

Traveling the world

Thailand – New Zealand – Thailand

15.01. – 28.03.2024 – Iris from SERVAS Austria

Introduction and destination

Hello, I'm Iris E., 35 years old, I grew up in Upper Austria and have been living in Vienna for 10 years. I have already tried out different professions - finally studied information technology and telecommunications and have been working in the IT sector since 2019.

Due to a job change, I had the opportunity to take some time off and travel for longer. The first question I asked myself was where! Where don't you normally travel to because it's too far away? The first country that came to mind was Australia. A look at the map made me realize that New Zealand was just around the corner and that it would be a shame not to travel there too if I was already "nearby". After a bit of calculating, I realized that my budget would be enough for about 2 months if I wanted to spend one of them in an "expensive" country. During my research on New Zealand and Australia, however, I realized that 2 weeks was far too little for each country and I decided on New Zealand as my destination. On the way to and back from New Zealand, I spent 2 weeks snorkeling in Thailand.

In New Zealand I had the chance to meet and make friends with 9 SERVAS hosts. It was a pleasure to meet all these great people and to be able to share a bit of their lives and experience the everyday life of New Zealanders. Unfortunately, there were no SERVAS hosts nearby in Thailand.

Itinerary



I landed in Auckland and initially traveled by public transport. With stops along the way, my journey took me along the west coast of the North Island with stops in Hamilton, Morrinsville, Opotere, New Plymouth and Wellington. From the south of the North Island, I now headed to the south of the South Island with a flight from Wellington to Queenstown. I rented a car in Queenstown and began my journey through this beautiful country. I first spent a few days in

Te Anau. From there I made trips to Milford and Doubtful Sound and visited a glowworm cave for the first time. I then drove to the east coast of the South Island - Nugget Point. I was very lucky there and saw two yellow-eyed penguins. From there I headed north with stops in Dunedin, Oamaru, Timaru, Kaikoura, Nelson and Havelock. Without a car but by ferry, I traveled from Picton to Wellington, where I rented a car again. The rest of the journey took me inland towards the north. My first stop here was the bird sanctuary on Mount Bruce, after which I headed for Taupo. On the way to Auckland, I visited Hobbiton, Rotorua and Katikati.

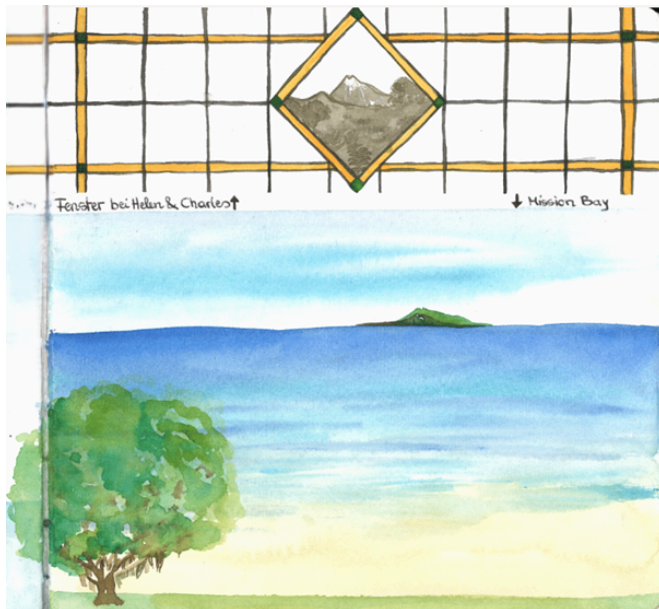


SERVAS Hosts

8 of the 9 SERVAS hosts were on the North Island of New Zealand. I had planned to visit an additional 3 SERVAS hosts on the South Island. However, I unfortunately fell ill during the trip, which is why I decided, in consultation with two hosts, to recover from my cold in a motel instead. I received a cancellation from one couple at short notice because something came up.

