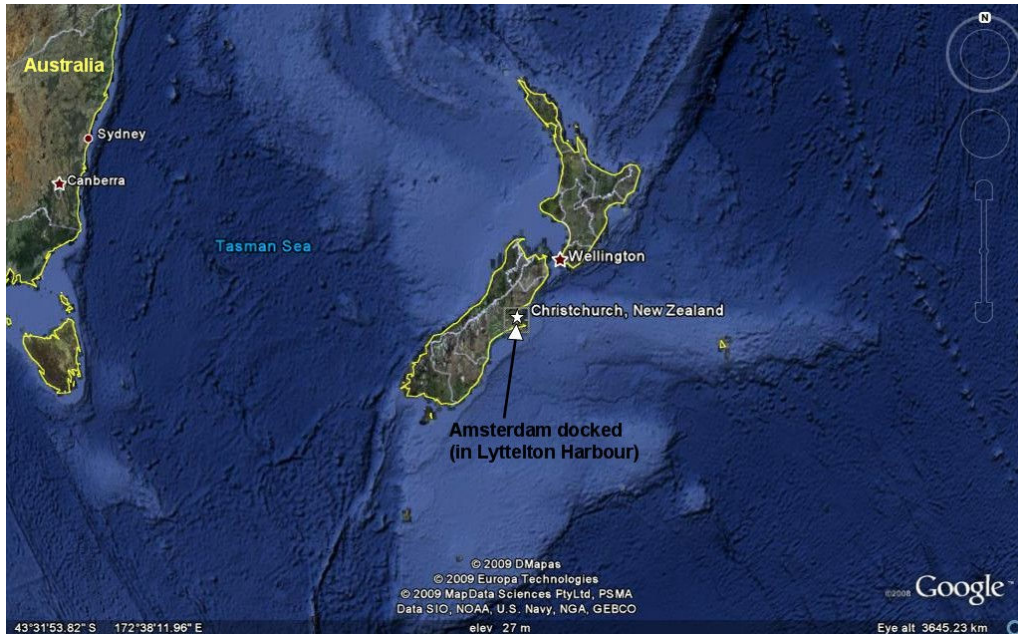


Day 46-Christchurch – Cathedral Square – Antarctic Centre – 11 Nov. 09: The day began with intermittent rain, moderate sea and chilly temperature of about 50°F. We were approaching the harbor for Christchurch, New Zealand. The location of Christchurch in New Zealand is shown on the modified Google map below.



The harbor for Christchurch is located in the city of Lyttelton which is about 9 miles from Cathedral Square in Christchurch. The Amsterdam entered into the Lyttelton Harbour about 6:30am. A view of the harbor as we sailed toward the berth in Lyttelton is shown below. A small tugboat escorted us to the dock. Normally, the Amsterdam does not use a tugboat because the bow thrusters and swiveling thrusters at the stern provide adequate maneuverability.



A rainbow from the sun playing on a passing shower can be seen in this photo on the left.



We suddenly got a nice surprise visitor on our verandah in the form of a seagull. He was probably trying to get out of the rain.

The berth for the Amsterdam was in an area used for industrial cargo and shipping containers were stacked on the pier where we were going to dock. However, we could see some tents set up for the normal tourist services.



The Amsterdam was safely docked in Lyttelton by 8am. The harbor at Lyttelton and the places we visited later in Christchurch are shown on the map below.



This was Veterans Day and the Amsterdam observed the occasion by having a Sunrise Service for Veterans Day in the Queen’s Lounge at 6:30 this morning. They also gave each passenger a red poppy pin to wear on the lapel during the day. The New Zealanders also honor their military veterans today and they call the day “Remembrance Day”. There was a celebration of Remembrance Day held near Cathedral Square in Christchurch today and passengers of the Amsterdam were invited to attend.

We didn’t have any organized tours scheduled in Christchurch and were planning to just go in to town and look around on our own. We wanted to explore the area around Cathedral Square in the center of town and then go out the International Antarctic Centre near the Christchurch airport. We left the Amsterdam about 9am and caught the complimentary bus that took us the 9 miles from Lyttelton Harbour to Cathedral Square.

