

## Day 9: Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012 Things to do in Invercargill and Bluff

Woke up at 4:30am freezing and had to get out of bed and adjusted the thermostat so the little fan heater came on, forgot to set the thermostat before going to bed last night. Didn't take long to drift off back to sleep while the motorhome heated up again until 7am when the alarm went off and we both sprung into life, well I did not sure about Robyn. At that time of the morning it is still dark, stars in the sky and the moon was shining, what a surprise as we were expecting more rain. I wasn't until around 8am the sun started to break the night darkness and around 9am the sun had risen.

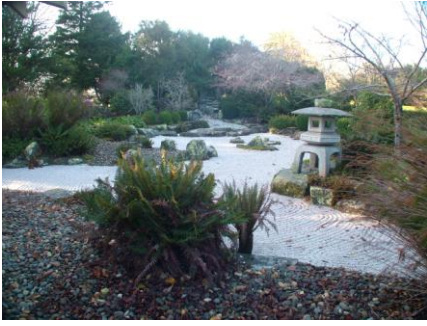
We set off around 9am for Queens Park, 80 hectares of magnificent lawns, trees, ponds, ducks, gardens, walkways, children's playground, kiosk, toilets, aviary, winter gardens of tropical and sub-tropical plants in a hot house environment, rotunda, rock gardens, statues, animal enclosures, and a band rotunda. The tourist information centre also houses a gift shop, cafe, museum and art gallery.



For all you plants and trees people you will know what everything is, for me it just looked great, love to come back when the leaves are on the trees and flowers are in bloom. The hot house with the tropical plants was interesting, or maybe we liked it because it was warm and humid reminding us of home.







The avery has many Kiwi and Australian birds but I would have thought the big open cage we walked into would hold more birds and at least have one kiwi bird as we never saw one on our whole trip. The animal section held a number of kiwi and Australian animals and despite all my coaxing; the deer wouldn't turn its head so I could get a better photo.

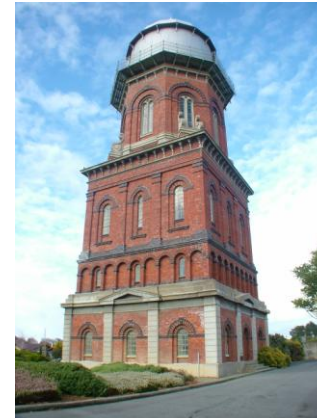


We spent around 3 hours walking around the park and information centre and if you wanted to see everything, especially in the spring when all the flowers are in bloom you would need all day.



The next tourist attraction is the Invercargill Water Tower, a 40 metre landmark built in 1889 and still used today to help keep up the water pressure if the power fails and the electrical pumps fail.

The tourism guide said you could climb the 112 steps to the top to get panoramic views of the city but the sign on the water tower door informed us that it was no longer open to the public.



With the weather being fine, cold and windy we headed to the Bluff around 30Km south of the city to have lunch at Stirling Point. As the country side opened up the wind blowing east to west was so strong at in places I didn't want to drive faster than 60Kmph as the motorhome rocked and as gusts

blew into its side it tended to head for the shoulder of the road. At this point Robyn asked if it was a wise move to head out to the Bluff but with no turning around points, narrow road and ditched on each side there was no turning back.



As we got closer to the Bluff all of a sudden the weather changed with rain squalls covering the Bluff, not inviting at all. However the journey out there was worth it due to the history surrounding the Bluff which is one of the earliest settlements in New Zealand established by James Spencer in 1824. The Maori name for the Bluff is Motupohue or Island of Convolvulus which was right until the white man came along and filled in waterway to make the railway line and road way.



The harbour port was originally established as a whaling, sealing and shipping port. Where the sign post stands at Stirling Point is where the original whaling station was located. We set up and made our lunch in the Stirling Point car park jumping in and out to take photos when the rain eased up. Although there is a 1.3Km walking track heading out from the car park, the weather was not inviting but on a fine day it would have been great to walk out to Lookout Point and look out toward Stewart Island. With the wind still blowing a gale it wasn't worth the risk driving up to Bluff Hill Reserve so we limited our viewing to the roads sheltered by the 867 foot hill.

As we sat in the motorhome having our cuppa tomato soup cars kept pulling up, people jumping out to have their photo taken under the sign that points to 12 locations including Sydney, London and Kumagaya, Invercargill's sister city in Japan. Points of interest around the harbour include the aluminium smelter, ferry terminal for Stewart Island, the old township and their oysters.

The drive back to Invercargill wasn't so bad as the wind was more toward the back of the motorhome so we travelled at around 80 Kmph and didn't have to pull over as many times to let cars pass, can't hold up the locals. Back in Invercargill the weather was cold, windy but not raining as we went for a walk around the main streets. Robyn wanted to go into the main department stores to sticky beak, gggggrrrrrrrr she can do that back home, the last thing I want to do is walk through department stores.





Take a look at the pictures and tell me what's missing? People, as it's far too cold and windy to stand around outside like a tourist taking photos. The city streets are not that exciting; believe me and now I can see why most tourists bypass Invercargill and head straight for Te Anau and Milford Sound, but if you have the time, come in spring or summer but not autumn or winter. One bloke and his wife (well I guess they are married) asked if I was feeling the cold, nearly said no I am the village idiot and get dressed up like a polar bear to win over the local chicks.

Shopping done Robyn met me outside one of the department stores and we headed back to the motorhome to store away her purchases and head to Countdown to stock up on food as we don't know what shops they have in Te Anau. We are now used to finding parking spots away from the front door so that we can park parallel across at least three parking bays but won't get boxed in by people parking in front of the motorhome. We had to make sure we had sufficient \$2 coins to do our washing and drying back at the holiday park. With our discount fuel voucher in hand we headed to the Z petrol station to fill up with diesel so we could head out early in the morning without having to come back into town and waste time. Z petrol stations have an attendant who, between the hours of 10am and 5pm will come out and attend to the browser. Now for you oldies like us, when was the last time an attendant came out to your car in Australia to fill the petrol and clean your windscreen? Give up? So do we.

By the time we parked the motorhome, did a couple of loads of washing, cooked tea, washed up and settled down it was around 8pm and the rain had started again. Another question, when was the last time you listened to the radio on a Saturday and Sunday night because there was no television? Boy that was back on the farm when I was a kid, do we miss the television? No, especially New Zealand television unless you like Coronation Street and some of their locally produced crap (crap) serials. Wonder what tomorrow brings as we head off early following the scenic route to Te Anau, must remember to set the thermostat on the heater before turning in.

While Invercargill is an interesting place to visit especially in the spring, would I choose to live here? I will leave that up to your imagination.