

[00:00:04.870] - Tracy Collins

Hi, and welcome to the Global Travel Planning Podcast. I'm your host, Tracy Collins, who, with my expert guests, takes you on a journey to destinations around the globe providing itinerant ideas, practical tips, and more to help you plan your next travel adventure.

[00:00:21.420] - Tracy Collins

Hi, and welcome to the Global Travel Planning Podcast. This is episode two, where we're going to be chatting about our recent trip to New Zealand, which was in September 2023 with my husband, Doug.

[00:00:33.280] - Tracy Collins

He's going to be here and having a chat with you too, to share about our thoughts about visiting New Zealand for the first time, because this was our first visit ever for both of us. We're going to be talking about, in this episode, our North Island, New Zealand road trip, which is our five-day itinerary. We'll talk about our thoughts and reflections as first time visitors to New Zealand, which if it's going to be your first trip, you might find useful. Then we'll talk through our five-day itinerary. This is the first part. The second part, which will be Episode 3 of the Global Travel Plan and Podcast, will be the second part of our road trip, which was actually through South Island in New Zealand.

[00:01:14.630] - Tracy Collins

But to say for this episode, myself and Doug are going to concentrate on looking at our itinerary and our thoughts actually on our first visit to New Zealand, which I have to say completely blew us away. Beautiful, beautiful destination. For the first part of this podcast, really, it's our thoughts and reflections from our trip as first time visitor. I'll start by introducing my husband, Doug, who came along on the trip with me.

[00:01:38.090] - Doug Collins

Hello. Good to be here.

[00:01:39.390] - Tracy Collins

We thought it would be a good way to have a conversation about the things that struck us. As I say, first time visitors. We've not been we live in Australia, but we hadn't been across the ditch, as they say, in Australia, New Zealand. We hadn't gone across New Zealand. And honestly, it really was a fantastic experience.

[00:01:57.840] - Doug Collins

Wasn't it? It certainly was. It was such a lot about New Zealand. I've worked with a lot of people from New Zealand here in Australia. And so we're so keen to get there. We've been putting it off, but we eventually planned it and.

[00:02:11.420] - Tracy Collins

Got there. Yeah, we did. I think it was one of those last minute decisions that's good in New Zealand, so that's what we did. I think one of the first things that struck both of us was just how incredibly friendly, open, helpful and welcoming the people in New Zealand were.

[00:02:26.220] - Doug Collins

They certainly were. As soon as we got off the plane, people welcoming you or the statues and Māori statues as you walk through the arrival at the Auckland Airport. And it's not quite overwhelming, but it's.

[00:02:42.350] - Tracy Collins

Something special. Oh, yeah, very special. I think I always remember that because it was just such a lovely welcome. So we did a road trip in both North Island and South Island. So I think some things to consider if this is what you're planning to do. I don't know, obviously, camper van travel is very popular in New Zealand. We decided not to do a camper van. We actually hired a car and stayed in a hotel and guest house, BNB type accommodation, which we absolutely loved. But obviously we know a lot of people and we saw a lot of camper vans. Certainly in the South Island, we saw a lot. I think one of the tips that we want to say, one thing that we did consider and we are aware of is actually that you need

to book in advance for popular destinations. Places like Hobbiton do get booked up. And even some of the tours that I actually want to do some of the that I'd like to have taken part in were actually fully booked, so we couldn't do that. I think you need to plan ahead before you go.

[00:03:38.370] - Doug Collins

Yeah. And particularly, as you said, petrol being so expensive there you really don't want to be wasting any of that petrol. So it's important you plan your route in advance.

[00:03:48.610] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, absolutely. I will talk in a bit more about it, but we basically started in Auckland and ended in Auckland five days later and managed to fit in Matter, Matter and Rotorill, which were the two destinations we chose.

[00:04:01.710] - Doug Collins

It is once we arrived, we didn't hire a car straight away. We had a day in Auckland first, and then we hired a car. We went back to the airport to collect.

