so we caught the shuttle bus back to the Amsterdam.

The ship got underway at 6pm and we sailed north. Tomorrow we will visit Napier, New Zealand.