Helen & Charles – Auckland

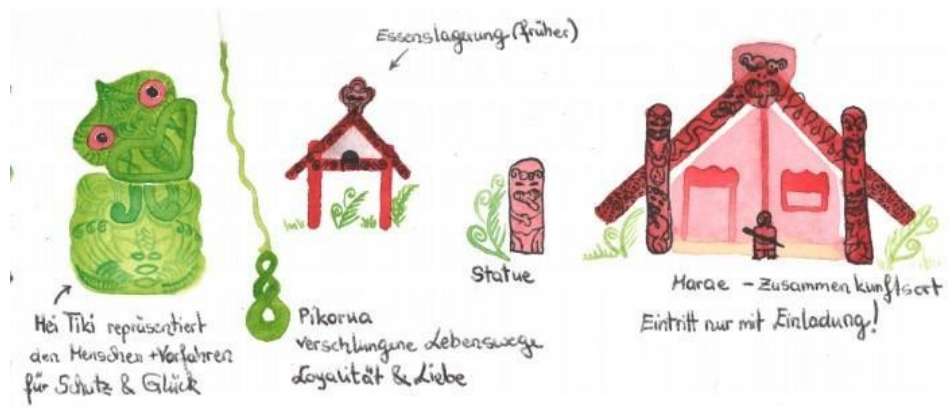
A very open and committed couple. Helen cooks a lot and is very tasty. An Asian exchange student was also staying with them at the time. Great travel tips from them and therefore the perfect start to my adventure. Host in New Plymouth recommended by them. Waiheke Island with art and very beautiful scenery.



Belinda – Hamilton

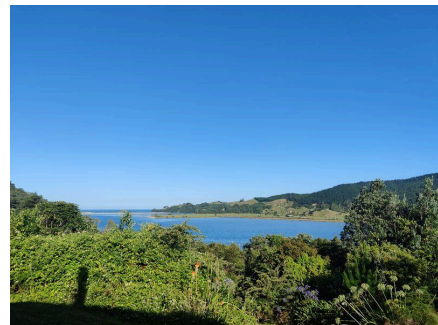
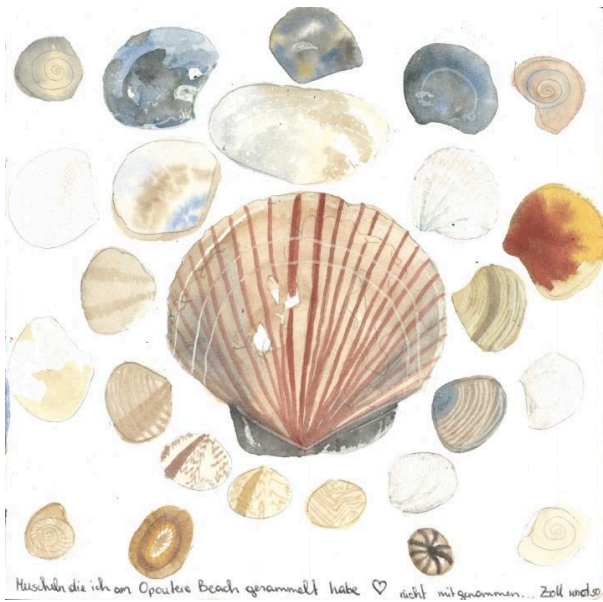
Farmers market, chatting about movies, traveling and the world, walking together and visiting the grounds of the Maori King, Hamilton Gardens was beautiful and huge.





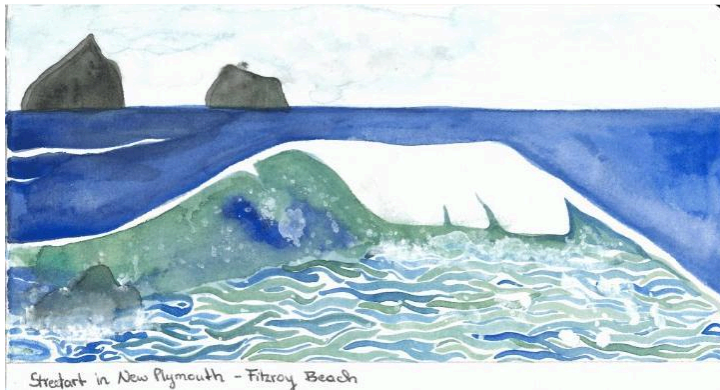
Chris – Morrinsville

beautiful beach and landscape - Getting to know the life as a farmer in NZ, New Zealand movies, relaxing, painting on the beach



Marilyn - New Plymouth

Beautiful park visited, gallery visit



Dorothy – Dunedin

Delicious food, the city of Dunedin and albatrosses

Dorothy lives in a beautiful house where you can still feel the attention to detail of her late husband Eli. I enjoyed listening to the stories about Eli and Servas.