[00:04:10.200] - Tracy Collins

The car, didn't we? Yeah, we did. We're going to talk about that in a second. I think one of the other things that we realised was that the weather is changeable very quickly. We didn't notice that. Really, if it's a clear day to do an activity, for example, the Hooker Valley trail in South Island, we were very lucky in that the day before it was too windy and that was closed. The day after I think it was closed. We were very lucky. So you've got to take the weather as it comes and actually get out there and do things. Obviously, it's difficult when you've got activities planned if the weather is not great. We were very lucky at Hobbiton again because the weather was outstanding. But do make sure that you pack for the weather. Obviously, we were there in September, so it's that winter going into autumn, spring, you could go into spring, I should say. Winter going into spring. I don't know why I said autumn, winter going into spring. And you could see the blossom on the trees and it was starting to get warmer. Certainly, I was over there for a month altogether and I could see definitely the warmth coming through.

[00:05:16.740] - Tracy Collins

But you need to really think about packing layers, waterproof shoes, coat, hat gloves, particularly for the South Island, where it was colder.

[00:05:24.160] - Doug Collins

Well, one thing we did notice as well was the food.

[00:05:26.650] - Tracy Collins

Wasn't it? Oh, yeah. Food was fantastic.

[00:05:29.200] - Doug Collins

The We tried a lot of different things. I can't remember everything we tried, but some things we just-

[00:05:35.020] - Tracy Collins

I know you particularly enjoyed the salmon.

[00:05:36.890] - Doug Collins

Oh, yeah. The salmon was outstanding.

[00:05:38.900] - Tracy Collins

I'm not going to forget that? Yeah. I know you enjoyed the pies were really good.

[00:05:43.080] - Doug Collins

The pies, the fillings, the pastry.

[00:05:44.720] - Tracy Collins

Everything was just- Yeah. We had some really good meals. I will say that actually we have written up both itineraries. The North Island, New Zealand road trip itinerary is available. Obviously we're going to go through that in a second in a bit more detail. But I actually do mention the different restaurants and places that we ate at. I think without further ado, we'll start talking about our itinerary. Bear in mind our itinerary is based over five days, which I know is a very short time to see North Ireland. Obviously, we didn't see all of North Ireland. That would be impossible in five days. What we did is chose the things that we really wanted to see in that time. We flew in from Brisbane on the Sunday evening got in, I think it was about eight o'clock. We had organised a transfer, private transfer. There are a variety of ways to get in from Auckland International Airport into Auckland itself, which is basically 17 miles, 27 km from the CPD. You can organise private transfer, which is what we did, which we found easiest. There is some public transport, bus and a train or the sky drive options as well that you can take.

[00:06:57.550] - Tracy Collins

But honestly, I would do a little bit of research to figure out what time you get in and what's going to work best for you. Obviously, in that first evening, we just headed straight to... We got a private transfer and headed to the hotel. We stayed at the Marriott in Auckland. I remember actually, first impressions for me was that it was cold because we're flying from Australia where it was a little bit warmer. Also I did not expect... I don't know why I did not expect Auckland to be as hilly as it was. That just shows you probably I should have done a little bit more research before I arrived into Auckland itself. I did research about the destinations, but Auckland definitely that took me by surprise. That was our first evening, so really not up too much. Really the itinerary kicks in on the next day. I call that day one, really. On day one and we were in Auckland. On that.

[00:07:48.730] - Doug Collins

Day-well, the first thing we did was look at what the weather was doing to start with. Then we looked at the hop on, hop off bus where we could pick it up from close to where we were staying. And then we picked out our destinations we most liked the look of, really, wasn't it? Yeah. And then we walked to the Sky Town, which was about five minutes from where we're staying. And we talked to the most lovely lady there who worked out the best deal for the hop on and some of the inclusive combination tickets.

[00:08:20.280] - Tracy Collins

Didn't we? Yeah, we did. And so that hop on, hop hop bus operates between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM. So the last bus to make it five. And at every stop, every 30 minutes there'll be a bus that goes past. So we found that was actually the best way for us. So we decided to buy a combo ticket, which included the Auckland War Memorial Museum, the All Blacks Experience, and the Sky Tower. We only had one day in Auckland. Again, when you're only one day in place, you actually have to choose the places that speak to you and that you want to go to. Obviously, the bus was the best way for us to get around and see all those places.

[00:09:00.860] - Doug Collins

That's right. We thought the best way to familiarize ourselves with a bit of New Zealand tradition and history was to head to the museum, Auckland Museum first. That was a good choice.

