



Terry's Travels

RTW2-1 First Stop Cocoa Beach

7/11/2000

A mad dash was the start of this winters Round The World trip. You see, my pal Peter the Fruit & Nutcase kindly offered me a lift South on the stormy Saturday. Since British Rail were URGENTLY doing some track repairs (that had been left a decade or two) I was glad to accept. All my tickets and itinerary arrived at 10:30am so I threw a few clothes into the cases that will eventually go onto my motorcycle and rushed to meet Peter at the clog factory for 12 o'clock. I need to explain that Peter's newly custom made two tone patent clogs were a bit too big. Since he will wear these to dance Rock 'n Roll in you see the importance of a good fit! I know - few of my pals are normal!

England was really suffering with the storm and flooding and it was especially satisfying to climb aboard at Gatwick.....

Di was waiting for me at Orlando Florida and we drove to Cocoa Beach in "Horny" the motorhome. This being the first stop to meet up with all the family before the more adventurous stuff.

The journey plan this winter is Peru/Bolivia/Chile/Easter Island/Tahiti/New Zealand (Motorcycle)/ E Coast & N Australia/Singapore/Malaysia and return to UK - all in about six months..

Terry - Cocoa Beach Florida



Terry's Travels

RTW2-2 Cocoa Beach—Before Grand Children 8/11/2000

My grandsons arrive tomorrow here in Cocoa Beach, so it seemed a good plan to write before they strike! (I'm really looking forward to it). The weather for the last 2/3 weeks has been Florida at its best. In the 80,s and ocean at 73 with warm evenings. Florida living has been beach, biking, some dining out and barbies.

Lots of socialising with friends and family from England. My pal Skip came down from Iowa and then reported snow when he got back - UGH! Visiting the bars has been interesting with many very loud comments about the ELECTION. It's quite incredible to see them struggle to get a result and spending BILLIONS in the process!

An Email is doing the rounds - apparently our Queen is taking over again, all States except Utah (she doesn't fancy that!). I better not say too much - the same may happen when we vote on the EURO.....

I have been doing my research on South America courtesy Lonely Planet and some brilliant stuff on the Encarta DVD, the civilisations prior to the Incas - I'm getting quite excited.

Next week is Thanksgiving - also known as Turkey Day - so planning walking in the Andes seems a good idea.....

Terry - Cocoa Beach Florida



Terry's Travels

RTW2-3 South to South America 29/11/2000

The adventuring part is now under way having had Thanksgiving in Cocoa Beach with the inevitable sales following.

Only hours into the trip and this attractive lady threw herself - literally - at me! Yes, actually the escalator stopped abruptly - scary but nice.

Coming out of Lima PERU airport I heard the strains of a Mariachi style band playing "Onward Christian Soldiers" - WOW - this is what travelling is about. First impressions were a mad metropolis with many wounded cars and smoke emitting decrepit buses.

Just a day later and what a contrasting and great place this is. Lima is the name for the downtown historic and badly run down area, where we visited historic buildings. The other amazingly affluent areas of the same city are Miraflores for the area on the shores of the Pacific with a swish enjoyable leisure and shopping area. Even the currency changes, you use American Dollars in the affluent areas and the Peruvian Sol in the poorer areas. A visit to the gold museum was really worth while, the Incas used gold nose decorations - to look like mountain lions who they really admired. The absence of TV must have encouraged their participation in MOST erotic sex - the amount of graphic XXX pottery was worth the visit too. I loved standing back and watching the reactions!!!

A lady gave Di a rose having spoken to us for a minute or two , a lovely friendly gesture, we were just sitting in a park enjoying tropical flowers and trees. Beautifully maintained by lots of gardeners - in the affluent area.....

Terry - Miraflores PERU



Terry's Travels

RTW2-4 Cuzco the Incas 3/12/2000

A final dinner outdoors with Andean band and perfect weather. The best my pocket translator could do with the menu was "Roast safety belt"! I must continue with my Spanish. On the way back we saw Naomi Campbell and three similar friends - they were full of it - wonder what they had been doing?

Just 15 mins flying out of Lima and the snow capped Andes were below, a change from the desert area. All the flowers in Lima have to be watered daily in this desert zone. Cuzco at 10,000 feet is a delightful place, the altitude made me puff a bit and a bit of headache.

Whilst waiting for a rental Honda motorcycle (the first offered would have coated me with oil out of leaky forks) I had a boot shine. One of the popular ways of being self employed at 6 or 7 years old. I paid a Sol (25c) and the cleaning started. Then the sales pitch - whilst the laces were removed a tiny scrap of paper titled "Tarifa" showing the price for "Especial at 6 Sol 50. A compromise was reached and the young entrepreneur did a super job. He stitched - sorry - laced me back up!

The Honda chugged us up the first big incline - perhaps its the altitude robbing its power - or maybe the Inca owner in its earlier life flogged its guts out!! Quickly the splendour of riding in the Andes took over with seeing the largely mud bricked villages and Llamas grazing in the fields. The handmade garments were colourful and claimed to be baby Alpaca (unlikely). One jumper we saw was skilfully hand knitted with NO seams. Barter is encouraged and watches are desirable.

Terry - Cuzco PERU



Terry's Travels

RTW2-5 Machu Picchu—The Scared Inca City 6/12/2000

Our knowledgeable guide assured us there are 113 microclimates in the world, the point being that there are 87 in PERU. The one that exists at 13,000 feet is quite splendid. The world's highest fertile area with a patchwork quilt of fields and lakes all backed by snow capped mountains. Driving through this made us feel very special. No wonder it was the Sacred Valley for the Incas. The Sacred River flows through on its way to join the mighty Amazon in the jungle just a few miles away. Peru is 60% jungle, 30% mountains and 10% plains. The world's best corn is grown in this area.

A market visit (hardly unusual for tourists) was in fact most interesting since it was foodstuffs as well as the colourful textiles. The sales pitch being "Baby Alpaca" - perhaps it was watching since its wool certainly wasn't present! We saw tin lids full of the most colourful dyes and even a bakers with a large wooden fired oven. The upmarket lunch stop had excellent Andean music (that Eric Clapton gets everywhere) and a wide food choice ,Alpaca and Guinea Pig is eaten - but not by me.

The centre of Cuzco housed the most perfect Inca masonry - in Basalt—especially The Temple of the Sun. The Incas were the top echelon of the Quechuan race and left these most incredible earthquake proof buildings despite the Spaniards destroying many in the conversion to Catholicism - as well as nicking all the gold.

An early morning start for the 6:30am train journey. Its a narrow gauge for the tight turns but still needs 4 zig zags to climb out of Cuzco. Then over 13,000 feet for more splendour before dropping to 7,000 feet where tropical jungle was just starting at Agua Calientes. The real way to get where we were going is to hike The Inca Trail for 4days. We were herded into a bus for the 1,000 feet climb into the most beautiful spectacular mountains that I have ever seen. And then the first glimpse of MACCHU PICCHU.

Having walked and climbed and been lectured on all the wonderful knowledge that they had, I was still left rather cold on the city itself - but the mountain top concept was totally something else.

Thank goodness the Conquistadores didn't find it, or the city be pulled down for the stone. And hurrah that Hirham Bingam found it in 1911. Our Peruvian guide found it VERY strange that he did not find any gold - and can PERU have its antiquities back?

Terry - Lake Titicaca PERU



Terry's Travels

RTW2-6 The Coca Tea 7/12/2000

I'm well into drinking this stuff - just a handful of leaves in hot water, swish them around, spoon out the soggy leaves and enjoy. I know that they can be made into cocaine after a lot of industrial processing - but its good for altitude. Now that I've confessed I'll tell you a bit about the symbolism of the pre and Inca religions. They believed in 3 lives. First in the underworld - below ground - the Snake, then the present life on earth—the Puma, finally the future in the heavens - the Condor. Now you can understand why the bad people were buried alive - it was just a thoughtful way of giving them the chance to be re-born again. Mummies were left facing the sun for their journey to heaven, and are now in museums for our interest - they DID smell of mothballs. Some super preserved ones being found in the permafrost of the Andes.

Now it was time to leave Cuzco - the bellybutton of the world and also the Inca Capital. A full day bus journey was planned but worked out better than expected. We just had one other passenger on this 30 seater - Ed from Denver. The best of a few interesting stops was in Raqchi - a place of Inca pilgrimages. This was very different with the usual artistic masonry but with adobe taking it to 3 stories high. As well as this important temple over 100 grain silo buildings and other accommodation were there surrounded by a 5 kilometre wall. It was fascinating to see this site in the discovery/restoration phase.

Once driving on the 13,000 feet altiplano we saw many examples of hard subsistence living. It seems the ladies of child bearing age always are, but then they carry the bundles of goods too. These ladies are often minding their livestock and knitting to fill their time! They wear traditional colourful costume whilst the men look scruffy in old western clothing. Lots of birdlife on these high plains including pink flamingos in the high altitude river. The guide told us the next town Juliaca was industrial, nothing prepared us. It was like an Indian city with dozens of rickshaw taxis and old blankets laid out with all types of metal scrap - bits of bicycles were favourite. I even saw 3 motorcycle shops - some bikes were even of this decade. Flashing welding arcs tried to blind you and not a tourist in sight in this quiet season.

Earlier in the day we saw an overturned bus, now we see a train overturned -the one that we would have been on! The railroad follows the road to Puno.

Arriving at Puno we saw the reason we had come - LAKE TITICACA. The world's largest lake over 2,000m high and between PERU and BOLIVIA.

Terry - Lake Titicaca PERU



Terry's Travels

RTW2-7 Lake Titicaca 10/12/2000

Lake Titicaca is 170km long and over 12,000 feet high. Our first outing from our excellent lakeside hotel was to look at the city of Puno. What a shithole! Brown dusty earth over broken concrete and muddy puddles. Graffiti, unfinished buildings (because of tax) with re-bars pointing skywards and honking mad drivers. We left and went to the giant lake - what a different world. One of the many lake related things I wanted to see was the Yavari. This 1862 steamship was built in England and shipped in parts round Cape Horn, then rail, and finally mules over the Andes to Puno - it took 6 years. Originally coal fired - then it was converted to dry llama dung (no shitting) but had a diesel fitted in 1914. The Peruvian Navy used her for years then she was beached. Due to climate and no salt restoration was possible and is in progress. She is in dry dock close to the hotel - a good excuse for a boat taxi to take a look and return in style to the hotel dock. Britain's Prince Philip has voiced his support - no reports that he insulted anyone this time.

