



AKAMA REPORT 33

Report 33 – New Zealand

We won't say much about New Zealand, as you can look it up in any encyclopedia. Here is a bit of basic information that we have gleaned. New Zealand is about 1,000 mi east of Australia. It includes two large islands, North Island and South Island, that constitute most of its landmass, as well as many small islands. The total land area of New Zealand is about 270 thousand sq km, which is about the same size as Japan or the UK. It runs roughly north-south, about 1000 miles long and 200 miles wide, with stunning natural beauty of snowcapped mountains, glaciers, fjords, and rolling green pastures. NZ is relatively warm and temperate. Average low winter temperatures range from 2 to 8 degrees C (46°F), while average high summer temperatures are 21 to 23 degrees C.

The capital of New Zealand is Wellington, but the largest and most cosmopolitan city is Auckland. Wellington, a busy seaport and rail terminus, is located on the southern end of North Island. Auckland is located in the middle of North Island. North Island contains most of New Zealand's 4 nearly million population, most of who live in urban areas. Three quarters of the population are of European origin, about 15% are Maoris; the remainder are Asians and pacific islanders. Generally, the culture is English, with great emphasis given to the Maori culture. Although there is a peaceful coexistence, the same kind of inter-racial tensions that characterize Australia and Canada lurk beneath the surface here. The system of government is patterned after the UK. Its socio/political environment is similar to that of Canada, with two major political parties and many socialized institutions. New Zealand is a trading nation. The economy is mostly industrial, although there are over ten times as many sheep as there are people. However, the principal exports are agricultural.

Kiwis enjoy the outdoor life. Marinas and boats, mostly sail, abound. We are in Gulf Harbour Marina, which is on the northern outskirts of Auckland. It has nearly every service one could want.

Gannets, sea birds with about six foot wingspan, sometimes come into the marina and dive from great heights and at incredible speed to catch fish. They must hit the water at about 100 KM/h! Near here there is a gannet colony that we visited. That was a spectacular, if somewhat smelly, trip.

Our friends Darius and Mary from Canada came for a visit. We rented a motor home together, of which there are thousands in New Zealand. Over about three weeks we saw a lot of the southern portion of North Island and the northern portion of South Island. Even though it is a small country, one would have to work diligently at it for months, or maybe years, to see everything. We would highly recommend NZ to anyone looking for a place to vacation.

We are very lucky to have friends here, Mike and Annie, who have a car. Together we have seen a lot of the sights in and around Auckland. Mike is a Kiwi, and enjoys showing off his wonderful country. We won't go on about all the detail, as it would already fill pages.

So, that's it from us, one of our briefest reports! We are now in Canada where we spent Christmas with Maurice's family in Alberta and are now in Ottawa to visit our kids and friends. After over a decade in the tropics the cold weather has been near torture, but it is worth it to see everyone!

We will resume our reports when we leave New Zealand.

Best to all and Happy New Year,

Maurice & Louise-Ann

AKAMA Report – New Zealand (2)

In a brief note after Christmas/NY, we advised that AKAMA was out of the water for the first time in three years. Well, we splashed back in with a lot of work done. Most of this report concerns that, and we apologize to our non-boatie readers if we make your eyes glaze over!

Anyway, before we get to that, here is an update on what we are doing. After we returned the motor home (Report 33) we found ourselves craving wheels. So, we hired a car. For anyone coming here, we can tell you where to get a rental car for about half the price of the rental companies. Mostly, we've just been "living", as if we were in a house. Days are filled with trips to boat parts places, the supermarkets and so on. We have gone out only once in AKAMA, to a big bay near here. For leisure we sometimes go for little excursions, usually with our friends from S/Y TOUCH OF CLASS.

When Maurice was diagnosed with cancer of the palate, we started making lots of trips to doctor's offices, clinics and so on.

Anyway, on to the repairs and upgrades on AKAMA. First, if anyone comes to NZ, be advised that there are no longer any bargains here and the service has deteriorated. After the huge demand for services during America's Cup, the Kiwis moved their prices up, way up. Also, their dollar is now very strong. Finally, there is virtually no unemployment here. Taken together, this means that everything we got done was expensive, behind schedule, and in many cases hastily done. Fortunately, we were around nearly every day to supervise, otherwise we might have got substandard work and not known it.

AKAMA now has the latest high-tech antifouling paint, International Micron 66. This is touted as a breakthrough and it better be, as it costs way more than conventional antifouling. She also has SpeedProp applied to all underwater running gear, including the thruster props. The claim is that the barnacles will not grow on this stuff, and it improves boat performance. We did a sea trial recently and so far at least the claims seem to be true. AKAMA is running faster at lower engine speed than ever before.

We did extensive refitting to the running gear, including a new propeller shaft, cutless bearing, dripless shaft seal and rudder bearings. The original shaft, which was supposed to be Aquamet-17 was badly corroded (so we think the builder pulled a fast one on Krogen). It has been replaced with a higher grade of stainless. While we were at it, we changed the shaft half coupling to a tapered one (so the new main shaft is tapered at both ends). This should provide better alignment and it should not come loose like the old one did. We added an R&D flexible coupling between the transmission half coupling and the shaft half coupling; this is supposed to reduce vibration and allow slight flexing of the engine to shaft alignment. We changed out the cutless bearing and the PSS dripless seal on general principles; both had some life left in them but since we were changing out everything else, what's another couple of "boat

units” (1 Boat unit = \$1000)! Finally, we had to have some minor damage on the prop repaired, so we treated it to a laser balancing job. We were astounded to find out that the pitch is 23”, rather than the 22” stamped on the hub! Anyway, all this works very nicely together.

