



NEW ZEALAND

Playground all about The sheep



To really see this island, you have to rent a car and have a full month to travel. New Zealand is the land of sheep. There are more sheep than people but this side of the world has so much more to offer. It's surrounded by beaches, green inland hills and natural beauty in all directions. The major cities are still small enough to be charming; the people are still down-under enough to be kind to tourists and the culture is still different enough to make you smile as we travel in what seems.....a journey back in time. Starting in Auckland one can see immediately why it's called the city of sails. More people own a boat than own a car around this area. The yacht harbor is packed with the biggest and best boats and yachts of all sizes. This is the world capital of sailing. This small north island has a moderate climate and most people live within a half hour of a beach. It's a great place to live and eat, and play. For the tourist there is no end of things to see and do. Boat tours take you to hidden harbors or undersea worlds. Bus tours take you to secret coves and pristine beaches, caves, rain-forests and wildlife sanctuaries. Rotorua is located about an hour out of Auckland. This whole area has a volcanic landscape and active thermals with which makes it an awesome sight to see. Champagne Pool in Waioapu is one of the most beautiful and unique sights I have ever seen. You could spend a whole month just on the north island. But not to miss is all the glory and vast differences of the south island. Here's where you follow the coast and explore each and every small town as you drive along the way. We stayed in local B&B's which added friendship and conversation to our trip. Starting in Christchurch we began our journey punting down the Avon River. The east coastline continued to delight us as we came across old architecture, great wildlife and unique personalities. The highlights were seeing the penguins crossing the street and the sheep shearing competition. We took the Trans Alpine Train to the west coast and the ride was a treat in itself. There

were glorious vistas, colorful flowers and beautiful mountains along the way. The west coast has a totally different climate and is quite severe in the winter. Here there are glaciers and snow caves. One can hike in or take a flight all over this winter wonderland. Traveling down the coast are the fjords of Milford and Doubtful Sound. Boat cruises take you into yet another discovery of nature at its best. Driving towards the middle of the island is Queenstown....a large city that fortunately is made to stay small in size because of its location. These people desperately want to keep their nation trouble free and fun-loving. Surrounded by lakes and mountains, this whole region can be a vacation all its own. The lakes are beautiful and are almost a turquoise color. Oddly enough there isn't much activity on the water here.....maybe because the water is so cold. Or maybe because their wild side is directed in sports and the likes of death defying things like bungee jumping and speed boating down narrow gorges. Yes, we did the speed boat ride but only when I requested the OLDEST (most experienced) driver who was all of 30 at the time. We also rode bikes down a long vista road with sheep on every hill and twists and turns that exposed grand views and promises of new surprises at the bottom. Oh....I already miss New Zealand. I wish we could have spent some time driving up the center of the island. And had time to actually relax at any of the lovely lake fronts. Or spent more time to hike or bike and find even more new experiences. New Zealand a place that makes you want to stay longer and share a world of a time a place that has the feel of ...PERFECT.