We went to Puno's best 5star hotel on its own island that is now connected via a causeway - boy did they need the business - but this is a splendid hotel with a memorable view of the huge lake. I went on a local ferry to two floating islands. The first, Uros, bounced as you walked on it. It's hard to imagine living on floating tortora reeds. Then a short trip on a reed boat, amazing things - they need renewing after 9 months. You may remember "Kontiki" well the Aymara (Indians) supplied the skills to construct the next reed raft.

Time to leave PERU for BOLIVIA using buses and a luxury catamaran. Once again only 4 of us. The road was part of the Pan American Highway that connects BOLIVIA to the Southern tip of S America. Farmlands with mud "igloos" for chickens stretched to the lake shores. All of the villages passed through had the signs (fish etc) for the differing political parties - America take note? Bush would be easy! Gore little more difficult! Then we had the first clear view of the snow capped mountains in BOLIVIA. A typical border crossing and into Copacabana that gave its name to the famous Brazil beach. A splendid Catholic church that was visited by the Pope in 1988 was the centre of activity. It had a large separate crypt for many candles - and walls covered with holy wax graffiti. A local tradition is to ask a "god" a wish. You give him a miniature of what you want. A stall sold tiny wads of cash, computers, cars, houses etc. There even was a small marriage certificate! Then you also gave him a cigarette to "smoke" - the wonders of travelling.

We boarded the catamaran - very nice - personal steward. A visit to the Island of the Sun - important in legend since the first Incas came from here. Up yet more Inca steps for a most wonderful view of Moon Island with the 20,000 feet snowy mountain backdrop. An Inca ceremony blessed our trip and we got tourist piccies with tortora boats llamas and a rarer vicuna.....

Terry - La Paz BOLIVIA



Terry's Travels

RTW2-8 La Paz-Highest City in the World 12/12/2000

Back on board the catamaran and time for lunch. The steward served a wonderful 3 course meal, this is travelling in style -especially after the local ferries. Our two fellow travellers are from Johannesburg so we learn much about S Africa. The sun was glinting on the crystal clear Lake Titicaca. There is no bridge over the lake so simple ferry boats carry a bus with launches for the passengers. We wave and power on to the nearest port to La Paz. It's still 1.5 hours bus ride and we climb and climb leaving the giant lake (83,00 sq. km) behind. Again, lots of subsistence living and the ladies are bringing their herds home as evening comes. A long final climb and we are really in the snow line at the industrial town of El Alto four km HIGH.

Another hell hole of a place but through the other side and La Paz. I've never seen anything REMOTELY like this sight. This city of 1.1 million people (the highest in the world) spreads some 400 meters below surrounded by cliffs and mountains. UFO's used to take great interest down in this giant bowl. Steeply down to the centre of skyscrapers and crowded cobbled streets. First impressions are of confusion, noise and bustle. Our Hotel is one of the older sky scrapers but its outside lift takes us up to enjoy a spectacular view over the centre. Free welcome drinks - Pisco Sours (like a Margarita) in the 11th floor bar allows the night view across the city. Its been a long and satisfying days travel.

Walking the central area was the first plan and happily the weather co-operated. The place is crawling with internets - good, but the internets are crawling - bad. Another country where my "World Wide Mobile" does not work. Horror stories of phone call costs - so it will be E mails that keep us plugged in to friends and family. The place is severely lacking in architectural style, there, wasn't I diplomatic? It would win my award for the worlds worst pavements. The country runs on a black economy - so there are street sellers EVERYWHERE. A conman tried an approach but we were pre-warned - thank you Lonely Planet. Pavement cafes are rare - you buy a drink and sit on a wall or bench - we did. Can you imagine men performing the function of a Photo Booth both with, and inside an old plate camera? - they did. They seemed to please their customers. Perhaps they were entering "The Ugliest Women on the Planet Contest". Mini buses ruled the city with their destinations like a mantra. The drivers main training seems to be how to knock down pedestrians whilst avoiding the use of indicators. Do you think we are having fun?- and then there's this altitude sickness. You hold your breath to take a photo and finish up panting - ditto with your bootlaces. I'm told you need oxygen to have worthwhile sex.....then there's the headaches - but yes its great to be travelling (and no mossies at this height).

Terry - La Paz BOLIVIA



Terry's Travels

RTW2-9 La Paz-Pre Inca 14/12/2000

I was awakened by the sound of church bells - it's Sunday - the pavements are drying and it looks suitable to take a trip out into the city. I decided against renting a motorcycle - self preservation. The river which contained gold and started La Paz is now unkindly called "Rio Omo" since it now looks like muddy washing machine water. The largest pre-Inca civilisation was Tiahuanaco some 70km away, its origins traced to 800BC, from this centre it had a great influence on the whole of S American history. Much of the wonderment of moving the giant blocks of stone and the skill of all the masonry systems cannot be fully explained. The worship of the sun and moon gave them interest in astronomy and the equinoxes became of very grey significance in the same way as many other ancient civilisations (that seem to have connections).

Sunday in La Paz is different, its more relaxed and quieter. Families are parading in their Sunday best, street cafes have been set up outdoors and there are concerts. We went to one last night and my best comment is that they were LOUD and enthusiastic!

The Sunday treat seems to be giant popcorn - smells great - fruit with buckets of stiff cream and gooey pastries. The best of the street entertainers was a guy who was excellent with Andean pipes, flute and ukulele type instrument - and on crutches - we contributed to his hat. The street sellers were mainly Indian ladies who never stopped eating. The beggars were normally slimmer and with 2 or 3 children/babies. They had wonderful eyesight being able to spot a tourist at 300 paces!

A taxi to S La Paz showed us the affluent area, houses with gardens and big security walls of fences. Then it was several degrees warmer as we went down - my ears were popping. Valle de la Luna (Moon Valley) was an amazing sight of lunar landscape but subject to massive erosion. Our taxi did an impression of Schumacker with screeching tyres on the return - and lost his 10p tip.

Another taxi - this time a sensible driver who crossed himself at every shrine took us to the airport. La Paz's airport is the highest in the world. It's a much faster take off speed in the thin air - CHILE here we come.....

Terry - Santiago CHILE



Terry's Travels

RTW2-10 Santiago Chile 16/12/2000

I seem to be taking an interest in local events where I visit. Fujimori (President of Peru) is now back in his home land of Japan - with a big pile of Sols. (Local chatter says to finance revenge with the USA over WW2). Here in downtown Santiago our first stroll brought us to a demonstration against Gen Pinochet - it seemed peaceful - or controlled? Otherwise it felt civilised to walk on smooth pavements in 80 degrees with sunset around 8:30pm. Decent beer and the ability to cross roads in greater safety. Breakfast in the different countries so far has been buffet style. The fruit was best in Peru but with VERY salty cheese. That's not a problem here in Chile - its just tasteless - but the bread is just great. My body is now recovering from being at altitude - so I hope to feel normal - (or at least as normal as I ever am) here near sea level for the first time for a week.

I really like Santiago - perfect weather - large squares - street entertainers bustling with the build up to Xmas. Sweaty Santa's toiling over their Grottos and Xmas trees twinkling to all the familiar carols. A well known musician was playing singing and SELLING his autographed CD,s. We had a great experience of Chile's postal service, a magnificent building in the main square. They provided a box, packed it and promised 5 to 6 days to England - if this happens I will be super impressed - reasonable too. The parcel was small goodies collected so far - knitwear, T shirts and even a genuine baby Alpaca furry hat.

The flight to Santiago had 2 stops and more mountain views the Atacama desert was especially beautiful. First impressions of Santiago was London like but even more buses (14,000 privately owned). A modern clean Metro underground but LOTS of pollution. I seem to become more and more concerned with this major modern problem. The Andes holds the haze here the same as L.A. - but my phone works and my SMS messages streamed in - wonderful - no bad news. Visiting the Cathedral was really special - it impressed me as much as any I have ever visited, both in its detail and overall design - it dates from around 1540. Finishing touches were being put to the Nativity scene. There were some double cabin confessional boxes - my imagination had the priest in the centre with man and wife with relationship problems - him being piggy in the middle and dishing out the Hail Mary's - sorry!

I've just collected 3 films used so far - excellent processing - its amazing what we have done to date. I went to the biggest bank "Banco de Chile" as I've ever been in - busy with impressive auto-teller machines - shame it didn't like my plastic , or have a cambio - the next more modest bank did.....

Terry - Easter Island CHILE



Terry's Travels

RTW2-11 Valparaiso to Easter Island 20/12/2000

A day out to Valparaiso, Chile's main port - imports 80% of Chile's goods - what a wonderful city. Formed from 1530 and influenced by various countries of Europe. It has more monuments and variety of architecture than any city I recall. Funiculars - Universities and Army & Navy colleges. People at 17 leave school and go to university or are conscripted for 2 years at 18. Valparaiso (means paradise) is 110km from the capital Santiago. The road passes through a 1.5 mile tunnel and then lush valleys growing fruit, veg and VINES. We also went through an extensive forest that regularly has forest fires. This and earthquakes have kept damaging the city. The beaches of Vina del Mar were wonderful, fresh air and ocean a bit cold due to the Humboldt current that flows northwards. One guano whitened black rock is called "Michael Jackson"! The restaurant served the best fish soup I have ever had - yes it beats Catty's in Spain. The guide delights in calling the McDonald's - American Embassies. A church on the way back was home to a Pilgrimage last weekend - 500,000 people.

I gave away my Lonely Planets to Peru and Bolivia - I'm keeping Chile for future use.

A 4.5 hour flight directly W and we arrived at the dot in the Pacific that is Easter Island. It is such a different world. Warm, humid, some bugs and great excitement with all the locals greeting friends and family arriving on the twice weekly flight. The island language sounds very strange. An ancient VW Transporter collects us and out into a night of very dim lighting, bumpy roads and wonderful flowers. A beer on the veranda and gazing up to a brilliant sky packed with stars. Next morning the dawn chorus was early with different birdsong - except for the cockerels.