[00:09:12.700] - Tracy Collins

It was. We spent about two and a half hours in the museum. We could actually have spent longer in there, I must admit. But it was really interesting that the museum is spread over three floors. The ground floor is dedicated to our people and places what it's called. Level one is our world and level two is war and remembrance. We did manage to get around all of the museum. The highlights for us, I think, were the Māori court, the volcano section, which was fascinating too, the Māori natural history and the origin section particularly the birds, which I find absolutely fascinating. I have to say the World War I and World War II hall of memories are definitely humbling and thought provoking. That was our first destination. We actually had lunch there and then we waited. I hopped on the bus and we headed to Boston, where you had highlighted somewhere that you wanted to go to.

[00:10:05.420] - Doug Collins

Yeah, that's the All Black experience. I really want to do that. The All Black is the name of the famous New Zealand Rugby Union team. The museum is located in the Sky City Precinct, right next to the Sky Towers, it's easily found. And we took the tour there and it was the entire history of the All Black team. Obviously, they dwelled on the massive successes of the team, but the highlight really was on this big screen standing in front of the haka, the traditional start of a rugby Union match involving the All Blacks. So there's two hakas. There's one with the ladies team and then one with the men's team. And it was incredibly powerful and moving.

[00:10:47.190] - Tracy Collins

It was actually, I wasn't even that keen on going old black because I'm experienced, because I'm not really a rugby fan, but I absolutely loved it. Seeing the haka was amazing. It left us both speechless, really. It was incredibly powerful. But I think the fun thing about the whole experience is that it's interactive. So it was a lot of fun. It really was a lot of fun, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. So highly recommend that if you are interested in rugby and the All Blacks, then go and enjoy the experience.

[00:11:21.850] - Doug Collins

Yeah. It's suitable for all ages. There is some children in there and it's something for everyone.

[00:11:27.150] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, absolutely. So after that, our final destination for that day was the Auckland Sky Tower. We decided to enjoy both the day and evening views. And so we were there for about an hour and a half. To give you an overview, we spent two and a half hours or so at the Auckland War Memorial Museum, and then we're at the Orbex experience again for about 90 minutes. Then we were at the Auckland Sky Tower for about 90 minutes. Obviously, you've got to take the bus in between to get between these places. The Sky Tower was opened in 1997 and was until 2022, the tallest building in the southern hemisphere at 328 metres high. The first thing we did was at centre level 51, which is 186 metres, the main observation level. Then we changed lifts to go up to the sky deck at level 60, which is at 220 metres. I felt like it was swaying a little bit at that level. It definitely was. So at level 50 is the recently opened sky bar, but I would check the open and hours for that. It was actually closed when we were there. And if you're an adrenaline junkie, there are a lot to do there, include a skywalk or the sky jump.

[00:12:34.270] - Tracy Collins

I will say that neither of us did that.

[00:12:35.700] - Doug Collins

No, we didn't. We watched.

[00:12:36.700] - Tracy Collins

Others do it. Oh, did we?

[00:12:38.420] - Doug Collins

Yeah. Some of these are coming off this side of the tower. I cannot believe that the edge now backwards before the ascent. I was getting nervous watching them.

[00:12:45.930] - Tracy Collins

Oh, no. So yeah, it was lovely seeing the sunset as well. You get great views over Auckland, so highly recommend it. And as I say, that was all part of our hop on, hop off bus combo ticket, which worked out cost effective for us. So that was basically the end of our first full day in Auckland. So day two we decided or we had booked to drive from Auckland to Mater Mater to go to Hobbiton. So we'd hired a car via Discover Cars and we picked it up at Auckland International Airport. So we did hire a taxi from the hotel and went out to Auckland International Airport to pick up the car, which is fairly easy. The drive time that day was two hours, twelve minutes. We're down to the B and B, which was only just 8-10 minutes past Hobbiton. Drive time to Hobbiton was two hours, just over two hours. We booked Hobbiton for 10 past three and you've got to be there 20 minutes before the tour starts. That was one of the things that we absolutely had to book. Then in the evening, we went to Mater Mater and we ate at a lovely restaurant, which we both loved, called the Redoubt Bar and Eatery.