Eli and a Servas
Traveler- Haircut on the
beach



16-18.02.24 Dunedin - Dorothy

Wie ausgemacht kam ich kurz vor 17 Uhr bei Dorothy an. Sie wohnt in einem entzückenden Haus, das von ihrem verstorbenen Mann mit Kreativität & Liebe hergerichtet ist. Sie erzählt viel von ihm, Eli, was mir gefällt. Er war Teil der Zigeuner bei Servas & durch ihn wurde sie auch Mitglied. Highlights im Haus finde ich sind die Fensterscheiben die er an 2 Stellen hinzugefügt hat, das Aquarium zwischen Wohn- & Schlafzimmer, da das in der Küche ab sich in beide Richtungen ziehen lassen (Küchenseite & Wohnzimmersseite), das verdeckte Klempapier,..... Dorothy und ich haben und sie bereitet leckeres Essen zu ♡ Am Samstag fühlte ich mich nicht so fit & bliebe mal zum Bett - am Nachmittag fahre ich mit Dorothy zum Albatross Zentrum und wir machen eine Tour mit, wir sehen einige Brutpaare, die Klicken sind schon geschlüpft. Dorothy meint vor allem im Flug sind sie beeindruckend, das haben wir leider nicht gesehen. In der Nacht bekomme ich mehr Husten und Schnupfen. Sonntag früh fahre ich weiter, jedoch nicht soweit wie ursprünglich geplant, sondern nur nach Oamaru.



Geoffrey – Taupo

Glass blowing, the most beautiful view I have ever seen while washing up, rapids, firefly walk on our own property with SERVAS guests from Prague who were visiting at the same time



2-4.3.24 - Taupo - Geoffrey
 Das erste Mal wie ich bei seiner Einfahrt vorbeifahren, sie liegt nicht wirklich versteckt aber nach einer Kurve und können Einfahrten neben einander, was selbst mit der niedrigen war ich mir nicht sicher, ob ich hier richtig war. Wie abgemacht tauchte ich um ca. 18 Uhr auf, ich wählte einen Weg (Pfad) so ich hoffe am Ende eine Haustüre zu finden und siehe da - gleich der Fiste war richtig. Geoffrey & ein weiterer Servas Reisender waren gerade beim Kochen. Das Servas Paar aus Prag war schon in Wellington vor meiner Ankunft bei den gleichen Servas Hosts und reisten an dem Tag ab, an dem ich ankam. Geoffreys Zuhause ist sehr schön und hat einen Atemberaubenden Ausblick über Lake Taupo - ich genoss glücklicherweise am ersten Tag die Aussicht denn an den folgenden Tagen war es leider meist bewölkt. Nach dem Abendessen vor dem Desert gab (von Geoffrey & Yui gemacht) Geoffrey eine Tour durch den Bush zu Glühwürmchen - keine Höhle - aber im Hang, in der Erde, in Baumstämmen.....

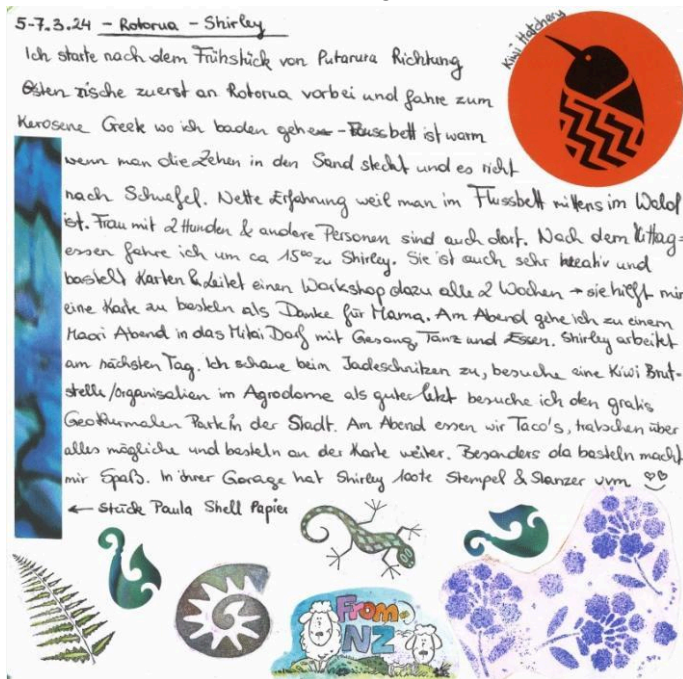


An den in der Früh aber wir alle gemeinsam Frühstück. Das Servas Paar aus CZ reiste weiter, ein kurzes Stück waren wir in der Früh auf der selben Route, nämlich auf Ararat von Geoffrey zu den Arakata Rapids. Hier wird bei einem Damm zweistündlich Wasser abgelassen und ein sonst fast trockenes Flussbett wird zum tossenden Fluss ein beeindruckendes Schauspiel, dass ich mir gleich anschauete - um 10 & 12 Uhr. Dazwischen und danach besuchte ich die Glasswerkstätte Lava Glass. Schöne Stücke und die Möglichkeit live bei der Entstehung dieser zuzuschauen hatten mich in Bann - auch das Mittagessen dort war vorzüglich. Panda In einem Bienen/Hong Shop war ich auch, hat mir nicht so gefallen. Bei Geoffrey zurück zeigt er mir Garten, Hühner, sein Tiny Hase das er vermietet um. Am 4ten in der Früh mache ich mich auf den Weg nach Daitomo - Atarui Cave & am Abend nach Hobbiton.