The lovely young slim dusky native guide and her very English looking driver who spoke only his native language were our companions to explore mainly dirt roads on the island. Over 900 carved figures (Maois) from 4 feet to 65 feet make a unique sight. Erected on platforms, one of which was Inca quality masonry they were built from 900 AD. All the Maois have been toppled * mainly village wars between long and short eared immigrants. Capt Cook found the largest one standing in the mid 1700s and toppled 10 years later. An Irish guy called Mulloy stood up quite a few in 1960 and a major Japanese effort stood up the biggest group of 15 in 1993-5 following a tsunami (tidal wave). The most important sites are close to the ocean, they removed vital organs of the important dead and washed the bodies before leaving them behind the statues. Minions were simply cremated.

Easter Island is 1900km from anywhere and 3700KM from mainland Chile. Its airstrip goes coast to coast and also is a Space Shuttle emergency landing site. The people here are Polynesian with connections to Maoris, the Duqueses, Tahiti and Hawaii. One of the cliff top sites had petroglyphs and the story is that fit young men raced down the cliff, swam 'or (km to an island, collected frigate bird eggs and raced back. The winner was expected to win the following year - or be killed. The island feels at ease with itself, just one hospital school etc but discos and more churches. Tourism is the major industry but of necessity is on a small scale. I couldn't get any links to the guy who believes that the island is linked to happenings with the pyramids etc in 10,500BC.

As a lovely tropical island interlude on the RTW its very worthwhile. The food is good - the fish fantastic. Locals ride noisy trail bikes in bare feet, the weather was perfect - and did I mention the slim dusky

Terry Moorea - TAHITI (French Polynesia)



Terry's Travels

RTW2-12 Tahiti and Xmas 23/12/2000

The very name Tahiti conjures up exotic island visions. Even the flight was timeless - a 5 hour flight with a 5 hour time change meant we arrived when we left - now we are 11 hours behind GMT. My mobile doesn't work here either - but a couple of really stylish Tahitian ladies with a flower greeting and a musical welcome too made me feel connected. Even a short line thru the EEC passport entrance and Xmas trimmings. I had been told that Papeete city was not so nice but I liked it. Its a busy port with all the ferries; the lush tropical feel and sun that will need sheltering from.

The fast catamaran ferry (new Scandinavian car ferry) took us to the quiet island of Moorea - you will see just how many islands there are if you look at your Atlas (French Polynesia). When I planned the trip I asked for hotels around 3* but well located - the travel agents Wexas from England and one from Lima in fact used about 4* and an average has been around 75 dollars inc breakfast - you could halve this.

Tahiti is expensive so we went for a simple beach bungalow with paddle fan, this was ideal with simple kitchen and fridge. Its ideal with ocean front and lovely reef protected lagoon, warm crystal water. Even reception has a good library too. The internet is here but about 15 dollars per hour (since I write to 53 friends in 8 countries still well worth it) - confound the French - different keyboard but the French sticks and Pan Chocolats are yummy. The great value of the trip is the RTW flights, 28,000 miles, 15 flights and 10 countries for 1700 pounds.

A scooter has been the ideal way to get around, it took us to the highpoint to see incomparable views of Capt Cook Bay. Another jaunt up a dirt road (4 wheel drive only) over boulders deep water and sticky mud that I put banana leaves in to help. Who would have thought a 50cc scooter could do this - and I got my deposit back!

Most tourists here are French speaking and at £2 for a small beer the night life doesn't flow too much. A typical snack is a Croque Monsieur (cheese and ham toasty) and one local lady gave us bananas to finish with just picked from her own garden. Stopping at a local pier we met a guy looking after a bunch of photogenic kids. He insisted on giving us some truly distinctive sea shells - we got a photo - real nice holiday memories.

We look forward to returning tomorrow to Papeete on the main island in readiness for our Xmas Day flight to Auckland. The system is we leave at 12:05am and then LOOSE XMAS DAY by crossing the date line - arriving at 6:00am Boxing Day - saves presents and all that.....

MERRY XMAS

Terry - Island of Moorea TAHITI



Terry's Travels

RTW2-13 Boxing Day Auckland NZ 25/12/2000

I didn't think I would be writing more about Papeete but two remarkable things have happened. My International American Realtor (that's estate agent in English but costs 3 to 4 times as much!) had booked he and his wife a super luxury cruise from Tahiti. He has such confidence that he will sell my American property and earn the ENORMOUS commission, so I felt that since I was his potential sponsor I would see them off! We missed them at their luxury 5* Hotel but caught them at the key side boarding of the impressive cruise ship. (I hope you have a great cruise Martin & Janice). I didn't mind a bit getting piss wet through walking back to our 3* gaff !!

The airport is only half an hours walk from our hotel and we were going that way to especially see the ladies at the large central church. Their colourful hats and finery are something to behold on Sundays. Turning the corner we saw the end of the runway - a Hawaiian jet was tipped over into the sea at the end of the runway !! Its nose was actually in the ocean - not quite deep enough to wet the pilots feet - but I'm sure he had wet pants.....

It seems it ran out of brakes - nice. The Jumbos couldn't take off over it but our 737 could.....

It is really good to be back in Auckland N.Z.- it immediately felt very civilised - the flowers were a joy since it's the height of summer here. I had rented a 250cc motorbike. It was the oldest (and cheapest) in the fleet of 125 bikes. It was - adequate - only rarely did I get passed by 8 year olds on their brand new foot scooters that Santa brought. In fact it would have been hard to find a 5 to 10 year old that didn't get one of those for Xmas.....

HAPPYNEW YEAR/MILLENIUM2001

Terry - Auckland NZ



Terry's Travels

RTW2-14 New Millennium South Island 1/1/2001

Auckland has again been a really fine city to visit again - especially since my friend Frances and her friend Emy (a tour guide) showed us around. Those that read last years trip will remember that we "met" by Internet. Both are Chinese so we got philosophy too. Apparently NZ has an especially high incidence of twin births - the explanation being that things don't get rushed here !! Another first was eating at an excellent Korean restaurant where my chopstick skills were put to the test, the Koreans use shiny metal ones - more difficult. I also learned that the Chinese use gold coloured ones - they apparently change colour if you are served poisoned food.

We came across an Islander wedding - what a colourful occasion. Set in a beautiful rose garden, six bridesmaids and the male equivalent - Groomsmen? They apparently do it here rather than a church when its second time around - explained the many children too! Three stretch limos made it all very picturesque.

I swapped the gutless Yamaha for a BMW F650GS - this gave us a great ride to the coast - Auckland has so much to offer. The Cirque Du Soleil has also come to town which I really hope to get to see - it opens in 10 days so I sent an Email for tickets. The booking office auto-response said "I am away in the Caribbean until Jan 8th - Getting Married".

Frances arranged a New Years Eve Party where Di was in the team making Chinese dumplings. It was a super event with Chinese/Japanese/Filipino and NZ people there - a great night. Again I felt so lucky to be doing all this.

Then the short flight to Christchurch where another pal Andy picked us up to go to Ashburton, a town of 12,500 on the Canterbury Plain, an area of farming. Its main claim to fame being the temporary home of my motorbike - thanks Andy. The partying started again and another invite to the lovely home of a pro fisherman (seen Perfect Storm?). The cooking was barbie on a thing that looked like a steam loco. Even more interesting was a hagi. This is Maori underground cooking covered with cabbage leaves. The modern equivalent was a 50 gallon drum with gas ring/ water and wet sacks - worked really well. The evening then continued with a street party, Andy pulling the cart filled with booze. Good band and I got to meet some of Andy's biker pals - they told me he got 160 out of the old Beemer - but remember we are in kph here.....

The bike was ready to roll - the next report will be from the saddle.

Terry - Ashburton S Island NZ



Terry's Travels

RTW2-15 South Island in the Saddle 4/1/2001

I'm like a big kid really (does half way through the first Harry Potter prove it?) - getting really excited to start another big trip on the old Beemer. Those of you that read my last winters adventures know that the 1978 BMW 800/7 carried us reliably across Australia inc the Nullarbor. This trip starts from Ashburton some 50 miles S of Christchurch where my pal Andy has kept it since I shipped it from Perth. We had a final dinner with our friends and next morning (first time open after the New Year) bought Di a new helmet at the local bike shop (you see Santa came after all). Andy and family met us there and got me a good price before waving us off - again it really had me thinking what a lucky bugger I am! - knowing such great people.

The riding was sunny but with a cool air temperature - lots of farmland - sheep to both sides - and passing us in double decker trucks and trailers. At the first Tea Shop two slabs of home made cake, coffees and a newspaper and conversation under two quid. The local farm milks 2,000 head of cows, and their daughter has gone to live in Kent etc.....

Then the minor road took us to the coast and a Penguin Colony - they get home around 6pm after a day in their 100 meter deep "office". I'm relaxed and really enjoying the riding on quiet roads when WHOOSH the rear tyre punctured really FAST. A bit of speedway style drifting and I got us safely to the hard shoulder. Bugger it!

Out with the magic can of "Fix - a - Flat" - didn't work. Out with the wheel and off with the tyre - all gungy inside but removed a 2" nail and fitted a new tube, a fellow biker stopped to see that things were in hand. I partly blew the tyre and left for a garage to blow it up fully. When I got back a local was in conversation with Di - he thought we had had a "domestic" and I had left her! I wouldn't do that - I had left the luggage with her. Since I was now filthy and my pristine jeans covered with muck we went to the nearest Motel (\$NZ55 for room with shared facilities - but no-one shares them?). After a shower and two jugs of Export Gold the world seemed good again - even better after fish and veggies.

