

Last leg towards Auckland

tomtom, le 17 décembre 2011 à 00:05

Of course we were sad to leave the Bay of Islands and all the very nice people we met during our stay in Opuia, Russel and Pahia, but we had to move South if we really wanted to start looking for a job. As we have already written it, we do not really like big towns, but in order to find two jobs at the same place it is easier to be where potential employers are ...

The cruising along the East coast was lovely: nice coastline, rocks, hills, cliffs, beautiful bays ... We planned to sail to Great Barrier Island but decided that it was not reasonable. As we needed to drop Agnès (my sister) somewhere between Whangarei and Auckland and meet my mother who arrived in Auckland a few days after, we would have only spent 2 or 3 days on this island which deserves much more time! We then decided to enjoy small walks around Tutukaka harbour, to stop in Whangarei (beautiful Urquharts Bay) and then to head to Kawau Island, from where Agnès could take a ferry to go back to her kiwi family's lodge in Warkworth ...



Urquharts Bay, at the mouth of Whangarei River

We spent 3 days in Kawau, and we had the pleasure to meet **Lin and Larry** who were just coming back from the US where they have presented their new book. They were very nice to welcome us just the day after they came back home ... it is great to discuss with sailors like

them, who have spent so much time at sea in every possible condition, at a time where GPS and electronic charts did not exist! We also met John and Kim, who run the **Emerald Lodge** on the opposite side of the bay: as we saw the small ferry stopping on their pier, we thought it was a public one (we did not know yet that such things did not really exist in North Cove) and landed here ... to help John unload the groceries brought by the ferry! When we came back 3 weeks later, we really enjoyed meeting the other inhabitants of this small island which tries to make itself forgotten from the bureaucracy ...

Being expected in Auckland, we had to leave, promising to come back a few weeks later. With a strong NW flow that hit us just after the Whangaparaoa peninsula from where we could see the Sky Tower, the arrival in the City of Sails was a little rough ... so was the landing in the marina berth with 30 kts of side wind ... Here is Schnaps' new home: Bayswater marina, face to Auckland.



Arrival in Auckland: an old America's Cup boat and the Sky Tower

Not in the town but not so far from it (only 10 minutes by ferry), real bathrooms to take showers, cheap wireless internet, a berth not far away from the pontoon entrance so that we don't have to run a marathon each time we need to go to the toilets, a car park, and reasonable prices ... fair enough, even if it is a little exposed! This marina became our headquarters for the following weeks, which were filled by our families visits (first Thomas' mother, then Claire's parents), job applications and the search of a car.

Yes, a car, which will enable us to explore the beautiful countryside of New Zealand (this is our first big island since Europe, excluding Panama) and go to job interviews even far away from downtown Auckland! In NZ, it is really easy to find an old cheap car. But we wanted something special: first we wanted an economic car to run (and therefore a diesel, we made the comparative study, even with the Road User Charge it is cheaper to have a diesel car as soon as you drive more than 9000 km a year), and a rather big one so that we could sleep at the rear. A big diesel station-wagon as the Citroën Xantia we still own in France would have been perfect, but it is virtually impossible to find this kind of car in New Zealand. If owners of such cars exist, they are not crazy and they keep them! Finally, we almost found what we wanted: old, cheap, reliable, very economic, big enough but not too big to remain light... a 21-year old Citroën BX!!! An old Citroën in NZ, are we crazy ? Not that much: the engine is one of the best and most reliable diesel engines in the world (it is exactly the same as the one fitted in Schnaps), the parts are not that expensive (compared with their price in France), and the BX is one of the most reliable and comfortable cars of its generation. The old small Toyota or Nissan diesel cannot really be compared with the XUD engine in terms of fuel economy (5.5 L / 100 km in town for a big saloon!!) reliability and ease of repair ... and as it is the 5th engine like that in the family, I know it almost perfectly! We got the car for 550\$, had a new headgasket fitted (together with a 2nd hand cylinder-head, as the previous one was cracked, this was the only bad surprise), and here we are: we can now proudly drive a collection car, and everyone stares at us and is jealous not to be behind the driving wheel of our spaceship!!



Our "new" Biwik's

So, now, Human Resource Managers of all New Zealand, we can come and see you. We are sure that you have always dreamt of having a collection car parked in front of your company building. This is THE opportunity you will never get again!!!

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