

## **FEBRUARY 5 - NELSON - Windy**

We left Wellington last night, and traveled through Cook Strait. Towards morning we entered Tasman Bay where Nelson is located. Nelson is the oldest city in South New Zealand.

The conditions for docking this morning are not the best. We were fighting strong winds coming from the south and the seas were very choppy.

### **THREE TRIES DOES THE TRICK**

The Captain gave the approach a try but had to turn around and come back. They announced over the speaker that the conditions were not good for getting in the harbor but they would keep trying and hoping the winds will die down. They said there is a chance we might have to skip Nelson if they are not successful. A large yacht was waiting out in the bay also. The entry is very narrow and shallow and the harbor is quite small so the winds, the direction they are blowing could force us over into the jetty. The harbor pilot is waiting at the jetty entrance and two tugs inside. The Captain heads up into the area of the entry again but again, had to turn around. We waited again, hoping these morning winds would give us a break.

Once again the Captain heads up for the jetty and this time with what seemed more determination and was able to get into the narrow jetty and into the inner harbor. As we entered we could see why he was so cautious as he did not have much maneuverability. It's hard to believe you can get a cruise ship into this harbor.

The docking delay set the tour schedules back 2 1/2 hours. They announced that we should add 2 1/2 hours to the previously scheduled time to meet the buses.

We had signed up for an overview of the city highlights of Nelson which ended with a visit to a classic car museum. Why anyone would want to spend their time in a car museum when only having one day to see Nelson, and now less time because of the delay, is beyond me. We had no other option though. My only guess is that there must not have been enough to see in Nelson otherwise.

### **BUS RIDE FROM HELL**

As always the "usual suspects", the ones that make an absolute ass of themselves to get a seat right in the front of the bus, were lined up ready to go. We have a right to call them out as this was the third tour in a row where the same people did this. It doesn't matter if the seats are reserved for handicap either, if they can get away with taking them they do.

The day was starting out quite chaotic and I guess it's because of the docking delays. Too many buses and people leaving at the same time I guess? Our bus was missing so had to get one. Meanwhile we are standing around for about 45 minutes watching the chaos. Finally we get our bus and as we suspected the "usual suspects" ran to the bus to get on the bus first to get the best seats. We were early today so had no trouble getting up near the front this time and had a good window that didn't have a curtain blocking the view. People started piling in and then the 4 Chinese people with surgical masks sit all around us. Whenever someone wears a mask I wonder, are they sick or do they think others are sick? I have to say honestly it makes me feel very uncomfortable to be in the close quarters of this bus with people that may be sick. They speak no English so can't ask them.

The bus driver was a short round shaped Kiwi with a Tilly hat on. He was a jolly fellow and pleasantly mumbled away about this and that as we traveled down the road to the town center.



No one could really hear him clearly or see where he was pointing.

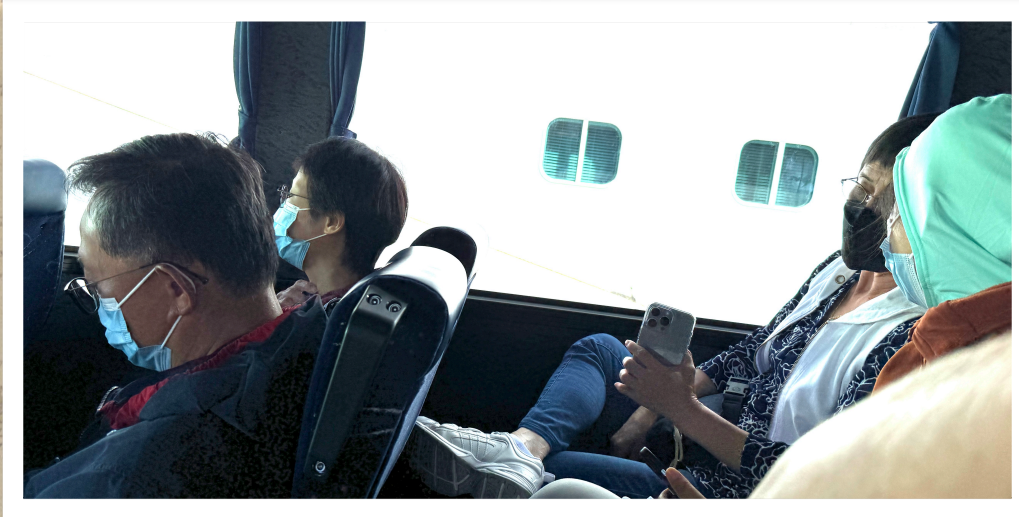
The “got-to- be-first” people were sitting prominently in the front seat with hands up taking videos of the road to town, including all the traffic stops. There were no buildings or scenery so it was puzzling. You couldn’t look out the front window without her hands with cell phones blocking your view. At that rate of video recording, she won’t have enough battery left for something really scenic as the day goes on. I don’t know, maybe she’s doing a study, on traffic lights and circles? LOL