Next morning the tyre was still inflated but I decided to head to Dunedin - one of the few large cities in S Island - for a new one. I'm a lucky person as you will see. The bike shop efficiently fitted a new tyre, supplied another spare tube and inflator, the biker lady receptionist told me about an author that had written a biker tour book of NZ. (mccycle.co.nz) and also had a B&B - we are staying with him

Terry - Dunedin S Island NZ



Terry's Travels

RTW2-16 More South Island in the Saddle 10/1/2001

Our host rides a BMW K series with his partner Donna and was a fountain of knowledge supplementing his travel book to help us enjoy our touring. We scuffed in the new rear tyre with a gentle bend swinging ride up the Otago Peninsular - home of the Royal Albatrosses. Even better was a gravel track and an energetic walk across sand dunes and a pristine beach - as good as anything ever seen in the world - to Sandfly Bay. We were chased up the beach by a sea lion !! but then hid and watched the penguins come home just before sunset around 9pm. The routine seems to be to have a final play in the waves, look around then flip upright and waddle ashore. They then dripped and had a leisurely preening session. It was simply wonderful, the beer that night tasted so good after the sweaty climb back to the bike.

We did a loop close to Dunedin (thanks Peter) and saw one car in 20 miles of lush grassland with sweet smelling clover in this wonderful hilly area of Otago. The only humans were distant kids on a trampoline.

A Deep South ice-cream - honestly it beats the best from Hagen-Daaz and Ben & Jerries. The explanation is the dairy herds and the lush grass. Less than 30p fills two of us. Dunedin was a great place to stay and ride out from, it has street cafes, some outdoor music - the sun was SO POWERFUL partly due to Peri - hellion which means the sun is closest to Planet Earth - but a fresh breeze making it ideal weather.

The next days ride took us down the coast to the Catlins. This area has even fewer people - maybe something to do with the Maori diet in earlier years hence passing Cannibal Bay! Really its about rainforest, wetlands, wilderness and the sea plus natural history. This was when we tried our first Farmstay - that's B&B on a farm. A beautiful large bungalow in a pretty garden all set in fairly flat 640 acres (1 Sq mile). John and Jean (our hosts) not only looked after us very well but explained the running of a sheep farm - a very modern science that I found totally amazing. Just the two of them producing 3,000 lambs per year. John has used breeding to carefully genetically engineer the lambs, drained the land, planted the right mix of pasture, watched the chemical balance of it to ensure the lambs eat well - they have a clear natural stream. Then the more specialised stuff - the Ram wears a harness to colour mark the ewes that he services. The colour is changed so that the date of pregnancy is known. The scanners come in to test pregnancy looking for multiple births - they need more care. Best of all though was a scan that actually shows the lamb chop! - HONEST. They know the meat content and fat layer. Different markets want different content - and weights.

Next morning breakfast of home made bread and preserves delicious. Then a drive around the whole estate - the pastures, length of grass - Swedes planted (they like those). Explanation of the lambs that are doing best and back to the large shed. The electronic scale is here - the two very important sheep dogs too. The clinic for poorly lambs and the Lamateria for bottle feeding orphans.....

Then a BIG Ghetto Blaster to entertain the sheep shearers - once a year a team of four (250-300 per day each) plus an apprentice. But first you have to remove the dag - that means shear the mucky bums first. Looking at lambs will never be the same again. We look for "casts" - if the lambs fall with a heavy fleece sometimes they cannot get up.....

Terry - Queenstown S Island NZ

PS I got the sheep truck info wrong - they have FOUR layers and transport 600 bleating lambs at 120kph with the trailer.

Then we were riding gravel roads alongside amazing bays before reaching the furthest point from home. The most Southerly point was overlooking what is a clearly visible Petrified Forest which goes way back in time to when NZ was connected to S America (Gondwanaland). Then the next bay had Hector's Dolphins playing in the surf. The weather then started with persistent drizzle, wiped visor then tried visor up and wiped specs, very hard on gravel, plus difficult cambers, I realised I was getting cold and a bit wet too - even colder at higher speed on sealed road to head towards Invercargill. This is the most Southerly NZ City.



Terry's Travels

RTW2-17 Bluff to Queenstown 12/1/2001

Invercargill residents are not happy that Lonely Planet said about their city "old fashioned, check shirts and bad haircuts". I quickly saw a bad haircut but the guy had two tidy blondes as company - reminds me, I need a haircut. It's a bit quiet here on a Sunday but we got a beer even though we couldn't find a liquor store open for a bottle of wine. The main park area is large and well kept - no sign of dog poo! The art gallery is a most spectacular white pyramid. The houses have very well kept gardens and roses are very popular. Historic buildings are well kept - perhaps the colouring is sometimes a little different. It's an OK place.

Half an hours ride and we were in Bluff - famous for oysters - this is the port of Invercargill. First settled in 1822 and whaling in the 1830's it is as old as anywhere that Europeans came to. There is a huge aluminium smelting plant here on the bay. This is the Southern end of the Route 1 that runs the length of N and S Islands. We are about 900 miles from the northern tip, 2,400 miles from the S pole and 11,000 miles from home - I suppose this is the start of the long return journey, so I sent a few mobile phone text messages from the highpoint next to the microwave tower.

The ride is now W to Riverton before turning N for the West coast. The bike got a well earned wash - I even synchronised the carburettors. Tonight's motel overlooks Lake Manapouri which is so quiet and beautiful I booked in for two nights. A few years ago 250,000 people - thats a LOT out of a population of 3.5 million! successfully protested the raising of the lake by 100 feet with all the eco damage. The lake is 178 metres above sea level and has a hydro electric power station buried deep inside the mountain. We went to see this huge amazing scheme - it provides power for the smelting plant some 160km away at Bluff. It was designed to give 700 Megawatts but someone screwed up and it "only" gave 550 Mw. Another tunnel is being built to improve the output. The tunnels go through the mountain some 22km to the ocean. Temporary accommodation has been built and will shortly be removed - some 750,000 plants are being propagated to replant the area back to wilderness. The tour guide collected the tickets, drove the boat for one hour across the lake - gave commentary, docked doing the ropes himself, got the bus and took the party of 40 of us deep into the mountain to the actual 7 turbines - gave the commentary

That evening we had a good conversation with an American couple - in their travels they had met a Maori Shaman (Holyman) - Yes he could marry them but he was too busy exorcising (he said ghost busting). Apparently this is common after a Maori death!

Heavy overnight rain had fortunately stopped by morning and we left without wearing rain suits - mistake - the first mountain was misty and damp. We put the suits on for the first time when we were already cold and damp. At the breakfast stop we were glad to be close to a heater. As we got nearer to Queenstown the solar energy was getting through - my spirits always rise when this happens on the bike. The road also was great following the side of the 50 mile long lake. A sign read " watch for slumps" - I was thinking what this meant when I hit a dip and the suspension bottomed. Then we were into Queenstown.....

Terry - Queenstown NZ



Terry's Travels

RTW2-18 Classy Queenstown 15/1/2001

Yes, Queenstown is a classy place, it has such a lot going for it. A high proportion of sunshine, a crystal lake, rivers and a wonderful mountain setting giving it appeal in both summer or winter. Sounds like I'm impressed? - I am. The other thing is that it has adventure activities - it began with bungee jumping but now uses land, water and air - summer and winter in the most amazing and creative ways. If it happens in the world it happens here. This brings the young, the tourists - and MONEY. Retailers such as Vuitton, Timberland, Hard Rock give it an International flavour but the highest quality NZ products are in the shops too. The planners are doing a great job and you get this easy going excellence and friendly service. So what did we do?

Booked into a motel (Chinese owned/operated) for 3 days and extended to 4. The lakeside setting had a walk of about 45 minutes to the town and the other way to Frankton and the small airport - so we walked. The bus called too so a night out and a drink was no problem. A group of lively American students got on one night, one opened the knapsack and dropped lots of items. One said she's dropped her diaphragm to great amusement. A gondola (cable car) goes from near the centre to the mountaintop and a view of all the small town and setting. Even a panoramic camera would not do justice to the view. The steamer on the lake looked like a small plastic toy from a Xmas cracker. There is a restaurant but also a coffee shop to enjoy the view that included watching the cable car and a bungee jump over the trees. The girls seem ed to be more "ballsy" than the guys - is this possible? Then there was the ski lift taking people and toboggans with wheels even higher so they could come back down the concrete luge - very much fun for all ages. It was the start of one of the many mountain walks through fragrant wild flowers.

Back in the centre, outdoor lunch in the pedestrianised area was chowder and salad and really good tasting. Street entertainers included a good classical guitarist - very nice until the bongo player started some 30 yards away. He gave him "the eye" but it didn't work. Neither did Moonlight Sonata - to bongos. In the pubs you can get a jug (2 pints). I noticed the locals never poured using the spout but out of the side. Speed or froth I don't know. The Japanese are here in force - apparently it costs less than half to holiday here than in Japan. You could here them clicking everywhere. The surrounding areas further support a holiday here. We went to Arrowtown - a gold mining place. I had been told (in confidence) that recent floods had washed more gold nuggets that easily could be collected. I looked and looked for at least 10 minutes and didn't find a single one. I went to the ATM, fortunately it is still giving me money so the trip goes on.

A 45 minute tour down the lakeside on the bike gives amazing snow capped views and we met some of the 700 bikers here for the Glenorchy Rally. On the ride back a bike had just crashed under a newly erected barrier. The rider was dazed but lucky the barrier was there or would have been in the lake! Kelvin Heights is an area of expensive homes and the golf course. We got an odd wave as we biked around homes costing more than a million. The planners obviously allow quite a bit of freedom with design and materials - with good results. Now that we were in affluent mode at lunchtime I chose 'Gourmet Sausage' in the 'Food Boutique' and I suppose I went to their 'Designer Toilet' -hehehe....

Terry - Hokitika W Coast NZ



Terry's Travels

RTW2-19 Storm and Arthurs Pass 20/1/2001

The Beemer was carrying us away from Queenstown alongside the glacial river with vineyards alongside - spectacular. Then at a look out point a group of guys were in the side of the river with wet suits, flippers, buoyancy aids, helmets and with floating tea trays. After the leader gave them a pep talk they entered the fast flowing, bubbling, swirling icy torrents and were quickly carried off downstream whilst trying to keep their heads above water * fascinating. A couple of miles downstream was a footbridge over the river and a cafe where we got a coffee - and waited and waited - they never arrivedthen having seen people jumping off a mountain with man made wings we went to the landing site to see if any arrived - they did, some females also, having taken off their wings and backpack (must have been a parachute, no shops up the mountain) the ritual was a high fivethen a farmyard with deer and llamas who were getting on OK.....then one with ostriches and deer - relations were more strained here!