[00:13:56.000] - Tracy Collins

I'd highly recommend that the pork belly bites and they were amazing. That's definitely. Basically, day two, we had allocated a visit to one destination only. If you are a Lord of the Rings fan, I guess Hobbiton is going to be the place that you want to go to. It's somewhere that I dreamed about going to for a long time. Again, it's really popular, so make sure that you book tickets. The popular trail with the Hobbit banquet was sold out on the one day that we could do it. So if that's something you want to do, you really, really recommend that you do it. I'll quickly just mention where we stayed. We stayed at the cozy country stay at B&B, which was beautiful, lovely, fantastic place to stay. I'll put some pictures in the show notes so you can have a look. Highly recommend it was eight minute drive to Harberton. Doug is going to talk a little bit about tips and facts for those of you who are going to go to Hobbiton.

[00:14:51.580] - Doug Collins

Definitely, yeah. The Hobbiton Visitor Centre is completely located on the main road. But we did find some of the best viewing points was slightly past from where we're staying. Look at the terrain there and the area. It's stunning photos. But yeah, the visitor centre, plenty of parking there. And as you're driving through that countryside all around there, there's plenty of designated viewing areas on both sides of the road. So allow yourself plenty of time when you're heading there to give yourself time to stop off and take a few photos. But once you arrive at the visitor center, you go inside and you are issued with your ticket on your reservation. And as you'd expect to find these places, there's toilets and cafes and a very well-stocked gift shop with all things related.

[00:15:46.940] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, well, there's plenty of... I mean, we were there, I would say, about 20 minutes before. And there's a great place where you can have a photo taken with the hobbit in the background, like board. Again, I'll put in the show notes. So obviously it's a must do if you're there. You're going to have to have your photo there. And then after that, you transfer in a coach to Hobbiton itself, which is a five minutes drive. Then your tour guide will be with you for the duration of the tour. And she was very good, wasn't she? She gave us a lot of background.

[00:16:15.840] - Doug Collins

Yeah, she was very enthusiastic, clearly a massive fan. And she was fully.

[00:16:21.620] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, she was. She was. Actually, when you arrive at Hobbiton, you're guided around the set, you find out lots of information, anecdotes along the and there's plenty of opportunity to take photos. I think I've took about, I don't know, 800.

[00:16:34.960] - Doug Collins

Yes, and she was telling you the best places for photos as well.

[00:16:38.340] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, she did, which was excellent. I have to say we were incredibly lucky because we had beautiful blue skies and sunshine that the day we visited, which was great. I mean, wear comfortable shoes because obviously you're walking around Hobbiton, so up and down the hills. The tour of the set ends at the Green Dragon Inn, of course, where you get a complimentary drink. So alcoholic or non-alcoholic choices and plenty of time to take more photos before you head back to the coach and transfer the visitor centre.

[00:17:06.190] - Doug Collins

There's also a little bit of food there as well. You can buy some.

[00:17:08.910] - Tracy Collins

Pies and- Yeah, cake and things like that. Yeah, so you can do that. I know we were the last tour of the day and after that they were setting up for the banquet. Basically we got back to the car park, we headed back to the accommodation, got ourselves sorted for the evening, decided that we would go to Mater Mater to have a meal, which is what we did, as I mentioned earlier, really enjoyed it. I don't

know if it's the Redoubt bar or the Redoubt bar. Redoubt bar. Redoubt bar. And Eatery was honestly highly recommended. So if you're going to Hobbiton, you're going to stay the evening, I recommend staying at the cozy country stay BNB and going to eat at the Redou bar.

[00:17:50.080] - Doug Collins

We didn't have a book in there. We just turned up and they're very accommodated.

[00:17:56.040] - Tracy Collins

Yeah. So that was the end of day two. So day three, we decided to head to Rotoroua, which is somewhere that I'd always wanted to go and see. I'm sure if you've seen the Hot Geezers on television, you'll know exactly why we were really interested in heading to that area. So yeah, it was fantastic. I have to say that I loved Rotoroua.

[00:18:22.740] - Doug Collins

Oh, it's a stunning area. Absolutely stunning.

[00:18:25.780] - Tracy Collins

Yeah. So we booked accommodation Rotoroua for two nights and we stayed in the Caranda BNB, which was fabulous. I cannot tell you how amazing it was. Home from home. Oh, yeah, absolutely. Ron and Lesley, who own it and run it, were so welcoming. And honestly, it's one of the best BNBs we have ever stayed in.

[00:18:44.460] - Doug Collins

The most well equipped, certainly.

