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## Newsletter 04/07

Per Tandem um die Welt

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From Hokitika to Auckland

### Of Possum Pie and Sulphur

It is hard to believe but we are at Auckland Airport again and have to leave New Zealand after four months. Although that is a long time, we feel like we have just started cycling at the other end of the world. We haven't even traveled to any places on the small islands. On the one hand we feel a bit melancholic to leave, on the other hand the seasons have changed to autumn or even winter. Cycling and camping is not such fun anymore and we are longing for Hawaii's warm temperatures. With a broken heart Julia had to understand that she cannot take one of NZ's beloved sheep with her. Even our favorite meals are not allowed to travel with us.



Titbits

The taste of possum is surprisingly good. It reminds us of rabbit – the animals are a little bit alike, aren't they? Possum is a delicacy at the West Coast of the South Island in New Zealand. The possum on Stefan's plate is served as a pie, you could have the shanks roasted. Pete owns the tearoom, he was a fur trapper and serves, in addition to other specialties, his famous "possum pies". The possums are not native to New Zealand. The Paheka (white settlers) have brought the possums with them from Australia and soon they (the possums) turned into a real plague. Without any predators they quickly made themselves at home in New Zealand and helped a good part in the extinction of several flightless birds. They especially like the eggs of the helpless birds. Even the famous Kiwi would be an ancient relict found only in history books if it had not been

protected by the Department of Conservation. Possums are a big pest in New Zealand and many New Zealanders do their part in trying to hit as many with their cars on the road as they can. We see and smell the result of it every day. According to this, Pete has chosen his slogan: "You kill'em – we grill'em!"

If you cycle all day long, sleeping and especially eating are crucial to your well-being. At least to ours... From time to time it comes to a shocking brutalization of conventions. Julia: "I've gotta have a guzzle now!". Panic will strike, if we are not able to see the promised cafe after 40k of cycling or so. Feverishly we will look for an advertisement or another sign of a potential relief. If we do see the salvation (the café) on the horizon we do have to wait impatiently till we are close enough to see whether it is open or not. Will we starve to death or can we make it another time? If it is open you can here a blissful yell of two guys sitting on a big machine: "Open, yeeeaahh!" Our favorites are blueberry muffins, pancakes with bacon and banana. We have learnt that the topping of a real Kiwi Burger has to include beetroot and sometimes Avocado, even at McDonalds!. Our standard dinner is pasta of course, but if we are lucky enough to have a microwave, Kumara (sweet potato) is our first choice. Not really nice to look at, but they are really a highlight. We do not like the Kiwi pies too much, filo pastry with a slimy meat filling is only taken, if nothing else is available. Or if the filling contains rat.



#### Our Route back

4394 km and 32630 vertical meters: That is our result of cycling around in New Zealand. After spending Easter in a little hut at Hokitika beach we headed further north and cycled the remote West Coast up to the township of Westport thus experiencing the loveliest coast ride we ever did. From Westport we finally had to go inland again to get to Nelson and Picton. But we were stopped in Murchison by a bad case of the flu.



Rain had been pouring for hours – cats and dogs!. We had been pained by a headache and the Buller Gorge seemed to have no end. Autumn in New Zealand brings the first waves of flu with it and we got the first signs of it while cycling in that very lonesome region. And there were rolling strenuous hills, too. We did not talk much because of our sore throats. But since all was grey around us there was not much to see and talk about either. We would have loved to lie down in a cosy bed but we had to ride on for some hours. There was nothing on the route and a rescue helicopter seemed a bit too early!. But then – even worse was to come ! We needed a short break with a mosquito net over the head as thousands of sandflies attacked us despite the rain. A person can get half eaten alive by sandflies on the West Coast of New Zealand and apparently they especially like German blood from Frankfurt!. We shivered from the cold since our goretex stuff had got wet inside after all the hours in the rain.



We cycled on, but due to our weakened and half sandfly eaten bodies it took forever and got dark. Finally we reached Murchison, our target of the day, and we booked into a motel room for several days. Sick leave in a village somewhere in New Zealand! The TV Programs here are as bad as in Germany but with even more advertisements. In times like these we miss our former apartment back home – a place to hideaway. Like kids we are happy about every new e-Mail or comment in our blog – a lonely time for us. Luckily after a few days we felt better – the sun shone over the amazing Buller Gorge when we cycled on.

Unfortunately there were only a few days left to explore everything by bicycle and we only did a short trip to the Abel Tasman National Park. In Nelson we enjoyed Pierre and Tracey's Canadian hospitality. Then we had to go back to the North Island, with a short stop in Wellington that seemed quite busy and big to us after all the quietness in the South Island. The Overlander Train brought us to the National Park Village where we parked the tandem again and put our hiking shoes on to do the Tongariro Crossing – referred to as the best one day hike in the world. We were not disappointed: Active volcanoes, sulphur mist, blue-green lakes and phenomenal views to Mount Taranaki, at the end a long descent through lush rainforest, an

unbelievable variety of landscapes condensed into 17kms and eight hours! We felt our sore feet and the pain in the muscles even some days later. When we were ready to cycle on again we once again got stopped - the tow bar of our trailer broke into two halves – no chance of repairing it. Cycling on was not possible. Luckily two Canadians drove by and took Julia and the trailer back to the National Park Village while Stefan cycled back alone on the tandem. We like Canadians! For the following two weeks we travelled without the trailer and so without our camping gear to Lake Taupo and Rotorua, the main thermal city in New Zealand and full of Maori-Culture. We were warned about the mass tourism there; but due to it being the end of season or because we are used to much more tourism in Germany, we really liked it there. Relaxing in a thermal bath or cultural highlight by visiting a Maori village offering the traditional Hangi food, we made the most of our days spent there. As they say in Rotorua, New Zealand – “sweet as, bro !!”



As a final highlight, we accepted our last invitation by Alistair and Charlene in Hamilton. We both agreed on Hamilton to be the friendliest town on earth, lots of nice conversation and three spontaneous invitations, quite overwhelming. Furthermore the local radio station and newspaper interviewed us.

And then it was time to pack all our belongings and go to the airport. Goodbye New Zealand, we will definitely come back, to visit our new friends and go to the places we have not seen yet!



**What's next?**

We say a big “Thank you” to all our new friends, guides, friendly helpers and hosts who made our stay here in New Zealand an unforgettable experience.

We are quite curious about Hawaii especially because we were told that NOBODY cycles there and everybody has got a car. Well, we will see how much we will manage to cycle there. But at the start we will spend some time on the beach. But one thing is for sure: we would love to return sometime, four months of New Zealand were just not enough!

**Haere Rae,  
Julia and Stefan**

“No matter which way your relationship is headed, a tandem will speed it along”

David Sundstrom

**Sponsor of the Month:**



Our tent – the Mutha Hubba – has already faced a lot, heavy rain and storms; and it has protected us really well. Serving as our living and bedroom it is even big enough to sit comfortably in it. And we do not have to stress that we like its orange color, do we?

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