Bannockburn is in the desert here, only a small distance from Queenstown , this microclimate thing again, and they have had three recent floods. Our chatty bus driver had earlier told us to visit the Felton Road Winery (www.FeltonRoad.com). He was right - the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay were sold out but the Rieslings excellent - a bottle went in the tank bag for later. The wines from OZ were generally priced lower than the NZ ones. I hear that the NZ ers are also starting to plant olive trees to join the fast developing wineries.

Then it was riding through more amazing scenery en route to the W coast. After the Haast Pass another microclimate and lush rainforest with tree ferns. We pushed on to 5:30pm and needed three attempts to get a motel. Third time lucky it was a Backpackers which was good with a coin - op Internet (with a queue). It was quite warm and an hour in the sun before walking to the local for food and drink - an excellent days biking. The following days was a ride N up the West coast with a hike to the Fox Glacier. This showed the amazing scale of Mother Nature still changing our Planet. I get some info by listening in to tour guides leading English speaking groups. The Fox "flows" at 1.5 to 5 metres per day - ten times the speed of Swiss Alpine Glaciers.

We were lucky with the weather again - the West coast has a very high rainfall and got to the small town of Hokitika.....it had a chip shop....

A real storm developed overnight so we had a day sheltering in Hokitika. 120kph winds blew out windows, damaged roofs and brought down the canopy of the garage near the motel injuring two people. The motel was good so it was laundering, writing , reading - even 3 channels of TV - that's a LOT for here!

Terry West Coast S Island NZ



Terry's Travels

RTW2-20 West to East Coast 23/1/2001

The next morning the wind had dropped - time to ride Arthur's Pass - perhaps the most spectacular crossing of the S Alps. Wet gear on and careful of the varying road surfaces. It started drying and really steaming WHOOPEE! - I just love it when the gravel gets lighter coloured. The steepest part had me getting down into first gear, but with no traffic pressure there was time to look around at the raging river, cliffs and trees. I stopped at the outlook point and from this highpoint got a tremendous view of the viaduct. Suddenly I was taken by surprise to have a really large bird close and unafraid of me. Apparently its a Kea - they love chrome bits on bikes and cars and can even snap a car aerial! - no problem to humans though. The weather cleared magically and the biking was definitely a five smile rating. I rode a loose gravel 20 mile stretch into Rakaia Gorge and then back to my pals at Ashburton for a nights nattering.

Akaroa is the seaside place for Ch*ch (thats local for Christchurch) and after the first chilly half hour's ride towards there we were ready for breakfast. It was a 'greasy spoon' place with a display of part fried chips, sausages and some items I couldn't identify - but looked life threatening! Tried ordering spaghetti - sorry no. Beans? - sorry we have none. Eggs on toast - yes. I thought they should be OK - WRONG. I'd expected the toast to be the white sliced that can take over a week to even go green. So the eggs were on this white toast. If you lift eggs from the pan with a spoon you get quite a bit of water - so soggy toast - yuk. What I can't explain is how to turn egg whites to dark grey. Answers please to www.poisonerry.UGH!

From Akaroa it was only an hours ride to Ch*ch the largest city in S Island.
The World Buskers Festival was on too so we expected plenty to see and do.

Terry

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Terry's Travels

RTW2-21 Buskers in Church to Hammer Spring 25/1/2001

The motel I planned was on the outskirts of Christchurch (the locals use Ch*ch) and proved ideal with a walk through the park and large Botanic Gardens to get to the City centre. Ch*ch is very English with the parks and River Avon meandering through. The historic tram ride took us around the compact centre and to the first busking site. The Festival uses different outdoor sites and is very well organised - in fact rated amongst the top three in the world by the professional buskers. The evening session (more risqué) was at a pub with large open area and lots of tables and a stage with lighting and good PA system. This is next to the extensive Arts Centre.

Fabulous and extremely varied entertainment for this and the following evening.

Sample:- What are the three advantages of Alzheimer's?

1. You can hide your own Easter eggs.
2. You meet new faces everyday.
3. You can hide your own Easter eggs.

there also was some male nudity later - no big thing - it got quite chilly !!

The Spanish owner of a Tapas bar was making his way with his restaurant - his only complaint was that its often windy - something that happens in Spain too. Ch*ch is a lovely easy going City with varied entertainment even without the buskers.

Leaving the city the plan was to go through the extensive urban area to New Brighton beach. I was shocked at how busy it was but saw a beach event in progress. It was races between inflatable rescue craft. Lifeguards swimming and body boarding. Most spectacular was the Jet Ski races that had them leaping out of the water over the waves. Great entertainment and a great brunch too. The ride North was past more new housing that looked good and the older stuff that looked a bit ropy. Then onwards into farmland and wineries before leaving the coast for inland. The wind got up and it looked like cowboy country. Higher into the mountains and near the top a spur road took us to Hamner Springs. This is a thermal pool resort and the council owned facility attracts 500,000 visitors per year. What a place - far the best of its type that I have ever seen. It was busy but so spacious it coped very well. A swimming pool but then over a dozen thermal pools from 35 to 41 degrees. Lazing in these looking at the mountains, trees and blue sunny skies - paradise. Some of the pools had rocks to laze against. Guess who got a bit sunburned and got wrinkly fingers after a day there. It was also the first picnic - the wasps were especially fond of the plums.

Terry - Nelson North Coast of S Island NZ



Terry's Travels

RTW2-22 Leaving the Southern Alps 27/1/2001

It was a lovely mountain morning as we left Hanmer Springs, sunny and little wind, the riding was at its very best. Then a bend some 10 miles later and a terrific blast of wind - now its windy. That's just how quickly it changes. The ride was our last major mountain crossing via the Lewis Pass. Cool at the top and fresh snow on the tops. But exhilarating to descend quickly round the many bends with it getting warmer all the time. Another roadside thermal pool was tempting but the riding was much too good. A turn Northwards and a change to wide valleys with hills more than mountains now. Then across the Shenandoah river. A picnic lunch and bottled water - we even chose a table close to a junction so we could see the passing traffic.

We are seeing some old converted buses into motorhomes, we guess that some of these are people coming fruit picking. We pass through tremendous orchards of peaches, nectarines, walnuts, lemons, hops also are grown here. Apples, pears - they present such a contrast to the really scorched brown hills. Like an oasis with all the lush green vegetation and big bugs smacking into the helmets. Finally we reached Motueka - a small town on the North coast, very busy - at least it felt that way after all the really quiet areas - the pub was mobbed by 6pm. A great days riding of about 200 miles - the jug of Speights was very welcome. Our choice of motel was poor -but it was cheaper, the cuisine of Motueka more than made up for it. Our best rating yet for excellent food, service and environment goes to 'Hot Mamas'. Two main courses, one desert and two glasses of wine under \$40.

The Abel Tasman National Park is only a short drive from here and we did the walk that goes through the dense scrubland with paths down to the many wide deserted beaches. We got a beach to ourselves and enjoyed watching the wading birds, the kayakers in the way out sea, all we heard was the cicadas, the gentle breeze and close flying insects. The mini binocs have been well used on this trip. This is the final week of the main school summer holidays and people still have lots of space here.

Kaiteriteri is the busier beach area - very Mediterranean looking with speed boats and all the water sports. New upmarket houses are springing up and shows that there is quite a bit of affluence here as well as the ones having it hard. The beach here is golden sand with safe swimming and shallow areas for the tinies. Another day of feeling fortunate not to be in the English winter

Terry - Nelson, North Coast of S Island NZ



Terry's Travels

RTW2-23 The North Coast of South Island 29/1/2001

There's lots of old British cars here - not all cherished but still going after over 40 years. Zephyr/Jag Mk 10/Hillman Hunter/Cortina/Triumph 2000/Rover 3.5/Austin 1100 and some nice cherished ones Austin Healey 3000/Mg Sports models/Triumph TR's. There's a healthy classic bike following too - including trials events.

Oh! before I forget - in the really rural areas many businesses have more than one service:- Butcher and Undertaker (not sure about that) Cafe and Fire Brigade (makes sense) Hairdresser and Coal Merchant (clean hands again after a shampoo) Radio Station and Haberdashers (think about it - buttons) Santa Claus runs Trash\$Converters (that works)

So far we have ridden over 2,000 really enjoyable miles around S Island in just over 3 weeks. Its VERY different doing it on a bike. You are in the weather, feel the winds, temperatures, humidity, solar. Perhaps even better are the smells - the rain, herbs, flowers, trees, diesel spills, tar, cooking and baking. You see so much more and are very approachable - especially with the British Plates on the bike. Yes - I'm saying it is even better than doing it in the camper van - despite the odd 'Greasy Spoon'.

Farewell Spit protects the huge Golden Bay at the extreme NW of S Island. Many whales have been stranded here but there is a very well organised Whale Rescue Service that have saved hundreds over the years. This is another extremity of the trip. Accommodation tonight is a better motel with our own lounge overlooking an established garden, I've made friends with the resident duck.

Nelson is a delightful small city in the centre of the N Coast - in fact we hiked to a hilltop overlook which is the actual centre of NZ. Extensive views over the Grampian hills and the distant snow capped mountains already ridden. It has a busy harbour with leisure craft, freighters and fishing boats. Later I was having a pot of tea in a Main street cafe when the ladies on the next table got their cappuccinos. A great gust of wind blew the froth over one of them. She took it in good part though and delicately mopped her cleavage....

The AA motel (the British AA card gets you discount) was alongside the river giving a lovely 2 hour walk along the banks. Dog poo bins provided. It was lovely and even at 8pm a swimming hole was being enthusiastically used. We were back by sunset at 9pm. Now we are more North and since the Summer equinox here was 6 weeks ago the nights are drawing in! The area has a great idea - The Fruit Loop - a bus service for the unemployed taking them round the growers for work, apparently with an 80% success rate.

