

**Kia Ora! Aotearoa,
'Land of the Long White Cloud'.**

Kia ora is a Maori language greeting and literally means "be well/healthy" and is translated as an informal "hi". I travelled to New Zealand, as my sister, Natasha, and my nephew, Jack, are living in Auckland. It was only a two-week stay – a long way to go armed with a list of 'must do's' – so a return visit is definitely in my plans.

The "City of Sails" was placed 4th equal (with Vancouver) in Mercer's Quality of Living Survey – which compares 215 cities worldwide – and first among those in the Asia Pacific Region. Its two harbours, a gulf full of islands and glorious beaches make it a maritime playground, while its numerous shopping centres, cafés, restaurants, bars, galleries, museums, and parks provide 21st century big-city experience. For a visual overview of the City, go up one of its 49 volcanic cones, such as Mount Eden or One Tree Hill, or catch the high-speed lift up the 328m tall SkyTower which rises about SkyCity in the central city. Auckland's most photographed volcano is Rangitoto, an Island just off Auckland. Ferries link the City with other islands in the gulf such as Waiheke with its beaches and vineyards; and Kawau and Tiritiri Matangi, an open bird sanctuary. Auckland's twin harbours and gulf are a focal point for this 'City of Sails' – a passion for boats and sailing is reflected in marinas like the 1,400 berth Westhaven, one of the largest marinas in the Southern Hemisphere.

A few of my highlights are as follows:-

Rotorua – Zorbing

Rotorua is the place that smells like rotten eggs! Home to an iconic New Zealand brand, it is the tourism and adventure hub of New Zealand, hosting an incredibly unique adventure activity. ZORB® Rotorua is the first official ZORB® site and has been running for over fourteen (14) years. Zorbing, or ZORB® Globe Riding (the sport of rolling down a hill in a large inflatable globe), often takes the number 1 spot of activities to do whilst in New Zealand so it had to be at the top of my "must do" list. There are two types of rides; depending on whether you want to get wet or not:-
The ZYDRO ride is the wildest, wettest ride. They throw you, and up to two friends, and water (warm water in winter, and cold in summer!!!) inside the ZORB® globe and send you on your way down the hill. When inside the ZORB® globe, you - the ZORBONAUT – are free to slip, slide, and spin inside the globe for an action packed, wet ride down the hill. It's a wash for the unclean, a bonding experience for friends, a massage for the aching, and a cure for the hangover. It will leave you refreshed, exhilarated, and ready for your next ZORB® experience (or let the crowd watch you scream and laugh your way down the hill).

Nicky does New Zealand



The ZORBIT ride, on the other hand, is a head over heels adrenaline rush. Strapped into the ZORB® globe in a specially designed safety harness, you are sent on your way down the hill rolling head over heels, heels over head as the ground and sky go whizzing past in a beautiful mosaic of blue... green ... blue ... green ... blu ... gree ... blu ... gre...bl. ..gr...b...g...bgbgbg...while your body is subjected to the soft and relaxing feeling of weightlessness and g-force. Funny enough, that's not what my sister said at the bottom of the ride, as all she could apparently hear were my screams!!!! It just made me want to go back for more and more and more!



Rotorua – Polynesian Spa

The Polynesian Spa overlooks Lake Rotorua where you can relax in public or private hot mineral spring pools and also indulge in various spa therapies – definitely on the list AFTER the exhilaration of Zorbing to relax and chill. Definitely one for the girls!