

## Servas Tour Report as Guest

### New Zealand

I became Servas member in the month of August 2019, impressed by the Mission, Vision and the Ideology of Servas, which I read in the news about Servas in a local News Paper.

During first 5 months of membership only I could get an opportunity to become Host for Massimo from Italy, Arzu from Istanbul, Petricia from Mexico, Moira Wendy from Scotland and Shewtalana from Russia.

I started my planning in September for traveling to New Zealand, since it was yet an unexplored country for me. We got the Hosts list and started contacting hosts in New Zealand. Finally our New Zealand itinerary was planned starting from 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 to 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.

We landed in Auckland where Freda Lewis had offered to meet us at Hotel, as it was far away from her residence and staying there was a difficult proposition. On the day of arrival March 21, 2019 she met us at 5.00 pm. She had booked a table for our dinner in one remote hotel. She took us around Auckland and finally hosted wonderful dinner for us in a nice hotel. It was our first Servas contact and I was surprised by her visit – a 71 year old lady driving car all the way from her remote place to meet for the first time someone from other country. A Great experience indeed.

From Auckland we proceeded to Rotorua, where we saw Maori culture show and stayed in Hotel. Next day we left for Acasia Bay Taupo to stay with another Servas member Cathy Edwards again a 72 years old lady. She drove us around and showed us Huka falls, Glass factory, Honey making shop, and her brother's farm and restaurant where we could see Hens and chickens and Alpaca Sheap a long neck Sheep. But the greatest attraction was the Geothermal power generating plant, generating power using lava fumes passing them through pipes to generate energy. It was a wonderful experience. Her House was lavishly furnished and well appointed and had a beautiful garden surrounding the house.

From Taupo we returned to Auckland to stay in the hotel overnight and proceeded to Wellington by flight 1 hour journey. Stayed here with Gaylene and Paul at Petone on the hill. Both of them were very much excited to receive us and drove us to nearby places of which the most amazing experience was climbing the hill top through bush walk to see beautiful view of bay. Wellington railway station was extremely beautiful with Gothic structure and we could travel through train to reach Petone just two stations further. Wellington is small beautiful city. She offered us a home made Pizza and other delicious vegetarian dishes cooked by her. In the night Paul along with Gaylene drove us around

bay and we enjoyed coffee with Ice cream in one of the restaurants. It was wonderful stay and we had discussion on various subjects like Yoga , Indian culture , history etc. One unique thing we experienced was that while sleeping we could do star gazing as the bed room had glass roof top. Paul loves river Kayaking and often does it along with his daughter. He narrated the unique experience. He along with his daughter were swimming in sea and suddenly a dolphin started hovering around his daughter's stomach and back, inexplicably. They kept wondering about it for few days. After passage of few days she went to doctor for check up and doctor declared her pregnant. Then they narrated the Dolphin experience to the doctor who told them that the Dolphins are very sensitive and the one around her that day, had come to know about the pregnancy and hence so was protecting her. Amazing ! Is it not?

From Wellington Petone we took a flight to Christchurch to stay with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sevas member Denis Brown – a 77 year old gentle man and Lion from Ashburton Canterbury. He received us at the Airport 100 kms from his place - about 1 hr drive in his Toyota Hilux 4\*4 drive car. A very kind man having beautiful bungalow with cat and a dog as pets. He allowed us to share his kitchen. He drove us for two days about 200 kms to show his farm ( he is a farmer ) now looked after by his son and having cattle, Sheep and Goats. We also went to Potts valley - a remote hill side lands – at base of mountains, with camping sites.

From Ashburton we took an intercity bus for Dunedin – a 180 kms journey switching over to another bus at Gore. We reached at 3 pm to Dunedin at place Normanby to stay with Dorothy another Servas member. She was so kind that she bought pickle and prepared salads and vegetarian food for us. Here we experienced rainfall and temp went down to 6 degrees. She drove us on top of hill to visit Bird Sanctuary. They had a machine with pictures of birds and switches , if we press switch we could here bird chirping sound. We experienced same while travelling in bushes inside the sanctuary. The Dunedin has world's steepest road 36 degrees steep which is in Guineas book of world records.

From Dunedin we travelled by Tracknet- another intercity bus service, further to south Invercargill, changing over at Te Anaeu, where Graeme another Servas member a dairy farmer had come to receive us to take us to Drummond-Otautau a village where he stays. There is no public transport from Invercargill to Otautau. It was nice of him to come to receive us. He was the richest Servas member and a dairy farmer with 630 cows. His bungalow was awesome and lavishly furnished. At the entrance we could pluck the violate colour grapes very sweet and unique taste. In our bedroom I could see a big world map in wooden frame . Graeme brought coloured pins and told me to fix it on map from where I have come from. I fixed it on India Maharashtra Pune. I counted pins fixed on the map on different parts of the world the count was 92 pins and I was astonished to see that he had up till now hosted 92 guests; hats off to him. Next day he

showed us dairy farm just behind his house. We came to know that the milking takes place twice a day and all the cows are milked within just two hours with automation. In his backyard he grows Beet root, Carrots, Lettuce, Tomatoes etc. He has hens for his requirement of eggs and only for Grocery he goes to Invercargill. He is a cyclist having 31 gears bicycle and has won many medals in cycling. He bicycled 280 kms in one day. While moving around his house I saw one white cabin with board written Woman's Cave. His wife Jan is an expert patchwork artiste and embroidery artist. She showed the cabin and there were 3 high tech Bernina machines made in Switzerland. Couple is having 9 grand children and Graeme is 71 years old and full of energy and a strong man.

While travelling in New Zealand I observed hectares of grazing fields with thin wired compound when enquired I came to know that they are live electric wires and because of the current that passes through them the Sheep, Goats and Cattle stay within the compound and do not stray on the road.

New Zealand is called baby country. What an apt nick-name indeed! No wonder the people here are full of Energy like a baby and with innocent smiles always ready to receive and host others.

I thank Servas for letting me a member and sharing my experience.

I am attaching few select photographs for reference.

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