The highway is a well designed freeway that they call a “motorway”. It passed through a long tunnel under the mountain ridge that is visible in the map above between Lyttleton and Christchurch. We got to Cathedral Square in Christchurch after about a 20 minute ride.

Cathedral Square was a busy place. We first noticed the old fashion looking electric street car waiting for passengers, as shown on the right. This was a complimentary trolley service that circled the business district. We didn’t take the trolley but just strolled around Cathedral



Square taking in the sights. The Cathedral dominates the square. Although a wing of the building is undergoing renovation it is still a beautiful sight, as shown on the left.

A couple of gentlemen were engaged in playing a game of chess on a game board built in to Cathedral Square. They were seriously engrossed in their game in spite of the crowds passing by.

The square has an eye catching piece of art that uses the silver leaf fern symbol of New Zealand as its theme, as shown on the right. We thought this art was attractive.



On the opposite end of the appeal spectrum was another inhabitant of Cathedral Square which, although ugly, probably gets more attention than the silver fern artwork. We refer to the Countdown Display for the rugby World Cup in 2011. Obviously, New Zealanders take their Rugby seriously, and their team, The All Blacks, represent them well.



A poignant item on the square is the relatively small black marble memorial to the Maori tribes that inhabited New Zealand before the arrival of the Europeans. Their history is much like that of the American Indians. They had no concept of an individual owning the land which they believed belonged to God. As the European settlers moved in there were bloody conflicts. The Maori, limited by primitive weapons, resorted to terrorism to slow the encroachment of the settlers. The wording of the monument attempts to bond the European and the Maori people by acknowledging the 1000 years that the Maori occupied New Zealand before European arrival. The monument says the Maori “Prepared” New Zealand for the Europeans, presumably by setting up villages in the logical spots for habitation and commerce. The plaque on top of the monument is shown in the photo on the right.

The entire monument is shown in the photo below.



The inscription on the monument lists the names of Maori villages and maybe the tribes that lived in New Zealand at the time the European arrived. Our view of the relations

between the Maori and New Zealanders of European descent is superficial at this point but it appears that New Zealand is putting significant effort into preserving and acknowledging the contributions that the native people have made to their culture. For example, shows of Maori dances and other traditions are presented to tourists as part of the New Zealand experience. We were treated to a Maori performance on the Amsterdam later this evening.

A short distance from Cathedral Square is the Christchurch Public Library. We wound our way through a shopping mall and found the library so that we could take a picture with Barbara's library card, as shown on the right.



We also stopped in and did the obligatory shopping for souvenirs tee shirts, kiwis, as such. We found the "Naturally NZ Souvenirs" shop across the street from Cathedral Square to be one of the best. Prices everywhere are high but their selection was great.

We had explored the Cathedral Square area to our satisfaction and we decided to dedicate the rest of the day to checking out the International Antarctic Centre that we had heard much about. We were particularly interested in their Blue Penguin exhibit. We purchased tickets to the



Antarctic Centre at the tourist information center bordering Cathedral Square. The tickets, costing \$92 NSD (\$72 USD) for two seniors, covered the price of round trip transportation, a ride in a Hagglund snow mobile, and the interactive Antarctic exhibit. We collected our tickets and headed for the Penguin Express bus waiting at the Cathedral Square curb, as shown on the left.

The International Antarctic Centre is located adjacent to the Christchurch airport and is about a 20 minute ride west from the center of Christchurch.

Along the way to the Antarctic exhibit we kept the camera busy snapping pictures of the passing scene. The following are pictures of typical houses we saw on the city streets that we passed.



We noted that nearly all the residential houses had fairly tall fences at the sidewalk. In the US cities we have lived in such high fences would not be allowed in the front yard.

In the photo on the left we also noted the children wearing school uniforms. According to the bus driver, all kids in parochial and even the kids in the public schools have to wear some kind of a uniform. Later we saw this young man, shown on the right, leaving a parochial school in a sharp looking uniform.



Our Penguin Bus approached close to the Christchurch Airport and pulled in to the parking lot of the International Antarctic Centre. The place was well marked by the main building which could not be missed when viewed from the street, as shown below.