Another evening in Downtown Nelson - live music - a good crowd outside of the pub. I was looking - indeed admiring the 1862 facade blended with the new buildings to form an up to date Main St. "Fancy sharing my spliff" - was an approach from this not young, but not old rather worn looking female. The spliff was all of 5mm. long. I declined , but nicely. She said she was high anyway - and was going - and went. I was left wondering.

Picton is where we head next and where the ferry goes from.....

Terry - Picton NE corner of S Island.



Terry's Travels

RTW2-24 Picton Ferry to North Island 1/2/2001

From Nelson the coast road ran into hills of cultivated pine forest. Huge areas had been felled and the ground looked really scorched against the areas of dense green. Havelock seems to be the capital for mussels - grown in its many secluded bays. It was too early in the day to try some and we rode onwards through big vineyards (a growth industry here) and into Blenheim, just a few weeks ago the scene of disastrous fires. They need rain badly - one of the locals jokingly said they were going to change 'The Fox on the Green' to 'The Fox on the Brown' - it would have been appropriate. Then northwards to a dairy area where we tasted Koromiko cheeses and bought Colby and Mature Cheddar. The top tank top bag is our larder. It normally carries crackers, fruit, sachet of soup, spray oil and soy sauce for when we do stir fries. We also carry drinking water. There was one of these scoop places and we got porridge (oatmeal) cereals and raisins in little bags. Motels provide tea, coffee and chocolate - we prefer them to hotels with usually having a kitchen.

Arriving at Picton in hot sunshine we had a good look around at accommodation. Cabins at \$49 - Ok but not well sited/3 bed new apartment \$150 - very nice/Lakeside Motel \$89/Grotty Motel \$58/AA Motel \$70, we settled for the AA where we also get a free night after 11 nights, we have been happy with them all so far. Picton Centre overlooks the scenic bay where the ferry goes from - its nice but not exactly thriving. Just 4km down the coast is Waikawa Bay where the Marina is and some very nice properties. Once again riding around the bays was fabulous and we only turned around when the road changed to gravel. Mussel beds were in these bays and this time we stopped at the Marina for a bowl marinated on a crisp bed of lettuce - they were the business.

My mobile phone just beeped - it delivered a test message I sent it via Email - it took some 18 hours to deliver it, but at least it is working - if slowly. I leave the phone on but then ride and quickly go out of range. The internet places that I write this are usually busy and more older people are very grateful also to be using it. I know I am - my daughter just sent me one that tells me that my 4 year old grandson has got in at the school of their choice - WONDERFUL.

45km and hundreds of bends around the coast, with lots of tree ferns partially screening the breathtaking views of the bays. We had some welcome rain that delayed our riding today but then reaching Havelock it was time for a late lunch. Straight to "The Mussel Boys" - we shared a chowder and a bowl served in half shells having been cooked in beer and wine and then under the grill with mushroom and lemon sauce. With a fresh salad that included spring onions. You can see we really go for it some days. This restaurant gets my finest accolade of a TTT award (Terry's Top Tucker) The evening was at the local to watch cricket on Sky. We met a lady who told us she had been the 'curator' (her word) of a nudist colony - and her doctor turned up!! - talk about role reversal. She also had a priest as a member. He had to get special dispensation from The Pope - to display his staff. The previous evening we met and ate with Ray (now from Auckland) and his father Jim from Surrey. Time slipped by and a few Montana reds - Jim was a great mimic - he could take off the old guy that was in the Del boy series. He even looked remarkably like him with the white hair and beard. A great laugh.....

Our month on S Island has slipped by - we could have spent more time here. All the S Islanders are very patriotic saying that we will not enjoy N Island as much - that its busier, more populated, less friendly, less mountainous and less scenic. We look forward to it. Friends to see, tickets bought for cricket Internationals. We couldn't get tickets for the Lulu/Hollies concert - they sold out in 1 hour! We have got tickets for the Cirque du Soleil though in Auckland.

We now are going to the ferry - we are on the fast ferry - that's running slower because of ecological damage. The slow ferry is running slower because 2 of its engines are knackered """"
Terry - Wellington N Island NZ



Terry's Travels

RTW2-25 Wellington and North Island 5/2/2001

Everyone said don't stay in Wellington, so we got a motel 15 mins N with a heated indoor pool and spa. Having gotten used to the quiet of S Island it seemed manic to get off the ferry and into the traffic. There was time to ride a loop in the hills called 'Staglands'. In England we would call this a single track road and since it had lots of blind bends it was often 2nd gear but it was a great way to see Upper and Lower Hutt, the final half hour into the setting sun was a bit difficult.

I met a 'trainspotter' in the pool. Steam locos, trams and trolley buses were his thing, he had also recorded and kept every episode of 'George & Mildred'! His best bit was talking about his 67 year old colleague at the post service - apparently he brings an Asian lady into NZ each year - and this keeps him young! I excused myself and went to read the local paper. SOCIAL

ANTHROPOLOGY : Male - disguise yourself in denim shirt tucked into matching blue jeans, white socks essential. Female - black G string under white pants, leather lace up top - tight.

TIP : \$3 for 72 condoms from Sexual Health Clinic. EATING OUT : Eat greasy food, it protects the stomach lining from being dissolved with excess alcohol. EATING IN : Huhu grubs are high in protein and have a great texture when deep fried.

..... we stayed in.

The following days bike ride into Wellington (the capital) went very well. Past the airport where the runway launches aircraft right over the Cook Strait, one of the nastiest bits of ocean in the world. Then I just followed the coast around Breakers Bay with signs 'Slow Penguin Crossing' and another 'Slow Waiters Crossing' - of course I stopped at the Chocolate Fish Cafe. Wonderful food with novel touches like a miniature bottle of milk for the tea. Psychedelic hand painted chairs completed the unique appeal - and the waiters had reflective safety jackets on too! Even the toilet was in the kitchens and marked Staff Only. This coastal strip was originally weekend cottages (called bachs), now its becoming rebuilt and fashionably expensive with the properties tucked against the low cliffs, and only a half hour from Wellington Centre. Further around the coast and a defence area where the sign said 'Keep Moving'. I did and came to Air New Zealand's catering HQ, so THIS is where that strange tasting coffee comes from, they must also grow that selected limp lettuce here too.

Finding an internet in Wellington was easy and cheap. I found one with a resident 'techie' who was a great young guy. I liked his approach to a Rachel Hunter look alike. "Good afternoon maam - what are you doing tonight?". Her response was good too "Oh, I'm going to Ch*ch, a wedding and all that stuff". One reason for being in Wellington was to go to the cricket, a one day/night International with Sri Lanka. Held in the impressive new Westpac Stadium, NZ lost with 4 balls to go. We went using the excellent train service, very close to the motel - in fact 3 rooms away, with the vibrations you didn't need to stir your tea - back to the cricket, the Sri Lankans returning on the train were full of it, just good banter with the locals.....

Wanganui is promoted as the River City even though its on the West coast. The Masters Event had just started. This is like an Olympics for over 30 year olds. 7,800 competitors ! - yes we struggled to get a bed. It was worth it. The ride along the verdant banks of the river was memorable. The river is the longest navigable in NZ and we saw the newly reconditioned paddle steamer smoking and steaming along the slow flowing river. Being a larger city brought more culinary choice, we went for a curry house - it worked through very well

Terry - in smelly Rotorua (the thermal activity gets it 'Sulphur City')



Terry's Travels

RTW2-26 Taupo and Stinky Sulphur City 11/2/2001

The ride inland from Wanganui was initially alongside the river but then into cone shaped hills - very different. The hills were sandy and easily eroded. Even stranger was an area of blue grey mud like rock. Up and down the gears the hills started to get a little greener. After at least 10 days of Total Fire Ban (that means NO wood or charcoal barbies, just gas ones OK) this was quite a change. The mid morning cuppa was welcome as it became quite cool at this altitude. Then we rode higher and saw lots of ski shops for the winter here. A final climb took us into cloud and it was now cold and wet. We still climbed the lookout tower - the 360 degree vista should have shown our destination, the giant Lake Taupo. Instead it was a scene of spooky clouds with just a sliver of brightness - hope that's our direction. It was and just 15 minutes and lots of bends later we were back down from the volcano formed mountain and drinking coffee. Off with the wet gear and slowly round the scenic shores of the Lake. All the motels were now offering thermal spas courtesy of Mother Nature. Downtown Taupo is a lovely place and popular with the young NZers. It sounds like a joke but there really was an English, Irish and Scottish bar. The Irish bar was catching the last rays of the setting sun - and had Kilkennies - CHEERS. Dinner was overlooking the lake and watching the massive modern trucks and trailers starting to hit the highway for night time journeys. There is a much smaller %age of sheep trucks now - and fitted with effluent tanks, a great benefit to following motorcyclists!

Rotorua is just up the road and one of the most popular tourist destinations. Due to all the thermal activity its also called Sulphur City. A trip downtown was a good walk but 'Wild Willies' bar was disappointingly quiet. I didn't find a local bar for the usual conversation. In fact I think the place stinks.

The road N now is becoming busier, but it was still a good ride to Hamilton. We have tickets for the cricket. It had hints of the past but was also very fashionable - nice. The day for the cricket was grey and wet - no chance. Instead we went to the morning cinema to see "What Women Want" it had everyone in the cinema laughing - yes all 7 of us. Its a really good movie.

Coming outside its dry and very bright and after a delay we saw the Sri Lankans give NZ another cricket lesson.

Today we head back to Auckland with the promise of lots happening this weekend.....

Terry



Terry's Travels

RTW2-27 Big City Buzz 15/2/2001

Back in Auckland with lots planned. The HERO Festival opening ceremony, this is the Gay & Lesbian Festival of parades, music, art and remembrance. The Prime Minister and Mayoress opened the event and the lesbians were the first to dance and parade to the cheers of about 1,000 people - lots of ladies cheering had facial hair! Then some giant quilts were carried in procession that remembered the 700 who have died of AIDS in NZ - very moving. A very good Maori singer and dancers were next. The gays were dressed in fluorescent boxer shorts only and did a cheerleader type dance number. The new G & L flag was raised. It is all shades of colour (yes) in straight stripes (straight?). Then ladies on motorcycles (Dykes on Bikes) roared into the square, one tall blonde on a Triumph Thunderbird looked especially poised with her noisy pipes. Leaving this and onto another event we passed a preacher 'sodomy is a sin - but not worse than any other ...' then we had passed.