Nelson looked like a sweet town, modern buildings mixed in with older wooden colonial style houses. A large black stone church anchors the hill that overlooks the town center and pedestrian street which seems to be the heartbeat of the city center. There are lots of outdoor cafes with umbrellas and people strolling and sitting on benches shaded by large trees. I thought to myself it would be great if the kiwi bus driver could drop us in this area on the way back to the ship. The town, we were told, had arranged for a shuttle bus to take passengers from the ship to this area and back for our convenience. So, if we could just be dropped there, we would have an easy way to get back to the ship.

Alas, and really too soon, we come to the Classic Car Museum which is located outside of town. They have certainly put a lot of money into this museum. It looks brand new and the architecture is modern and very up to date. The town must be proud as it is a very nice museum but again I ask, why are we spending time in New Zealand looking at classic cars?

The driver pulls into the parking lot and parks in one of the large designated bus slots. He tells us what time we should return to the bus. I think they allotted 1 1/2 hour to visit. Off we go in a mass.

As we gather inside the entrance, another bus of people comes in and unloads, and joins us. The guide meets us and we have to hear a long dissertation about the museum. He slowly moved us along past the gift shop and into the area where the cars were displayed and



began by telling us about each one. We managed to free ourselves from the group. We meandered around with the other non passenger ship visitors at our own pace.

I really didn't want to be in here, just wanted to be in that little town to get a feel for New Zealand life. We met up with John and Janice who were pretty much feeling the same way. He said his bus driver said the tour we had through town was just a quickie but the real destination was the car museum. They had the same idea as we did, as they asked him if he could just drop them off, those that wanted to, at the town center on the way back to the ship. There was

no good reason why they should take all of us way back to the ship when they were just going back right through the town. Their bus driver said "Sure. No problem." They said if we wanted we should come on their bus #5.

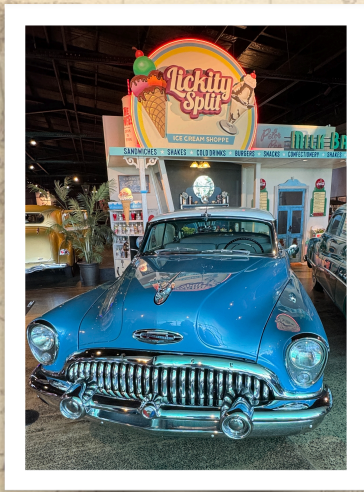
Okay, that sounds like a plan. Things were looking up. We went to the cafe to get a coffee. I have to say NZ has the best little cafe's with wonderful baked goods, pastries and breads. They are so creative and delicious.

As we sat there, more and more buses began to arrive from the ship. The amount of people arriving was overwhelming the little museum. I decided to go talk to our bus driver about dropping us off at the city center on the way back to the ship.

"OH NO, you can't do that!" I said "Why not? You are going right by there and bus #5 said they would." He said, "OH NO, you have to go back to the ship and then you can catch a shuttle back!" I argued, "What sense does that make to take us all the way back and then for us to then have to get another bus to take us right back?" No, he was insisting, "You have to go back, the shuttle will bring you back."

Bus #5 driver was standing there and looked like he got caught in a big lie and turned around and skedaddled away as fast as he could. I felt bad for him as I guess I exposed him and his great idea.

So, getting very disgruntled, we headed back to the bus at our designated time, and waited and waited and waited as people dribbled back to the bus like a slow leaky faucet. The bus driver was outside chit-chatting away with one of the passengers. What about the designated time to be on the bus I wondered? Time goes by, and no one else is getting on. The bus seems like it's full but the bus driver is still chit-chatting. He finally realizes comes in begins to count how many people are on the bus (and maybe checking to make sure some of his passengers didn't escape and head back to town on their own which I was wishing we had done). He says, there are still 4 passengers missing. So he waddles back across the parking



lot and amazingly, to me, finds them in the crowds of people and herds them back to the bus where they leisurely get back on the bus, in no hurry.

Finally he starts the engine up and slowly begins making his way out of the parking lot except that because he was there so long more buses have come in and there's no room to move. We can't get out until two other buses are loaded, he says, and move out of the way. I looked at the buses and there was only one or two people in them so they had a long way to go before they were loaded. That was it! Had my limit!

## **OUTTA HERE!**

That was the final straw for me. I got up and asked if this town had taxis? He said yes it does and I said good let us out! "You are not supposed to get out!" he insisted. I said, "Just let me out, I have not come all this way to see NZ and sit in this bus in this parking lot any longer." So he opened the door and out we went.