[00:18:46.320] - Tracy Collins

Oh, yeah, absolutely. It was beautiful, spacious, luxuriously decorated, and actually quite simply perfect. It was a 10 out of 10 for us. The gorgeous views over Rotoroua again were absolutely outstanding. Obviously we had scheduled the morning to drive to Rotoroua, but we had some activities. The activities that we had planned that day were basically to go to Tipuwa, excuse my pronunciation, geothermal valley on a guided tour. That was the first thing that we did. Then that evening we had the Midtime Māori village cultural experience and dinner buffet. Then dinner was included in the village experience. Those were the things that we had planned. Once we got to the BNB, checked in, left a luggage, then we headed straight away for the geothermal valley guided tour. We headed for T. Ipuwa, first of all, where we had booked timed slot tickets through Getty Guide. I mean, a guided to us the best way to learn about the history of the area from the guides. Our guide, Kahoot, whose family has lived in that valley for over a thousand years, was fantastic. What an amazing and really inspiration. She was lovely. We were a little bit early, so there is a cafe and a shop that if you need to get there early, just go and have a cup of tea or whatever, plenty of parking.

[00:20:10.600] - Tracy Collins

We had an introduction, as I said, from our guide, Kahoot, to talk to us through about what we're going to see. You've got mud pools, heated pool and gizzars. The largest active gizar in the valley is the Puhutu Gizar. We were all anticipating an eruption of water up to 30 metres high and actually we were not disappointed. The cow does point out that the share has no control over the gizar, so it cannot be guaranteed. T. Ipuwa means Hot Spring. You'll also find the Kiwi Centre and New Zealand, Māori Arts and Craft Centre there, which was amazing. I went to the Kiwi Center, saw two Kiwis. First time I'd ever seen a Kiwi in my life, which was amazing. Obviously, Kiwi is New Zealand's national bird and they're actively involved in conservation efforts to keep the Kiwi bird from becoming extinct. The other area that you will visit is the New Zealand, Māori Arts and Craft Centre, which is a weaving and craft carving school which teaches the ancient traditions and skills to ensure these are passed on to future generations. During the tour, you have the opportunity to actually watch the students at work and even ask questions.

[00:21:14.520] - Doug Collins

And they were very, very obliged and happy to ask questions.

[00:21:20.070] - Tracy Collins

Answer questions. Yeah. So then after that, we did head back to the BNB and get changed. But that evening we were at the Mitai Māori village for the cultural experience.

[00:21:31.710] - Doug Collins

That's right. And that was for three hours the experience was going to be and it was a complete education. It really was. And we arrived, you have to be there 30 minutes beforehand for the welcome and to collect your tickets. And then it's a bit of a question-answer session as regards what the evening will entail. And then everybody puts the coats on and we head out to watch a war canoe on the river.

[00:21:55.350] - Tracy Collins

Yep.

[00:21:56.090] - Doug Collins

And that is absolutely, you feel like stepping back in time. It was just so visually stunning. Yeah, it.

[00:22:03.270] - Tracy Collins

Was excellent.

[00:22:04.380] - Doug Collins

But be careful that we need some flat shoes because the walk to the river is pretty dark and a little bit difficult under foot.

[00:22:13.020] - Tracy Collins

Yeah.

[00:22:13.400] - Doug Collins

But it's well worth it. And then you'll walk back to the meeting house again and we had the meal. It was cooked in the traditional way with all of the ground. I'm sure there's a proper name, but it escapes me. And the food was delicious.

[00:22:31.420] - Tracy Collins

As well, wasn't it? Oh, it was amazing. I should just say that after we saw the Warriors chanting paddling down the river, we actually did go and see dancing as well. I was just.

[00:22:40.480] - Doug Collins

Coming to that. Yeah. And the same between being the two, we watched that the show, we're a traditional show with a traditional show, dancing and singing and chance. And it was.

[00:22:53.050] - Tracy Collins

A storytelling. Yeah, it was very, very good. And then after that, there was another question answer session after the meal. So the meal was fine. I found the food was very tasty. You can also if you want to drink, you can buy alcohol at the bar. There is a bar open there. I will say that you will be sat at a table with strangers, but we found everybody really friendly and it was really interesting to meet people from all over the world.

[00:23:18.120] - Doug Collins

That certainly was. Yeah. And then that followed. It was a question-answer session and some very, very probing questions. And the compete was very happy to answer every single of them. And then there's options afterwards to go and look at some glowworms.