The Antarctic exploration and study programs sponsored by the New Zealand, United States and Italian governments use the facilities at the Christchurch airport to support their operations. The closeness of these government organizations has obviously been used by the Antarctic Centre to enhance their knowledge of Antarctic technology and the authenticity of the displays that they have.

This sign shown on the right is adjacent to the entrance to the Antarctic Centre.



A short walk down a sidewalk brought us to the airport passenger terminal used by the

US for flights to Antarctica. The terminal entrance is shown on the left.



There were also the Hagglund all-terrain vehicles parked out front for visitors to see. One of the rugged looking vehicles is shown below.



We finished our quick look around the outside of the Antarctic Centre and went inside. A friendly and helpful greeter named Belinda, shown on the right, came over to us and quickly explained how we could best enjoy the exhibits they had to offer.

Although the displays of Antarctic exploration and research were interesting, our main goal was to see the Blue Penguin and learn more about the little animal. Belinda explained that for \$22 NZD each we could get a “Backstage Pass” to tour the penguin exhibit and see how injured and sick Penguins are cared for. Actual touching of the penguins was not possible but the guides would get us real close to the little critters. We bought tickets for that tour which was scheduled to start at 12:00 noon.



We had 30 minutes to spare so we took a 10 minute ride on the all-terrain type vehicle designed by the Hagglund Company for use in Antarctica. They simply call this vehicle a Hagglund. It can travel over snow and operate in extreme cold temperatures, snow, and rough terrain. We climbed aboard one of the Haaglunds along with two other tourists and a driver. Our ride demonstrated the extremes of hill climbing, crevasse crossing and deep water navigation that the Haaglund was capable of. We were all strapped in and had headphones that delivered a steady patter of humorous monologue from the driver who took the Hagglund through its paces. We could still manage to get our camera pointed out the small windows. The first encounter was with a steep hill like the one shown in the photograph on the right.



It was like riding in a roller coaster as we sped over the steep hills. We were surprised that there was no jarring bump at the bottom of what felt like free fall off the peak of the hills. Apparently the suspension system does its job well.

The next test was crossing a simulated crevasse in glacier ice. The Haggglund slowly eased out over a 4 foot wide opening at the top of one of the hills. The weight distribution is apparently such that it doesn't tip into the hole in the ice as long as the crack is 4 foot or less wide. The dangerous places in the ice are noted with a black flag so the test course we were on had black flags posted at this simulated crevasse. The flag shows in this picture looking down from this "hill of terror", shown on the right.



Our driver then took us through a series of banking maneuvers where the Haggglund was tipped sideways until it was leaning at about a 45 degree angle and we had to hang on to overhead hand holds to keep from falling to the downhill side of the cab. The final test was a simulated river or lake. We eased into a pond of water and found that the Haggglund was designed to float with us in it. The treads kept moving and provided the propulsion to get us to the other side of the pond. We finished the demonstration run very impressed with its all-terrain capabilities but happy to exit and get on with our visit to other parts of the Antarctic Centre.



