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Newsletter 02/07

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From Picton to Dunedin

Giddy from New Zealand !!

Saturday, 5:30 p.m. We got to the local pub just in time for Rugby. Here, Rugby is more popular than football in Germany. We order a jug of beer quickly and sit down. Having done that we feel well prepared for the game – despite we don't know anything about the rules. We support (like the rest of the patrons) the Highlanders, team of the South of New Zealand. The game is action-packed. For us as beginners it resembles soccer, but you are actually allowed to use your hands and body-check other players. Meanwhile a lot of people talk to us and spread the news who we are in the pub. Everybody then knows that we started from Oamaru today and spend four months in New Zealand. The owner of the pub wants to know how our lunch was at the Moeraki Boulders, 35 km up the road. We are slightly irritated, but another guest has seen us there earlier and has already told everybody else. The world is small, and the South Island of New Zealand is even smaller!



The Highlander's are in the lead, the place gets excited! The half time break is used by the barman for the local raffle. You get a ticket for a few bucks. The barman even owns a "lottery-machine", which really stuns us. The lucky winner can choose between a kg of meat or a kg of fish. You can have veggies, but nobody wants them. Victory for the Highlanders!! A party is going on. Free crab breads and another round of the famous "meat or fish" lottery. And another jug of beer!!

One month on the South Island

The South Island is characterized by great features: One natural highlight follows the other! We started in the small harbour of the friendly town Picton, where the green and lonely Marlborough sounds invite you to hike, canoe and dream. After that we hit Blenheim with its great vineyards. We could not resist having a few tastings and went on feeling like birds. Unfortunately we had to climb out of the valley to the East Coast over a massive hill, which we named "the hangover".



For hours we enjoyed the view of the wild Kaikoura Coast, including its famous fur seals. You can smell fur seals long before you see them. You could say: Experience with all senses. The coastal town of Kaikoura is still small and beautiful, despite the busloads of tourists who come to enjoy whale watching. Off we go to Christchurch, the capital of the South Island, thanks to our great hosts we saw the city in many different perspectives. Around the city we found great hills for mountain bikers and beautiful beaches. After "big city life" we crossed the Canterbury Plains, a really flat country which is often described by cyclists as boring. But we sped along this perfect tandem terrain.

Lake Tekapo is a lake of fantastic glacial blue colour - like a swimming pool. But it is a little bit too cold to take a bath in the 1 degree Celsius glacier lake. The nearby Lake Pukaki shimmers greenly – like an emerald.

We had to go around nearly the whole of the Lake in order to get to Mount Cook, New Zealand's highest mountain. From a remote campground we could indulge a breathtaking sunset over the red coloured mountain. They say that Mount Cook very much resembles Mount Everest, therefore the first man to climb Mount Everest – Sir Edmund Hillary – has trained here. We preferred to stay on the ground and explored the glacier lakes, in which small and big icebergs were floating. We even could climb on one of the floating iceberg giants from a boat. The iceberg moved slowly up and down and our hearts skipped a beat. Another of the giants had cracked and 500 year old ice beamed blue like the most precious diamond.



After the world of mountains and ice we went to Oamaru, one of the hottest and driest places in New Zealand. With temperatures up to 42 degrees we can definitely confirm that. At the East Coast we could again enjoy stunning views of the wild sea, lonely bays and beaches. We "quickly" climbed over Mt. Cargill and we descended into Dunedin. The city was built by Scotts and you can still notice their influence. Thanks to Dunedin's university we found a lot of cafes to relax in. Nevertheless a big challenge attracted us: The steepest street in the world. Baldwin Street has got a ridiculous steepness of 38 percent. We faced the street and forced those pedals down, we made it up to 26 percent before we had to give up.



People along the way

Cool! Cool! The two girls are really excited. What happened? Not much, only two sunburnt and exhausted looking guys in funny yellow jerseys on a big machine just made it to the top of a hill to look at Mount Cook – that’s us. The girls seem to like us: “You are so cool! Can we take a picture?” Another car arrives and we talk to them, but then a fully packed bus arrives and spits out a big crowd armed with cameras. We are quickly surrounded and hear the constant click-click of the cameras. We agree to meet the girls in a pub later and do a burn-out!! Well, at least we try! The reason: People often talk to us, which is really friendly, but unfortunately about 90% of our conversation is based on the following question-answer scheme:

1. Yes, it’s really fun. (it just doesn’t look like it is).
2. We average 80km a day (look very self-conscious).
3. We started in Auckland and get back there in May.
4. Yes, we are reasonably fit (look: innocent).
5. Julia is the motor, I just steer and look important (waiting for a laugh).
6. The bike is from the Netherlands, we brought it there.
7. No, we are German.
8. It’s foldable, so you can put it on a plane.
9. It cost more than our car (which we don’t have anymore)
10. We are from Frankfurt, have a safe trip! Really nice talking to the people, but we have to do some cycling sometimes.

Kiwi Hospitality

The Kiwis are famous for their hospitality. Two invitations we have gladly accepted so far. We spent a nice evening with great dinner with Stephen and Sally near Blenheim. We spent three days with Peter and Anne in Christchurch. It was like “Bed and Breakfast” with personal company. We will not forget our tandem tour in the wind stream of their racing tandem. We had not realized how fast you can go on a tandem! We kept on reminding ourselves: “We must get fitter now – too much desk work with our bank jobs!”



Besides that we meet a lot of nice fellows on the streets: Michi, who checked our tandem; two Scottish cyclists we had a strenuous race with at Mount Cook; Carol and Joe, the friendly Australians who gave us a lift to Mount Cook and of course our “visitors” from good old Germany – more welcome! That way we proceed nicely and slowly and the usual holiday feeling shrinks and we realize: We are on our way around the world.

And therefore, our route that is not a straight line anymore, but for us “Happiness is the constant journey, not the final destination”.



So far, we have achieved 2214 km, 15699 vertical meters, - that’s our result up to the end of February. We have had seven flat tires (of which six were on the trailer), a broken spoke, and the bicycle stand fell off (yeah, less weight!)



What will be next?

We are going to ride the Otago Central Rail Trail, a 158 km gravel path built on a former railway line. After that, we will go to the deep south of New Zealand, the Catlins, Doubtful Sound (in Fiordland National Park), and Invergardill. But you never know. Wind, weather and destiny change our schedule every few days – and that’s a good thing!

As all the kiwis say:

**“Good on ya, mate!”
Julia and Stefan**

„Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not.“ (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Sponsor of the month:



Yes, they survived their final test – a full day in soaking rain for our bright red panniers and they succeeded perfectly: 100% water-resistant! Easy to attach and comfortable to pack they are our daily companions, doubling up as wardrobe, living room, and kitchen. And on top of that: their design and looks are quite striking

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