It wasn't long before a cab driver picked us up. What a relief. He dropped us off at the bottom of the steps to the large cathedral that is the landmark for the area and located at the top of the pedestrian area where shops and cafes and the museum are. He wished us a good time and that we enjoy New Zealand.

## **LITTLE TOWN OF NELSON**

We strolled around for a couple of hours and then found a nice outdoor cafe where we spent the rest of the afternoon having some cool drinks an appetizers and watching the people.

Today, we saw many of the crew who were out having some time off. They were taking a lot of selfies and enjoying themselves. They are a great bunch of people, very hardworking and enjoying their few hours off from all the long hours that they work.

We caught the shuttle bus back to the boat.

We had dinner that night in Le Restaurant on the ship with John and Janice and they too were frustrated with the way the day went. Their bus driver had reneged on dropping them off in town. I guess I spoiled that for them by bringing it up with our bus driver. They said it was a total waist of time having to go back to the ship and then come right back.

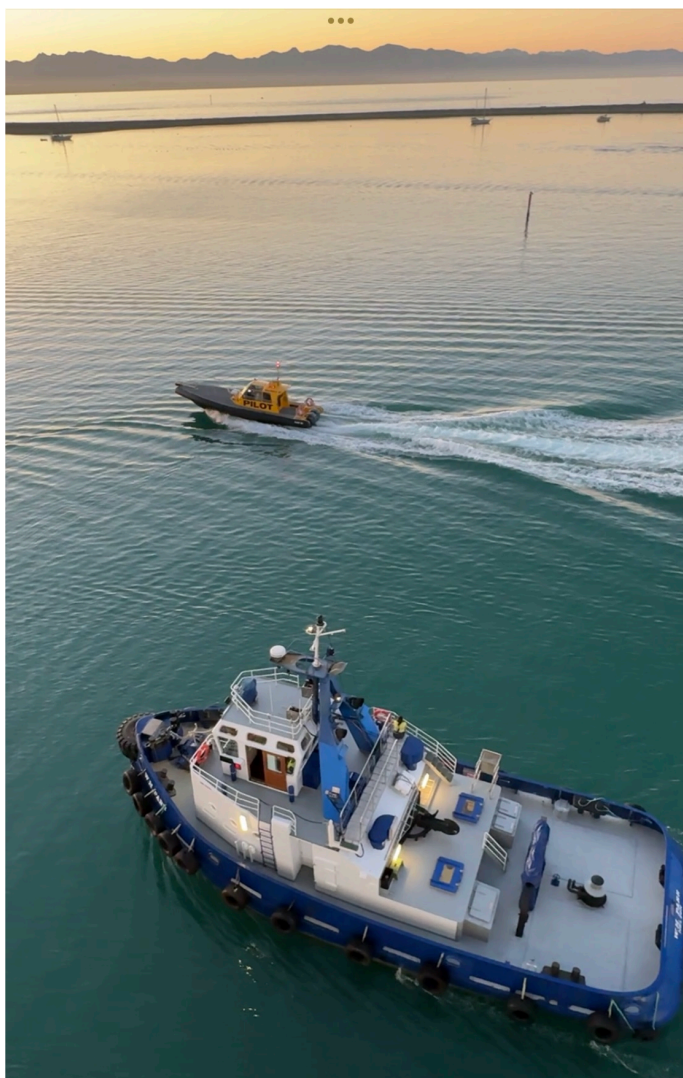
## **LEAVING THE HARBOR**

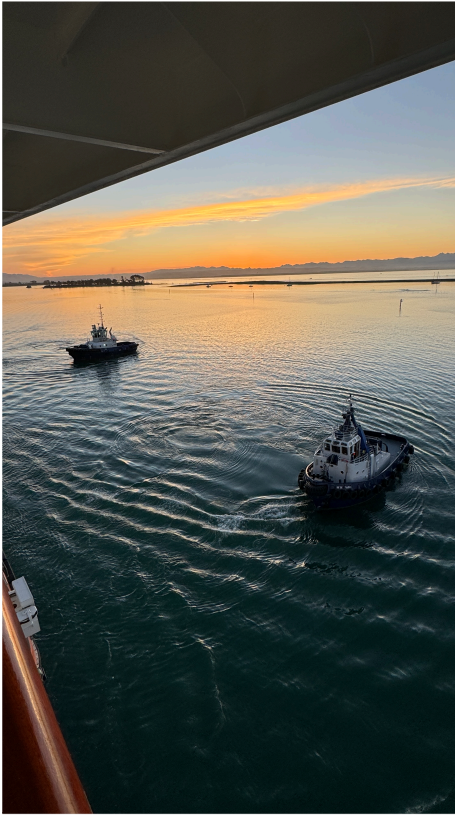
We left Nelson, about 8:00 PM, on schedule. The captain took it very slow coming out of the narrow harbor entrance. It was a beautiful evening as the sky turned orange and purple as the sun set. The water was flat calm. Two tugs worked to help us out, hovering about our starboard as the captain used the thrusters to push us off the dock. The captain backed down a bit into the harbor where sailboats were anchored and then made a careful turn and slowly moved forward towards the narrow manmade channel. He made his turn keeping the markers and the jetty on his right.