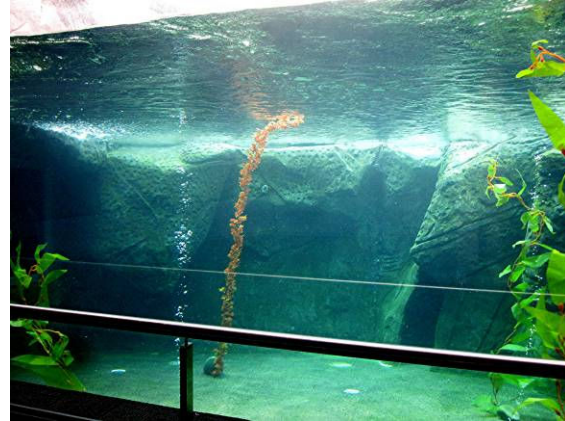
Our "Backstage Pass" tour group



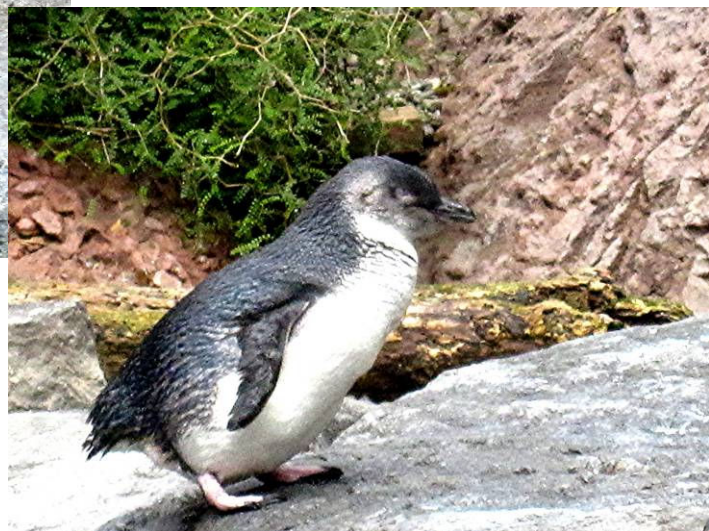
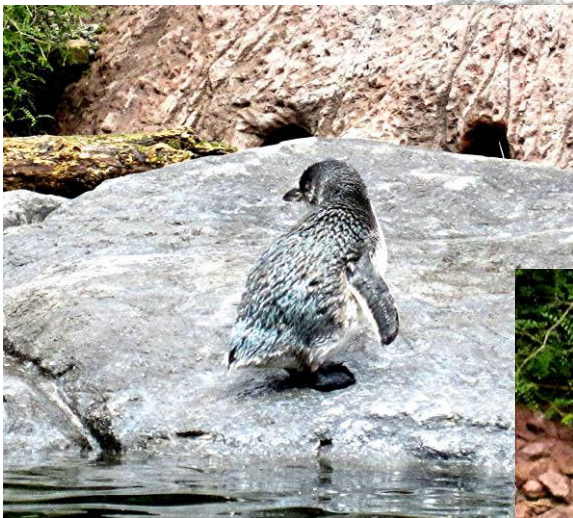
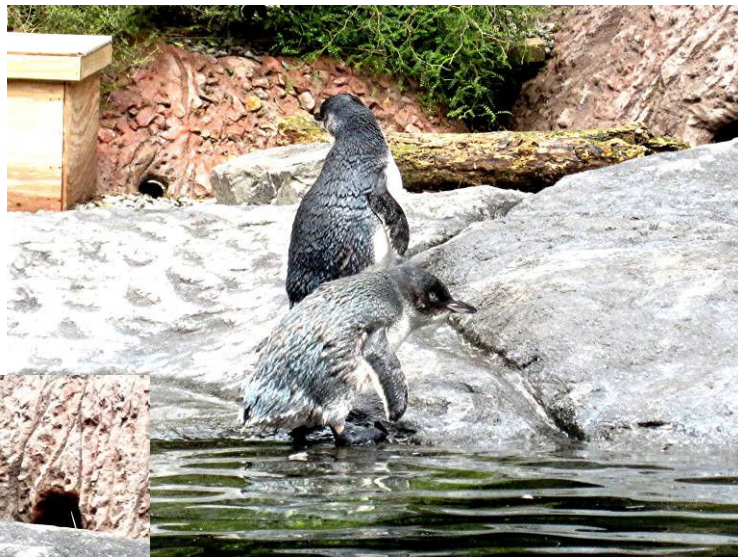
gathered in the Antarctic Centre foyer waiting for our guide, as shown on the left. We wore the yellow vests to show that we had bought the Backstage Pass.

We met our guide, named Sue, and she explained that the facilities she would show us have the main purpose of saving injured or newly hatched and abandoned blue penguins.

She started the tour by taking us to a pond of chilled water that the penguins swim in. There is a side aquarium type window for viewing by people who have purchased the standard entrance ticket. That is, not the “Behind the Scenes” ticket. We were led to a door that let us go beyond the glass so that we could see the penguins on dry land. The following pictures were of the blue penguin babies beside the pool of water viewed through the aquarium glass.



The iridescent blue color of their feathers is the source of their name, blue penguin.