We discovered during the work on the drive train that the top bearing and seal on the rudder were shot and the steering ram mount was a bit sloppy. We thought that this would cost us a bundle, but luckily the new bearing and seal could be installed without removing the rudder.

We have a product recommendation that should be of interest to everyone. We had some leaks around our portlights. Taking them out and reseating them would have cost about a boat unit each and we have ten of them...yikes! We discovered that Captain Tolley’s Creeping Crack Cure does the trick. This stuff looks like really thin carpenter’s glue. To use it, put the nozzle on the crack and squeeze slowly. The sealant is drawn deep into the crack by capillary action. There it sets up in about an hour. We had to apply it up to six times over a two-day period in some cases. Eventually, it fills the crack. While it is runny when fresh, once it sets up it is the stickiest stuff we ever worked with; nothing would take it off Maurice’s fingers.

We had a few rotten areas on the boat, due to rain getting in where it shouldn’t have. We had the pilothouse doors rebuilt, the floor in the starboard head replaced and the windlass pad rebuilt. She’s now better than new in this department. While we had the windlass off, we had it rebuilt; after 13 years of nearly zero maintenance it was certainly past due. It only needed new motor bearings and a bit of a clean-up. We recommend Maxwell winches to anyone looking for a new winch.

In the galley we removed the trash compactor, which was really a nice piece of gear, but only used once or twice a year. In the space we put a slide out trash bin and two shelves. We use the shelves as an appliance garage; they are far more useful than the compactor.

The pilothouse now sports a new fish finder and new varnish here and there. While we had the varnish pot out, we re-varnished the back doors, which were way overdue. On the side cap rails we stripped off the varnish and applied Cetol Natural, as it is too hard to get at these when cruising. The Cetol is supposed to last longer and be easier to maintain. We’ll see. It is not as nice looking as varnish, being slightly opaque like fence stain than clear like varnish.

The generator set has a new exhaust manifold and heat exchanger. While we were at this, we un-jury-rigged all the jury-rigging that we did in Madang PNG. So it is now back to stock condition. We hope our trials and tribulations with the generator are over, but somehow we doubt it.

We changed the carpet in the pilothouse, which was really getting ratty, to a nice new blue one that matches our upholstery very well. We had enough material to add carpeting in our stateroom, very luxurious! We resisted putting it elsewhere, though, as it does tend to catch dirt and salt water drips and it impedes access to hatches.

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First and foremost, many thanks go out to all who sent us personal emails over the past year or so. It has been a bad year for us; as most of you know, Maurice was diagnosed with cancer of the palate. Three operations later, he now has a hole where a good part of the roof of his mouth used to be. To block it, he has to wear a prosthesis called an obtuator; this allows him to speak and eat reasonably well. For any of you who are considering visiting New Zealand, we can attest that the medical service

here is first rate. They have both a public and a private system. Foreigners can use either, but have to pay.

So, much poorer for the cost of Maurice's operations, we are now resuming our travels. Hopefully we will have much to report in the coming months. Tomorrow, 16 May, we begin our passage to Australia, about a 1200 mile trip, which will take seven or eight days. We had planned to leave earlier, but the weather would not co-operate. Aboard for the first time we have crew, Corey (Louise-Ann's brother) and Jan (a Kiwi that was recommended by one of the operations chaps at Gulf Harbour Marina).

We did not get much company this year; it is so far out of the way. But, in addition to our friends Mary and Darius, who came last year, Kyle, our son visited for a few weeks recently. He reports that the diving around the Poor Knights Islands was good.

Anyone coming here and wanting to hire a car would be well advised to seek out Ken King Auto in Whangaparaoa, a suburb in the extreme north of Auckland. He has by far the best deal going for rental by the month. We were also impressed with Gateway Motor Homes, not the biggest, but good personal service. For those coming by boat, Gulf Harbour Marina is one of the friendliest, despite its large size.

As we said in our last report, we hired a motor home and toured around for three weeks. One would think that such a small country could be thus visited in its entirety; not so. To really do it justice, one would need several months, and even then much would be missed. One of the neat things about NZ is that in a day's travel you can pass through several climactic zones and even drive from one side of the country to the other. We can provide a list of attractions if anyone is interested. We liked the Rotorua area, with its touristy but interesting Maori village and geothermal activity. Traversing the country through the mountains, via Arthur's Pass, was also interesting. For those that like seafood, The Mussleboys restaurant, on the way to Nelson is a must, as is fish and chips at the Manganui Fish Shop. Visiting a gannet colony is also a must; pick a day when the breeze is off shore to blow any smells away from you! We drove up to Cape Reinga, the northernmost point of North Island; there was a gale blowing and it was spectacular.

We have been cruising around the Hauraki Gulf, which is where Auckland is located. We travelled up the Waiwera River, just north of the Whangaparaoa Peninsula, until we ran out of water. Then in the dinghy went the rest of the way up the river to Warkworth. It's a nice little town to walk around, and we enjoyed an ice cream cone while sitting on the banks of the river. The best islands so far have been Great Barrier, Kawau and Waiheke, where there are numerous anchorages, each different and each quite pretty. For those who like nature walks, there is another island, Tiritiri, which is a wildlife sanctuary. The best way to get there is by passenger ferry. Speaking of walks, NZ is covered with hundreds, maybe thousand of well marked walking trails. Being couch potatoes, we've stick to the more benign ones.

Aboard AKAMA, we continue to make improvements. The latest is a new autopilot. It has more "grunt" than the old one and should keep us on course better. Also, it speaks the same electronic language as our computer and GPS, allowing us to program routes into the GPS or the computer and have the autopilot follow them automatically.

We enjoyed New Zealand immensely, despite Maurice's medical problems. The adventure now continues in Australia!

Cheers!