A fast pilot boat sped by and cut in front of the Captain to intercept a fishing boat entering the channel. The Harbor Master boat came out and stood post to keep two other small boats from getting in our way. It was a beautiful night and the tide was low so you could see the spit that shelters the small harbor.

The hillside was decorated with little white houses built on steep hillsides. Looks much like Wellington with the houses all built on the steep hillsides. We headed out into Tasman Bay and eventually it became dark and we were back into the motion of being at sea again.

Tonight we would say goodbye to New Zealand, not having seen much of it, but liking all we saw, except the insides of tour buses. That night in the early evening we passed our last bit of New Zealand appropriately called Cape Farewell. We head into the Tasman Sea which lies in the belt of the westerly winds, noted as the roaring forties. It is known for its storminess.





## **FEBRUARY 6 - 1ST DAY ON THE WAY TO SYDNEY - turn the clock back 1 hour**

The seas today had long deep swells but not choppy or severe winds. The temperatures are cooler so everyone is staying inside.

Today we had signed up for a Viking Cooking Class. Seafood was on the menu for the class. This time I talked Larry into coming. The size is limited to 12 and taught by the head chef on the ship, Ignacio. Fortunately today we did not have the woman that caused problems last time, so it was a pleasant time.

We learned how to make Calamari Risotto, fish and chips with hand-cut chips, wasabi crushed peas and a Indonesian take on tartar sauce, and finally Mahoe Yogurt Panna Cotta with pink pepper meringue and rose wine jelly. It was delicious and a fun time.



## **HOBART, TASMANIA DUE TO PILOT BOAT STRIKES**

During our class we were interrupted several times over the intercom as the crew was doing emergency drills and then again, during the dessert demonstration, the captain came on to announce we had to change our destination. We would not be going to Hobart, Tasmania due to pilot boat strikes. We instead are forced to divert to Sydney on the 9th for one day only and then the next day again back at sea to Rhyll, Phillips Island where we will anchor on the 11th to see the little penguins come back from sea. Then on the 12th we would anchor in Geelong, Victoria where we will meet us with Larry's nephew and wife. That follows another sea day as we head to Eden, New South Wales where we will dock and then back to Sydney on the 15th and finally back to our original schedule.

## **RUMBLINGS**

So there are unexpected itinerary changes that are expected. It could be weather or strikes and of course



the big unknown coming up as to whether we will cross through the Red Sea. These possibilities have brought up conversations and speculation throughout the ship. The couple sitting next to us at the cooking class said they may decide to fly everyone to London at some point. Some say they might get off voluntarily in Singapore. Others say if insurance backs the ship through the Red

Sea we will go there. The CEO for Viking said back in February they will make a decision by the time we reach Mumbai as to whether we will go through the Red Sea or head south around Africa. There are rumblings.

### **FEBRUARY 7 - Seas still fairly calm with long deep swells.**

Nothing on the agenda today. We slept in and ate breakfast at the sit down restaurant and then went up to the Explorer's lounge to read. Along the way we decided instead to go to one of the lectures about the Coral Sea. It was pretty interesting and will come back later at 4:30 to hear is talk on Captain Cook.

### **THE TRIVIA CULPRITS**

We went back up to the Explorer's lounge and were lucky to find empty seas and grabbed two. As usual the Trivia group began to come in. They slowly and sneakily confiscate your extra chairs with a polite and sheepish smile as they drag them to their trivia dens all the while concealing their plan to later stare daggers at you to pressure you to give up the rest of your seats and space. They are like spiders catching their prey and dragging them, the chairs, back to their dens, coming back again and again for more. We laugh at the way they do this everyday, hoarding their spots and chairs.

The ship had a chowder table set up today. They reminded me of vultures getting their soup bowls and taking them back to their areas of hoarded chairs and slurped away.

Days have been grey and misty for days now.



Took naps. Listened to another lecture, this time on Captain Cook.

**FEBRUARY 8 - Sea Day -**

Woke to rolling sea, white caps and nerve wracking storm chop.  
Overcast and gray but not cold. Looks like the north sea as I would imagine it. We go to the Explorer's lounge again to read. The crafters are here today. Some woman has an ear piece in that is so loud the whole room has to listen. Some talk show program.

Will arrive in Sydney tonight or rather, early morning, about 2:45 AM.