[00:23:34.070] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, that's correct. We did opt out of that time because we were getting a bit tired. But obviously it's something that if you want to do that, you can do that. So that was the end of day three. So day four was going to be our last full day in Rotorua. I had planned some activities that day. So I'd booked a visit to the National Kiwi Hatchery Center, which we did first thing at 10:00 a. M. Then I'd also booked

to go to the geothermal Hot Springs that evening as well. So I bought an open day ticket for that. We did have a gap because I wasn't sure what else to do that day. We decided to go to Wai'o Tapu, which absolutely, I think, just blew my mind. It was absolutely the geothermal Wonderland is absolutely the way to describe it.

[00:24:23.500] - Doug Collins
It really was a wonderland.

[00:24:25.210] - Tracy Collins
Oh, yeah. Incredible. Absolutely incredible. I can't wait to go back. It's one of those places that I will go back to over and over again just to see it. It was fantastic. So I don't know, Doug, if you want to talk about the National Kiwi Hatchery, which is where we went first.

[00:24:42.320] - Doug Collins
Yeah, that was so interesting as well. We had a walk around. We had a time slot for 10:00 AM, and it takes about 45 minutes. When you learn all about the breeding and the eggs and the incubation and the collection of the eggs, which was absolutely fascinating. And one of the experts there told us all about the species, how it's protected and what measures they are putting in place to try and reduce the decline in numbers.

[00:25:10.970] - Tracy Collins
Yeah, because it was actually quite shocking to know 50 % of newly hatched Kiwi chicks are actually killed by stotes, which obviously it's an introduced species, mammals that were introduced into New Zealand, which have managed to decimate the bird population, because obviously in New Zealand a lot of the birds are flightless, so they are defenseless against animals like stotes.

[00:25:33.370] - Doug Collins
Which is why we were very keen to contribute our admission to support all the work that.

[00:25:40.150] - Tracy Collins
They do. Absolutely. And if you haven't seen a Kiwi by this point, there's an opportunity to see the resident adult Kiwi during the chair. Obviously, we were there pre-hatching and I think they did have some eggs in at that point, which is quite early I think they mentioned. So I'm sure as the breeding season continues and they get more eggs and you may have the opportunity to see chicks, which we didn't, which is absolutely fine. After that, we decided to go to Wai'otapu, which is a 30-minute drive outside of Rotorur. But the place is incredible, totally awe-inspiring, unlike anything I've seen on Earth before. It's one of the most active geothermal areas in New Zealand. They've got colorful pools, geysers, and a lake, which just make this absolutely photographer's dream. Again, I took so many photos, absolutely so many photos of that. Highlights of that include the champagne pool, Devil's Bath tub, the largest mud pool in New Zealand. It's open seven days a week from 8:30 to 4:30. I think the last admittance is three. Make sure you wear sensible shoes because there's a lot of steps to negotiate further on in the park and you need to follow the boardwalks.

[00:26:50.590] - Tracy Collins
You will receive a map and the trails are well signposted so you won't get lost. When I headed out, I wasn't sure whether I was going to do all the trails, but there's absolutely no way I wasn't going to do the trails once we started.

[00:27:03.860] - Doug Collins
Yes, and it can get a bit warm. Even because of the hot geysers, it can get a bit warm. We're both a bit hot by the time we were walking.

[00:27:11.300] - Tracy Collins
Around, weren't we? Yeah, we were actually, obviously because you're surrounded by hot water. The three walk and trails, which take about 90 minutes and all to do the three. Also famous at Wai O Tapu is the Lady Knox Geyser, which erupts at around 10:00 AM or 10:00 AM each day. I think it's not predictable. So if you want to see that, don't do what we did and book the National Kiwi Hatchery for

that time because then it meant that we actually missed the Giza. So that's something we will definitely go back to do time to do that. Make sure that if you're going to do this, take a refillable water bottle and fill up just outside the visitor center. There is a cafe, gift shop, toilets at the main entrance, and obviously there is parking, but I can imagine it would get busy. So arrive earlier in the day during peak season, which would fit in if you're going to go and see the Lady Knox Geyser anyway. But it was stunning, actually visually stunning. Just an incredible place to visit, actually. After that, we had our last activity that we planned in Rotor. Actually, it was the perfect way to end what was going to...