The PM opened the Asian Lantern Festival after the Dragon Dance by throwing the switch to light them all. The event was jammed and lots of children were there with their own lanterns. Many food stalls offering a great variety of smells and tastes. There were fortune tellers and musicians playing Chinese instruments. The event is to strengthen trade links between China and NZ. I never knew that HSBC Banks in England are the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation. My Chinese friend came for a ride and showed the way to the W coast beaches - simply wonderful - I burnt my feet on the scorching sands. Then another 'flattie' (puncture) but after the recent practice 20 minutes and I had changed the tube and re-inflated using the small CO2 canisters. As I blew up fully having got to a garage another biker told me about a charity ride.

Unfortunately it clashed with our booking to see the Cirque du Soleil a most wonderful show that mixes the excellence of humans with music, ballet and clowning. All held in a temporary village of modern big tops.

After 6,000km the old BMW was overdue some service. It had been pinking up the big hills. I met Peter at Holeshot BMW in Auckland, he had come from Rochdale Lancashire in 1966. He was also a BMW owner himself - the ideal person. He dressed the points and re-timed the ignition. Then found low compression, I may have burnt the valves with the lead free petrol. I left him to it and went to drool over the new Triumph Bonneville. When I went back he had reset the tappets and most compression had come back. Just use it and put some Valvemaster in the tank, the valves will bed back in OK. We were riding again and the bike was much better. You get like an orange syringe without the needle and just squirt it in the tank. Riding was warm today and we got to Wangarei the bike getting better all the time. The vents on my jacket were open and the evening stayed warm too - this really suits me.

Breakfast was overlooking the yacht basin feeling very like the Med except for short spells of very fine drizzle. It all becomes more tropical the further N we go. The increasing drizzle manages to start wetting the roads despite the solar power. There is a lot of evidence of recent heavy rain. The banks at the side of the minor road are clay and it has washed onto the road. A road works section was splashy greasy liquid mud so we got mucky as well as wet. More rain washed us clean again and then it dried. A small ferry left as we boarded to cross to Paiha in the Bay of Islands. No vacancy signs told us to start looking, a good decision since this is a very popular destination. It has the feel of England's Lake District mixed with Florida's Keys. You can whale watch, swim with dolphins, glass bottom boat, tour the bay or fish for BIG ONES . One recent Marlin caught was 160kg.

The evening was the usual walk, find the locals, which now had more Maoris. I found some Harley riders too, one with a Sturgis T shirt - but hadn't been. Then dinner on an outdoor balcony (great for people watching) and excellent fish that tasted similar to Halibut.....

Terry - Dargaville



Terry's Travels

RTW2-28 Bay of Islands/Northlands 17/2/2001

We had decided on an early start on this anniversary of Cap Cook's death in 1779, he had such an influence on these parts. We were at Waitangi by 8:30am and it was really drizzling down. You know the sort that really wets you. Waitangi was the place where the Treaty which is the basis of NZ was signed Feb 6th 1840. It was the area first settled. Unfortunately it is a day that is the focus of discontent. We were warned to watch out and if we were asked for a little money to watch the bike to pay it. I would hate to loose even the air from my tyres! Maori are 15% of the population and growing. They have had support totalling 525 millions to date.

It was warm and humid and the waterproofs weren't quite. After an hour or so Di saw an Internet and cafe alongside with outdoor tables undercover. We removed the outer layer and ordered breakfast at what was Northlands award winning cafe. My cafe latte arrived with a heart shape in the frothy top, it was St Valentines Day. The place certainly deserved its award. We modified our travel plans in view of the weather and headed for the opposite W coast instead of the N tip. The mountains were wonderful and lush green. It was getting drier and blue sky ahead when we saw the first signs of the estuary with some mangrove type lagoons. There were many more Maoris now - a non Maori such as me is a Pakeha. The Maori cars were quite noticeable with their signs of collisions. I watched one carefully as he waited at a side road then sped past me , wires flapping from where the rear lights should be. The boot lid giving me a friendly wave as it disappeared.....

At Omapere there was a lovely hotel/motel/campsite right at the mouth of the estuary. Breakers at the mouth and large sand hills opposite made it very special. The outdoor pool was set in gardens and lawn and was warm - ideal to have a lazy afternoon. The dining room had a tasteful Kauri wood ceiling and chandeliers. Crayfish (lobster) was my choice and Di chose Dory fish - all made for a delicious dinner. I met a flag marshal for m/bike racing and passed an hour jawing to this knowledgeable guy. The bike had been running very well but was wandering a bit. I found the whole luggage frame had loosened a bit, tightening it made quite a difference. Dialling in a bit of steering damper helped too but a new front tyre is due. The long ride to Helensville was most enjoyable - riding through the forest of giant Kauri especially so. So much better being able to look up and all around from the saddle. The changes in climate and terrain were very noticeable again and it stayed hot all day. The movie industry are making more movies in NZ because of the differing terrain. The trilogy of 'The Lord of the Rings' will be completed for release Xmas 2001/2/3 - great marketing!! This is the area famous for Kumara (sweet potato) so brunch featured this. It was a bit dry but I ate it all - hunger is the greatest condiment. I had been thinking the bike was running more quietly - then I realised my early morning swim had left water in my ear. Helensville had thermal pools - what better way to end a long days riding.

Its only 50km back to Auckland so their was time to get a new front tyre. The fitter told me that the modern compounds run at a bit higher pressure for the roads here. I went to drool again at the new Bonneville and was offered a test ride (I well remember being a salesman) but took a advantage.

Its very impressive - good for the old country. Neat and compact, smooth and sporty and at a price less than England where its made. Funny old world. We saw Qantas and changed our tickets to fly from Auckland to Sydney - no charge. Now I need to find somewhere to store the bike after next weeks final ride - yes NZ will see me again.....

Terry - Auckland



Terry's Travels

RTW2-29 Jaffas and The Coromandel 17/2/2001

Pakistan v NZ were playing in the Eden Park cricket ground, which also houses rugby as the season changes. It was sweltering and NZ were certainly feeling the heat with Shoaib (the Rawalpindi Express) bowling or 'chucking' at 147kph. Reading reports afterwards a certain NZ batsman was considered 'as useful as a waterproof tea bag'. After so much time in Auckland I'm becoming a Jafa (Just Another F***ing Aucklander). Di was packing again, our room in the Airedale was like an apartment with a halogen hob and a dishwasher - all at a good price organised by my Chinese friends. We were heading for the Coromandel Peninsula - only an hour away using the fast road. It took us past a friend of a friend. We called and met David in his service station. Originally from Keighley (Yorks) but now a NZer after over 40 years there and made plans to meet again when there was time to talk. The lady at the motel that night said there were no restaurants open on a Monday and solved our problem by digging potatoes and picking tomatoes and excellent plums from her garden.

Heavy rain caused an early stop in Whangamata where I explained cricket to a Canadian. 'this man with a short leg must bat even a no ball from a bowler using a googlie....' - he must have been a bit thick since he seemed puzzled.

Hot sun and pristine scenery and we were at Hot Water Beach - you hire a shovel, dig a pit in the beach, it fills with hot spring water so you add sea water to temperature then soak and sunbathe - easy.

I seem to be a magnet for nutters, our brunch had just arrived at Coromandel when a guy arrived and knelt beside our table having put his coffee on it. I was just winding my pasta on my fork when he said another chap had pointed us out (to get rid of him I suspect!). He asked where we were from and said Oh you are Yorkshire Puddings too. Between mouthfuls he told us nobody wants him, he was divorced after 22 years - well the sex had stopped. He had left his girlfriend in England having told her "Ahll take you but not your kids". All this from a 45 year old retiree from "down t' pits". I ordered a dessert for him and Di to share - which he enthusiastically polished off before going to the cafe across the road for a free refill of coffee - and him a Born Again Christian. We parted to ride our SEPERATE ways and he gave a blast of his two tone horns on his ex Police BMW, this was collision damaged but his head had looked OK - on the outside.....

Terry - Sydney Australia



Terry's Travels

RTW2-30 New Friends 2/3/2001

I'm very lucky to have another bike kept in Southern Spain. I always introduce my pal Phil there as 'the most important man in Spain' - he stores my bike you see. Now I have the same in NZ N Island. We called back to meet David & Maureen in Mangawhiri - had dinner - became friends - and talked and talked. You know its a small world - my ex wife was in the same class at school as his lifelong pal and maybe David too (more research needed). With just 4 days left in NZ I wanted us to make the most of them. We stayed in a small cabin in Miranda, a tiny place on the coast facing the Coromandel Peninsula. Sleep was difficult with rain drumming on the metal roof. As daybreak came I put my swimming shorts on and walked in the warm heavy rain to the thermal pool. Other people had the same idea - how strange it was to be under a warm waterfall with cooler feeling rain beating on my body. Ten am came and in slightly less rain we rode back to Auckland for our final weekend there.

It was socialising, eating sushi, sashimi with our friends and going to a great dancing bar below the spectacular Sky Tower. Then onto a late night disco where a bouncer said "its noisy" but let us in free to try it. I felt like I got a free entry to Hell. Down these dark stairs with curious young glazed eyes looking at us from old sofas on the landings. Down again into a smoky cellar with brick walls containing all these wildly writhing bodies glimpsed when brighter flashes of light caught them. It was hot hot hot. If HELL is like this I promise to be good. We escaped alive into the street above - what a great night out.

What a contrast to ride the coast to Goat Island. There are many of these around the world, the sailors used to leave their goats on deserted islands, with water and vegetation for later use. This one is a marine research area.

The bay is teeming with tropical fish, dolphins and whales (in season). You can snorkel and glass bottom boat through this paradise - a wonderful experience.

