

AB EXPLORER TOURS

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Bulletin - May 2017:

Time for another edition. Where has the first half of the year gone I have to ask. Things have only slowed down in the last week with the conclusion of a full on and interesting season for sure. My time as usual has been taken up with Cruise Ship Trips in Dunedin with around 80 days between October and early April. Around 8 days were lost as the ships did not come in due to the weather conditions which is all very disappointing for the passengers on board. Many come from Australia just to see Fiordland and Dunedin. With Dunedin Railways I also managed 2 Silver Fern Rail Car Tours with one going from Invercargill to Greymouth, Westport and back to Christchurch for the Sunday Star Times readers and the other from Christchurch to Invercargill and return. This latter one had people from Australia, the North Island as well as Canterbury. The day those folk were on Stewart Island we ran a trip from Invercargill to Gore and during the stop over in the town we ran another to Maitua and back both of which proved very popular and the full trips were a surprise to us and will probably be repeated another time.

During March and April we undertook 2 Canterbury Valley Explorer Tours and both were full with enthusiastic people coming from around the south and up as far as Oamaru. Both saw indifferent weather with the second not making it to Erewhon Station due to a creek ford washout. It is amazing country and an experience to see these mighty farms and the stock in good condition. We were lucky too, that we were able to access Mt John where the observatory is located at Tekapo. The stunning views from there out to the Southern Alps and the McKenzie Basin are impressive for sure. Both trips coming home operated down the Waitaki Valley which is not seen very often for those people residing in the south. This trip will be repeated in the autumn next year and detail will be in the November edition but if you want to be included let us know now to secure a place.

Currently last minute detail is being put into place for a Darwin, Kakadu Northern Territory Explorer with departure on 7th June. This will in all likelihood be the last

one for us to the Top End but you never know if people express further interest in that area we may do another before retiring. That returns on 22nd June then 3 days later Pat and I are going to Perth then north to Shark Bay before returning to Perth to meet friends with whom we then set off to Margaret River, and across Nullabor Plain to Adelaide with camper vans, which is a whole new experience for us. From there Pat and I will go to Sydney to catch up with Annabella (some of you have met her when she did my Aussie tour arranging) and her family prior to coming home in early August.

Norfolk Island continues to struggle and now with Air New Zealand pulling out of the service from Auckland to Norfolk people are now required to transit via Sydney or Brisbane which adds more time and cost just to reach there. I was well into the planning for one in the Spring but have pulled the pin as it is just not workable currently. There is a new Airline starting up about now with flights between Auckland and Norfolk but as it is has not been proved to be there for the long term yet I and other operators consider it too risky to book onto that currently. I am therefore planning to offer this in the Spring next year when services will have settled down some what.

Explorer Tours 2017-18:

First up this coming season is **The Top of the South Explorer**. The Itinerary has had to be changed due to the Kaikoura events so obviously that section has had to be dropped and the route will change so as we only have to travel the very congested Lewis Pass route once. We will overnight in Ashburton for the first and last nights. On to Hanmer Springs for 1 night then Motueka for 2. The usual half day cruise along the shores of Abel Tasman National Park will be included. Over the hill to Takaka for 4 nights which is our base for exploring this part of Nelson. You will experience Puppu Springs, with the day tour to Farewell Spit and the Lighthouse being a highlight for most. Stunning Totaranui Beach with its short walks both along the beach and into the bush. A full day to experience the Wanganui Inlet which is also known as Westhaven. This a stunning remote piece of country in North West Nelson and is seldom visited by many people. We did it on one of the trips last year and those people were really impressed with what they experienced out there.

Back over Takaka Hill to pass through Nelson and on to Havelock where we will stay for 3 nights. On one of the days here we will travel out past Pelorus Sound to French Pass to view Durville Island and other amazing sights from high up on the hills. If the tide is right the view and sound of the tide roaring through the Pass is amazing. The other day we will travel to Picton for part of the morning then on to Blenheim to take in the town and to spend time at the Omaka Aviation Aircraft Heritage centre with its WW1 & WW2 aircraft and other war themed exhibitions, by Sir Pater Jackson.

Next day we travel to the West Coast via Murchison, Reefton. Lake Brunner and Arthurs Pass back to Ashburton. We will go this way to avoid the congestion that

prevails on the alternative route currently between Picton and Christchurch.

I have itineraries available for this currently and it will operate between 10th & 22nd of September. With us not being available for most of June and July please do ring now for the full itinerary information. I will have limited communication while in Australia so it would be best and appreciated if you ring prior to 7th June for that detail. Good interest has been shown for this departure to date.

Another **Silver Fern Railcar tour** is being offered between the 25th and 30th September. It will leave from Dunedin to overnight in Ashburton, Greymouth and Christchurch. Included will be the option of travelling to Hokitika and the Tree Top Walk, Westport and Punakaiki Rocks as well as coach travel over stunning Arthurs Pass. These tours have proved to be very popular recently so if interested please make contact with me as soon as possible to have your name included for information and to make a booking. Some people have already advised me of their intention to join the tour but would you please reconfirm to ensure we have your name recorded.

Norfolk Island: As mentioned earlier there are issues with planning this departure. It is my intention to go up there later in the year to check things out as so much has changed since my last tour there that I feel I need to do that to ensure all will be well for another departure. Ideally it will be best to go in the spring or early summer 2018. Please make contact if interested.

Tasmania: In recent times people have asked me about another departure to the smallest state of Australia. I can offer that again if people show enough interest to do that and indications are that it may be quite well supported. Once again if interested please make contact.

North Island: This departure did not run this year due to time constraints and other factors. In hindsight I am quite relieved we did not go considering the very wet cyclonic weather experienced there during April and into May. We could consider a late autumn departure next year if enough people showed an interest!

Stay Put Explorer: Have had an enquiry about a break away for 4 or 5 days to experience another part of the South Island. Am thinking Twizel or Haast as a base. If interested or have an idea give me a call. We have done these in the past and they have proved to be popular.

That's our news at the moment and we trust you might consider one of our offerings. If making contact please appreciate the dates we will not be in Gore over the next few months. If you are travelling to other places in the world take care and enjoy that experience.

Pat & Allan