After viewing the penguins behind the aquarium glass, Sue took us into the equipment room and told us how they keep the water free of bacteria and algae that can injure the baby penguins. It turns out that instead of using chlorine to kill bacteria, they use ozone gas which is less toxic to the penguins. They generate their own ozone gas with generators like the one shown on the right.

After the tour of the equipment room we went to the room where injured penguins are cared for. Both Sue and another guide, Vicki, brought out two little blue penguins and let them walk around the floor as we watched.

We took the pictures below as the little penguins paraded around our feet.



Sue (below) and Vicki (on the right) picked up the little chicks so we could get a closer look.



Sue showed us some of the herring they have shipped in from Holland to feed the penguins. They stick with one supplier and type of fish they have found that works well for the penguins.

Behind Sue, on the wall, is a stuffed ferret which is one of the predators that eat penguin eggs and the young chicks.



This display finished our 'Backstage Pass' tour and we exited back into the main foyer. We then went through the interactive displays they have to illustrate what it is like to be in Antarctica.



Barbara finds out that she is taller than an Emperor Penguin.

Orlin fantasizes about taking part in an Antarctica expedition.



One of the best features of the standard tour is the movie "Beyond the Frozen Sunset" shown on a huge high definition screen. The movie is a 17 minute continuous film by Mike Single that follows a seasonal arc from sunset to sunrise shot mostly from a camera mounted on the underside of a helicopter. This was a nice way to get the feel of the Antarctic experience without the pain that might be associated with the freezer room they operate for people who (after putting on the arctic garments provided) want to experience the temperatures and wind of the Antarctic.

Of course, the exhibit eventually exits to the gift shop. Barbara easily finds the strategically placed blue penguin souvenirs.



As we paid for our little blue penguin we noticed that the \$5



New Zealand bill has a Penguin prominently displayed on one side, as shown on the left.

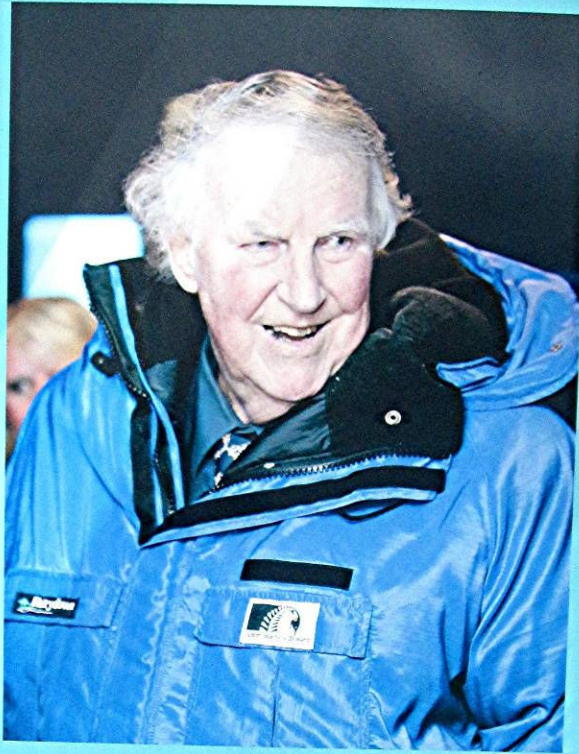
In the foyer was a very nice piece of decoration to carry out the Antarctic theme, as shown below.



Behind this display were the toilets. Here we found an example of the loveable humor that we have found in the New Zealanders. Check out these descriptive icons for the men's and women's toilets. Ya gotta love 'em.



A famous New Zealander that is honored at the International Antarctic Centre is Sir Edmund Hillary. His name appears frequently in public areas and on buildings in Christchurch and elsewhere that we visited.



Sir Edmund Hillary KG, ONZ, KBE 1919 - 2008

Sir Edmund Hillary was without a doubt the most famous internationally recognised New Zealander. He was the first to climb Mt Everest and the first to reach the South Pole by mechanised means.

Ed Hillary became the leader of the New Zealand contingent of the successful Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition in 1957/8. Ed left Scott Base with his team on 3 January 1958 to pioneer a new route to the South Pole.