My final thrill in Auckland Harbour was awesome. I had booked for my Chinese friend and I (too scary for Di) to sail on the Americas Cup yacht NZL 40. A team of three professionals operate the yacht with about 20 passengers helping with the grinders (winches) and even taking the helm. I took the wheel just before we left the port area and sailed under the Harbour Bridge. The mast seemed almost to touch the underside of this suspension bridge - my heart was in my mouth. The wind freshened and we started making about 12 knots in perfect warm sunny weather. You get a 2 hour sail, we had gybed OK but the captain had to cheat and start the engine when we stalled in tacking across the wind. The yacht started leaning quite a lot and the wind really got up. What fantastic power with the huge sails, spray coming over the bow, then she heeled more, a bit alarming, then we were taking on gallons of water over the now submerged side. One unfortunate lady wasn't fast enough and got her knickers well wet from being dunked - maybe the excitement got to her too.! We passed everything under sail, sailing really close to the wind. One final reach saw us touching 14 knots - fabulous. One of my best experiences ever - I bought the T shirt!

A final barbie, leave the bike, sniff sniff, and its Australia next.....

Terry - Sydney, OZ.



Terry's Travels

RTW2-31 Sydney Australia 9/3/2001

Our friends Greg & Sheila kindly met us at the airport and we were quickly into another world. Four times the population of Auckland it felt big, hot and busy. Our hosts looked after us brilliantly, the city centre was a train ride away but first a visit to the Wildlife Centre. We saw Koalas, Wombats, Kangaroos of different sizes and colours, even albino ones - but the most surprising were the mummy ones with giant Joeys (babies) that jumped in and out of their pouches. Incredible birds, bats, dingos - in fact everything Australian. The Downtown Aquarium - by far the best that I have ever seen, showed us sharks, sting rays, one looked like a fluttering tablecloth of some 8 feet across. The Great Barrier Reef area displayed coral, anemones and intensely brilliant tropical fish - mother nature at her mind blowing best. Sea urchins, slugs etc that you could touch and Moray Eels that you definitely could not. Greg and Sheila are keen scuba divers so Sheila was a most knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide. Another TTT award for this great attraction.

Sydney harbour is also the home of the Maritime Museum, we were lucky that the replica of the tiny Dufken had sailed in so we could tour this vessel that was the start of modern Aussie history by landing in the early 1600s. The Batavia replica was also here too, she cheats by being carried across the world by container ship. This is a popular exhibit from Holland and is of the same era as the Dufken but had a crew of 180 against only 20. The intrigue with this vessel is sex, violence and mutiny before a shipwreck off West Australia's coast. Then a walk around a battleship before my first time on a submarine, the Onslow, I really now appreciate what heroes submariners are, in going below in a small tube packed with everything including torpedoes. The sea plays such an important part on this, the world's largest island.

Also in harbour were the yachts taking part in BT's Global Challenge, they were taking VIP's for a sail around the harbour before resuming their round the world race. A day here is simply not enough. We raided the Olympic sell off shop, ate some of the world's best yoghurt, I sulked when I couldn't get tickets to see 'The Buena Vista Social Club' at the Opera House. Had a Barbie - a very Aussie thing - met more friends and learned a bit more of the Aussie language. 'Dinky di' was confusing to Diana but meant pretty good. The train guard had obviously been to the same voice school that the British Rail ones go to - but otherwise the service was excellent. One day it really rained hard and when the train left a station the person near the door got a shower, we especially enjoyed this entertainment. Best of all was when a person who smugly had stayed dry boarded!! then got drowned.

It felt really special to stay in a home after all the motels - even better that it had a pool and the internet. Greg gave us a drive around the horsy country area around Richmond. The BIG houses and land here range from 2 to 5 million dollars. We then went to the club for dinner. What a place packed with pokies, these made the food really good value but made it all too easy to eat too much. A week had so quickly slipped by and it was time to rent a car to drive North. The Prime Minister here is really struggling and has reduced fuel taxes - thank you John. Hertz had the best deal and Sheila decorated the dash with Frangipanni petals - how lucky we are to have friends like this.....

Terry - Singapore (business reasons have caused me to shorten the trip - more details next report)



Terry's Travels

RTW2-32 and then the phone woke me 10/3/2001

You may have noticed that I don't work much these days - you would be right. But a property deal that has been in progress for some four years was coming to a conclusion. I have an occupant that is being very difficult and I am trying to reach an agreement by phone calls and Emails. This was the background as we left Sydney.

The Sydney suburban sprawl goes on and on - and then almost wilderness. We were taking Tourist Drives from the main road and stayed in a place called Foster after a wet but pleasant forest drive passing New South Wales' tallest tree. The ocean was stormy here with big breakers and heavy rain out of heavy skies, but it still looked good. Next morning it was still raining HARD. Some council joker had 'Conserve Water' signs everywhere. It was difficult and dangerous as I drove the little Ford Laser, it was aquaplaning as we hit the flooded sections. The solid curtain of water bringing us almost to a standstill - it was so hard to be able to see where it was safe to leave the road. We had passed one car in the ditch that got it wrong. For much of the time it was only a two lane road - and this is the one that goes all around Australia. The big trucks seemed very close and threatening as they passed in a huge spray. When Noah built his ark he didn't have these problems. Still, we could have been on the bike. Later there were brighter spells to enjoy the increasingly tropical flora and fauna. Incidentally we had been told that up to the enlightened? 1950's the Aborigines were classed as flora and fauna!

We reached Coffs Harbour - a.k.a. Banana City in more tropical rain so I thought, sod it - that's it with driving today. The Best Western had a pool - didn't everywhere - and a restaurant. We waited for a lessening of the rain to see the town, put the broolly up and went outside, quickly deciding on the motel's restaurant. In fact it was surprisingly excellent, well presented, good service and we were pleased to tip before leaving for the 20 yard stroll back to the room. We had passed Bonny Hills and Port Macquarie today which were the nicest looking places we had seen on this coast so far. Brisbane was easily reachable today and I decided that we would reluctantly change our flight tickets and abort the rest of our planned trip since I had still not reached agreement. The weather had cleared a little and we made an early start. Breakfast was overlooking a major swollen muddy river, one of many on this coastal stretch. There had been very bad flooding in this area just a few weeks previously. Many fields were flooded and all the creeks looked ready to overflow. It was really quite scenic with it. The corn fields gave way to sugar cane and with a rail road right alongside it looked like it was a scene from a movie. There were coffee plantations, macadamia orchards, bananas - all looking really lush. The sky was brightening all the time as we went from NSW into Queensland. By now we had planned all our strategy for an early return. Heading directly to Brisbane Airport we missed the coastal strip of Surfers Paradise.

We bought an extra leg to fly to Cairns at great expense and re-scheduled our flights Cairns/Darwin/Singapore/Paris/Manchester. We chose a motel by the river in Brisbane, which luckily was close to a river ferry terminal. We had time for a trip downtown and took this very fast ferry service. We found an internet to advise everyone and plan meetings back in the UK - this is me working again. Then a little time to stroll around - its like a tropical London, with a different feel to Sydney.

The return ferry trip was fabulous as the sun was setting and the lights coming on in the affluent houses and sky scraper apartments along the riverside. It looked really twinkly on this barmy tropical evening.

Our final dinner in OZ was at an Italian with a balcony that overlooked a floodlit tree with fern type lives and rich magenta blossoms. Two glasses of an Aussie red and I was ready for a good nights sleep.

RING-RING RING-RING , my occupant has accepted the proposed agreement.

It only goes to show that Sods Law works the world over!! - but I'm still travelling back early.

Terry - sulking in Singapore



Terry's Travels

RTW2-33 The Final Episode 14/3/2001

Of course we were feeling a little sad about the early return but grateful to have enjoyed our 4 month+ trip. The flight to Cairns was along the coast and when we flew over the Great Barrier Reef it looked wonderful - way better than the photos we had seen - maybe sometime. Cairns was much more tropical and had much lower density building than we had seen. Then onwards towards Darwin which was even more tropical and humid - my bottom lip came out, I had so much wanted to see Crocodile Dundee territory.

Onwards to Singapore, Changi is such a wonderful airport - efficient taxi to the Copthorne Kings Hotel, dumped the luggage and time for a quick drink downstairs as we awaited a call from my solicitor in England. Through one door and a Shadows number hit us at 90 decibels, through another door and it became 115db. The bar was packed with what looked like locals - mainly male for their Friday night out. The only bar stools vacant were right in front of the band. Two attractive lively singer/dancers fronted the three piece band - and they were all good. The beers tasted like nectar after the long journey - at least until the bill came - six pounds a glass! A few locals smiled happily at us, they had their own bottles of Chivas Regal and the staff looked after them with water and ice. The guy alongside us was having a GOOD time with his pitcher of beer and playing a mean air guitar alongside the band. We were just thinking of going when he topped up our glasses. His name was Sunny - it matched his personality. One of the locals got a singer to dance with him and was signalling behind her back for the band to keep the riff going. My phone flashed and I went out to some quiet to talk to my solicitor - everything fixed so back to the fun. We now wished we had changed before coming down, I bought a pitcher - paid by credit card and started to drink with Sunny. After the first set we were able to talk some more . He said to go to Chinatown and not to deal with those bloody Indians - they'll rob you. After the second set of both Chinese and Euro music another European sent us drinks across. he was from Wales, was living at the hotel whilst he worked on the oil rigs. We went to bed happily knackered after a 20 hour day. Singapore is tearing down and rebuilding - even by floodlight all night. They will spoil it if all the old goes. Whilst here we ate in Chinatown, strolled by the river, swam at the hotel, dined outdoors and people watched at Clark Quay. There is such a mix of nationalities that live here. When you add the visitors too it makes it a fascinating place. The tour boats for round the harbour go from here. The port is the busiest in the world. An extra bag that we bought was magically filling with extra stuff.

So how had the total trip gone? Well, family and friends - people again have been the top highlight. But Mother Nature too - amazing places, creatures on land and in water, flora and fauna. Escaping the bad winter in the UK is also a highlight for me.

Florida/Peru/Bolivia/Chile/Easter Island/Tahiti (less so) and especially NZ were all great to visit. The biking was a BIG highlight. Time in Sydney in a home crystallised my thoughts for building a small retirement house in England - 2002?

Most of all the hard earned freedom to be able to do all this. It gives me the incentive to get this business stuff right.

Have fun and keep in touch

Terry - back in the UK cold, foot and mouth - but not for long.

PS The grandsons took two minutes to make me glad to be back and arranging another trip with them