

LAKE PLACID NEWS

ROTARY CLUB NEWS: Cool to hot: A trip of a lifetime down under



Susan and Alec Friedmann after snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef (Photo provided)

You probably don't associate the holiday season with 80-100 degree weather. Yet down under in the southern hemisphere, that's exactly how they celebrate, basking in the heat of the sun.

Much to our relief, my husband Alec and I managed to avoid bushfires, avalanches and volcanoes on our recent trip of a lifetime to New Zealand and Australia.

From New Zealand's North and South Islands, to the Australian outback, main east coast cities to the Great Barrier Reef, we made a 50-year dream come true.

Traveling with 20 other eager globetrotters on a Road Scholar Down Under Odyssey Adventure, we soaked in culture, traditions, natural wonders, unique wildlife, iconic architecture, Maori and Aboriginal art, as well as the unique heritage of both countries.

Every day of this month-long adventure was packed full of sound, sights, smells and tastes. By the time we arrived at our last spot in Sydney, our heads were spinning with all the different experiences, in addition to almost 3,000 photos.

On our return home, the toughest question family and friends asked was, "What were the highlights?"

Our New Zealand experience couldn't have been more different than Australia, especially the weather. The cool temperate climate allowed us to feel at home, wearing our warm Adirondack clothing.

Situated 10 minutes from the city of Wellington on New Zealand's South Island, Zealandia was our number one highlight.

Commonly known as "the wild side of Wellington," it's the world's first fully fenced urban ecosanctuary, with a vision to restore the region to the way it was before the arrival of humans.

This 500-acre ecosanctuary is a groundbreaking conservation project that has reintroduced 18 species of native wildlife back into the area.

Highlight number two was the dynamic geothermal park in Rotorua, an area in the heart of the North Island, 140 miles southeast of Auckland. The town itself lies in the Rotorua caldera and is the site for steaming geysers and boiling hot mud pools.

As our Australian highlights, the iconic Sydney Opera House and the Great Barrier Reef claim joint position in the number one spot.

The opera house, one of the symbols of 20th century architecture, held us captive as we took photo after photo at every possible angle. We wanted to inhale every aspect of this incredible edifice.

One of the seven natural wonders of the world, the Great Barrier Reef, is the size of about 70 million football fields or half the size of Texas, and breathtakingly beautiful. Our first view of this oceanographic wonder was in a semi-submersible reef viewer. We then topped off the experience snorkeling in and around a minute portion of the reef, awed by the size and colors of the coral.

Where did Rotary appear on our trip? Unfortunately, our tight activity schedule didn't coincide with any club meetings. However, one of our fellow travelers was an active Rotarian in Portland, Oregon, and we exchanged several ideas for fundraisers.

The Rotary Club of Lake Placid is one of more than 30,000 clubs worldwide. Members from more than 200 countries are part of a global network of 1.2 million people who come together to make positive, lasting change in communities locally, nationally and internationally.

The club meets every Thursday at 7:20 a.m. at the Marriott Courtyard hotel.

To learn more about the good deeds of the Rotary Club of Lake Placid, go to rotarylakeplacid.org or rotary.org or visit their Facebook page – Rotary Club of Lake Placid, NY.