[00:28:14.650] - Tracy Collins

Because the next day we were going to the airport. This was actually the perfect way to end our few days in North Island, wasn't it?

[00:28:20.660] - Doug Collins

It certainly was. It was perfect location as well, because we were right next to the lake.

[00:28:26.120] - Tracy Collins

We had booked a few hours at the Polynesian spas. The Rotorour Lake geothermal hot springs. Well, what can I say? As soon as I stepped outside of all the hot pools, I was like, Yeah, this is absolutely perfect. The spa is fed by two two Hot Springs, the priest spring and the Rachel spring, and they feed 28 hot mineral pools. The acidic nature of the priest spring helps relieve aches and pains, and the alkaline nature of the Rachel spring nourishes the skin. We booked the delux lake spal. There's our experience, which enables access to five pools, four Hot Rachel spring-fed pools of varying temperatures and one Hot priest spring-fed pool. There's also a cold prunge pool, which I didn't go into, but Doug did.

[00:29:13.180] - Doug Collins

I was brave enough to jump in and I learned a few new words. I didn't know that I actually knew them. It was-

[00:29:21.740] - Tracy Collins

Very cold.

[00:29:22.500] - Doug Collins

It was extremely cold, yeah.

[00:29:24.090] - Tracy Collins

Also the geothermal heated recliners were a hit too. I mean, with fantastic views over the lake, they are ideal to relax on when taking a break from the heat of the pools because obviously you have to be careful. You're going to spend too long in the pools and they do warn you of that. The reception is saying be careful about how long you're spending them. I think if you're going to visit, I think things that are important to know is that the lake spa experience includes access to changing facilities, perfect changing rooms are fantastic. Secure lockers, you get towels are provided, the soap, shampoo and hairdryers. Obviously, bring a swim in costume, bathers and flipflops. Though apparently you can hire swim costumes there if you need to.

[00:30:05.600] - Doug Collins

But the most important thing is being a refillable water bottle because with all that heat and the hot water, it's important to stay hydrated.

[00:30:14.270] - Tracy Collins

Absolutely. So that was our last stop of the day. But obviously after that, we were a little bit peckish. So we headed to Eat Street. So there's an Eat Street Rotorio. We're used to that in Brisbane, but there's an Eat Street Rotorio with plenty of dining options. So we chose the CBK Craft Bar and Kitchen, which we'd recommend. That was again, another delicious meal.

[00:30:34.300] - Doug Collins

It really was beautiful.

[00:30:35.810] - Tracy Collins

Yeah. So that was the end of day four. So day five, another full day, I guess, is we were heading back to Auckland. So a bit sad, really, at that point.

[00:30:47.570] - Doug Collins

We were allowed to have plenty of time. We planned the route.

[00:30:50.900] - Tracy Collins

We did. So basically it's a two hour, 30 minutes from Rotorou to Auckland International Airport. So Doug was flying back to Brisbane and I was actually flying down to Christchurch to South Ireland, where I was doing a house sit, which I will talk about in a future episode of how did house sitting, the advantages of house sitting. I was actually house sitting in Christchurch for a few weeks. But obviously it was a really easy drive back to Auckland International. No problem whatsoever. Drop the car off and took off on a- We.

[00:31:24.230] - Doug Collins

Eventually found a.Petrol station.

[00:31:25.880] - Tracy Collins

Yes. Just be careful when you're driving back that you find that it's not necessarily obvious the way that we drove in any way through the petrol station. So obviously you want to drop your car off fully with full level of fuel in it.

[00:31:39.250] - Tracy Collins

Yeah. So basically I guess that day five was more just it was a full day driving back to Auckland and leaving. So we had basically four days. We had the first day in Auckland, second day in Mater Mater, and days three and four in Rotorua. That gives you an overview of what we did.

[00:31:58.500] - Tracy Collins

We have a fully detailed itinerary, which includes links to the places we stayed, the different activities we took part in on our website. They will be on the show notes for this episode. That will be at tracytravelsintime.com/episode-2. So do pop over there so you can find links and say to all the different places that we stayed and to that article, which really gives a fuller information about all the places that we stayed. But I just want to say, I guess from us, it's just thanks for tuning in for this episode.

[00:32:30.370] - Tracy Collins

And all I've got to say is Happy Global Travel Planning.