“This really is a wonderful attraction” said Sir Ed, as he toured the Centre with his wife June, before officially opening the world’s first indoor “Antarctic Storm”. He described “The Antarctic Storm” as “quite realistic” comparing it to the conditions faced by his team in Antarctica on that famous expedition.

We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves with all the exhibits in the International Antarctic Centre. The Internet address for additional information is www.iceberg.co.nz . It was time to head back to Cathedral Square and return to the Amsterdam by way of the shuttle bus. We went out to the Antarctic Centre parking lot to catch the “Penguin” bus back to Cathedral Square. There we saw this whimsical caution sign shown on the right.



The sun was now out bright and shiny and the ride back to the center of town was delightful as we passed golf courses, residential areas and parks like the one shown below.



The bus let us off at Cathedral Square in downtown Christchurch. We were waiting for our shuttle bus to the Amsterdam when Scott Talley, the IT Officer on the Amsterdam came by and we chatted for a while. Our bus soon arrived and we made the trip back to the Amsterdam.

There was a cultural performance of Maori dancers scheduled early in the evening. In order to get the timing right for the Maori show we skipped dinner in the dining room in favor of a festive barbeque that was held on the Lido Pool Deck. The Amsterdam hotel staff really puts a lot of effort into providing the passengers with options for dining on board. Here are some scenes from the barbeque shown on the right and below.



The stewards were wearing red and black checkered “lumberjack” shirts. This seemed like a good choice since it had gotten chilly again as the evening approached.

One of the Amsterdam bands played for our musical enjoyment, as shown on the right.



One of our favorite stewards, Pas, came by to put a candle on our table and see if there was anything he could do for us. We got this photo of him with Barbara.



We finished dinner and went down to the Maori show in the Queen's Lounge about 7pm. The performance was entitled, "Welcome to Aotearoa" and was put on by the dancers of Te Mana O Mareikura. "Aotearoa" is the Maori name for New Zealand. Aotearoa has the meaning of "Land of the long white cloud" in reference to the line of clouds that frequently hang over the island chain.

The dancers, dressed in colorful costumes and sporting tattoos on both men and women started their performance with a traditional dance. We took the photos shown below.





We particularly enjoyed watching a girl, shown below, who appeared to be about the same age as our granddaughter, Emily.



Near the end of the show they invited some of the ladies in the audience to come on stage and do a dance while swinging a white ball, called a poi, on a rope. The result is shown on the photo below.



Then the master of ceremony said the men of the troupe would demonstrate a “Hakka” dance that was traditionally done to scare the enemy and avoid bloodshed. The dance involved loud yelling, threatening gestures, eyes open wide and the tongue extended as far as possible. Then members of the dance team went in to the audience and recruited men from the audience to join them on stage for a Hakka Dance. Orlin was trying to avoid eye contact and look as small as possible when he was selected by one of the recruiters. Throwing caution to the winds he dutifully followed the dancer back on stage, along with several other guys from the audience.

In the picture below the Maori man has his tongue extended in the “Hakka Dance” to frighten the enemy.

Of course, the native dancers were bare-chested so the audience soon started to change “take it off” to the hapless men volunteers on the stage. They finally gave in and shucked the garments off their quivering upper torsos. Without going through much painful detail, the scene that resulted is shown on the right and below.



The Amsterdam volunteer warriors stuck their tongues out in the best Hakka tradition they could muster. Mercifully the leader, shown on the right, brought the dance to a conclusion and the “mighty warriors” of the Amsterdam (as he put it) returned to their seats.

After a concluding dance the performance was brought to an end and we gave them a standing ovation. The passengers really appreciate the local cultural groups

coming on board to share their traditions. We go home with a better idea about how different people of the world express themselves and celebrate events in their lives.

We left the Queen’s Lounge and were surprised to find that the sun was just now going down. Barbara was able to catch it sinking over the New Zealand mountains in the west. This seemed like a fitting way to bring this day to an end. Tomorrow we arrive in Wellington, the capital city of New Zealand. That will be our third city in this whirlwind tour of New Zealand.