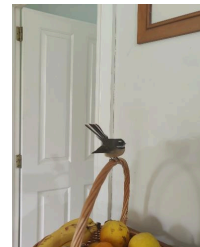
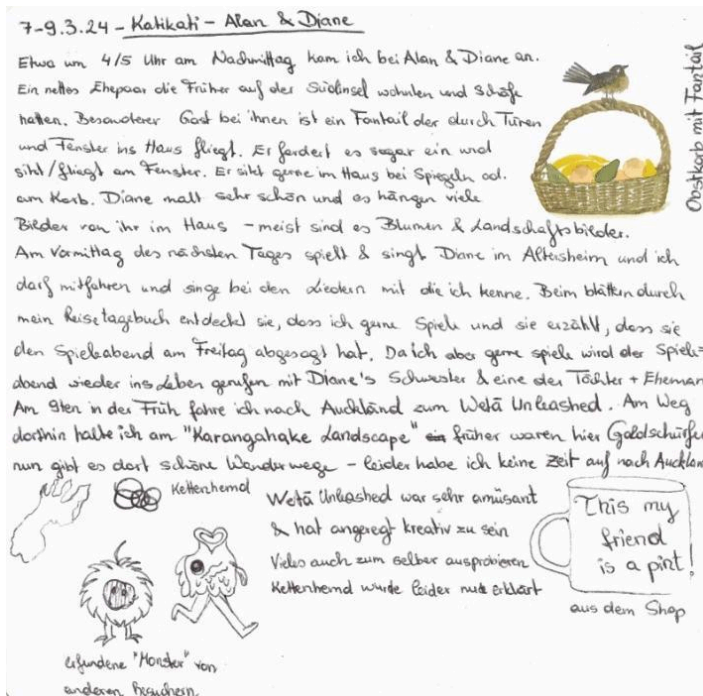
Shirley – Rotoroua

Great shared passion: crafting - waterfall card - self made with the help of Shirley



Alan & Diane – Katikati

Games evening with their daughter and a good friend, singing in the retirement home (Diane plays the piano)



Helen – Auckland

Sharing travel experiences from NZ and tips for Austria as Helen is planning a visit.



9-10.3.24 - Auckland - Helen

Leider hatte ich nur eine Nacht zeit bevor mein Flug nach Thailand abhob. Wir plauderten eher ernste Themen. Aber auch Tips für Helen's Reisepläne nach Österreich besprachen wir. Am nächsten Morgen Frühstückten wir gemeinsam und ich packte meine Koffer. Auf Helen's Tip hin machte ich mich auf den Weg zu einem Strand in der Nähe und spazierte etwas & genoss das Meer /Landschaft. Um ca 17 Uhr gab ich das Auto am Flughafen zurück.

Of course, the descriptions are only a small excerpt of what I experienced and enjoyed in New Zealand. I painted the pictures myself. I took an online watercolor course about 3 years ago and last year I started making travel journals in which I also paint. I can only encourage everyone to do this - no matter how good you are at drawing/painting, it will always be something very special.

How were the Servas visits in general?

Since I traveled alone, the exchange and conversations were very good for me. Traveling alone is great and has many advantages. I generally got to know lots of new people. Whether on a boat trip, on a hike or sightseeing - you get to gossip. However, these are usually only very brief acquaintances with whom you don't exchange contact information or anything like that. So it was all the nicer to have a longer exchange with the SERVAS hosts and perhaps do something together. The travel tips from the hosts were particularly valuable - whether in the region or on my route - the tips were worth their weight in gold!

What would I do differently next time?

No question - I enjoyed the trip and had a great time. What I underestimated, however, was sleeping in a "new" bed at least every other night. You wouldn't believe it, but it gets pretty tiring after a while. One of the consequences of this realization is that I wouldn't travel such a long distance next time - at least not in the same amount of time. Especially towards the end of my stay in New Zealand, I would have liked to stay longer in one place to explore the areas even more and relax. On my next stay in New Zealand, I will choose a smaller region and maybe even walk a part of a long-distance hiking trail, of which there are several in New Zealand.

Thanks to all the SERVAS hosts who took me in and let me share a bit of their everyday life. Hope to see you soon! Best regards Iris