

ProGuides NZ AGM in the Bay of Islands, May 24-27, 2019

From treats of luscious honey, scrumptious cheese, and tantalising spirits to lessons about history, the arts, collectibles, how to save birds, and why bananas might be the next big thing in Aotearoa – the familar around this year's ProGuides NZ AGM had it all.

FRIDAY

A bunch of intrepid PG members joined Sharron Hickman to guide us on our way to Paihia in the Bay of Islands.

First, we visited the **Puhoi Organic Distillery** and met with the endearing Kirichuk family.

Alex Kirichuk is a nuclear engineer from the Ukraine, who came to New Zealand a number of years ago to settle in Puhoi, the little village north of Auckland that was once found by Bohemians. The **Puhoi Organic Distillery** is a family business, which Alex runs together with his wife Iryna, a doctor, and daughter Victoria, a policewoman. All kind of spirits are produced here and Alex is proud of the creative approach he takes when it comes to produce new varieties such as ginseng gin, manuka honey whiskey, Ukranian vodka made with chili. Herbal tonics for health and wellbeing, and a small range of natural perfumes are also manufactured on site. "It's very important to keep the natural structure undamaged," says Kirichuk. All ingredients have to be natural and of high quality. They mainly come from the family's organic garden or are delivered by the neighbours. A part of the production goes to the nearby Puhoi pub. Other customers are Smith & Caughey and the Fine Wine Company.

The distillery is not open to the public, only by appointment, they offer lunch and dinner menus. A 1,5 hrs lunch menu is NZ\$ 150 per person and a dinner menu NZ\$ 300 per person.

Address: 9 Saleyards Rd, Puhoi 0951

Phone: Alex 021678013

www.spirits.nz

The next two stops were quite short, but still sweet.

The **Honey Centre in Warkworth** is worth a visit as it gives you an idea of how high quality honey is produced. You are allowed to taste the most delicious sorts of the golden liquid. The staff is very knowledgeable and gives a lot of information around bees and native plants. A small café, a shop and toilets are at hand, which makes it a perfect stop for visitors from overseas. They also have an online presence so guests can get their orders delivered to their home country.

Address: 7 Perry Road, Warkworth

Phone 64 9 425 8003

www.honeycentre.com

Next stop was **Parry Kauri Park**. It is one of the latest reserves that allow people to see kauri trees, although some of the tracks have been closed when we were there.

The park is located next to a museum, where one can see displays of kauri digging, photographs of gum digging, giant pieces of kauri gum, saws, native timer and a bushman's hut.

Address: Tudor Collins Drive

Warkworth

Phone 09 425 7093

warkworthmuseum.co.nz

Moving along, we had our next meeting with **Robert Webb**, the founder of the **Whangarei Bird Recovery Place**.

Rob is a charming raconteur. He entertained us not only with stories about his altercations with bureaucracy, but also about his encounters with nature as well as saving its species. He is not only saving and nurturing endangered creatures, but also pretty hands-on when it comes to invent tools to help injured birds. For instance, he created a rather odd looking contraption which cradles the bird in an upright position after being hit by a car, helping it to recover from the accident by taking weight of the legs, so it keeps the bird moving, which is key to survival

The centre, who has the only kiwi who doesn't mind the sunlight, when woken up by his minder, is run by voluntary donation.

Address: Bird Recovery Centre
State Highway, Maunu, 0179
Phone 09-438 1457
www.nbr.org.nz

The petrol heads amongst us were in for a blast at our next stop at **Maungatapere Motor Packard Museum**. Its story started back in the early 1950's. Collector Graeme Crow had a strong interest in the Industrial Revolution and its effects, and started to collect memorabilia connected with the era, mainly cars. Over 50 Packards, covering most models from 1919 to 1958, are on display in various halls in the former dairy factory. Graeme Crow passed away a few years ago, and his family decided to open the collection to the public.

Open for guided tours on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. and Sunday for large groups by arrangement.

Address 1146 State Highway 14, Maungatapere, Whangarei
Phone 09-434 8214
www.packardandpioneer.co.nz

Our last stop of the day was award-winning **Mahoe Farmhouse Cheese**, a grass-to-table operation. Founder and owner Rob Rosevear gave a close look into the factory and shop.

Anna and Bob Rosevear and their family have been making cheese in the Bay of Islands since 1986. Son Tim takes care of the 60 Friesian cross-bred cows whose milk goes straight from the milking shed to the cheesery next door and is crafted into cheese by sons Jesse and Jake who work alongside a Dutch cheesemaker. Besides cheese, they sell condiments, quark, yoghurt and other items in their little shop.

Address: Mahoe Farmhouse Cheese
State Highway 10, Pakaraka 0472
Phone 09-405 9681
www.mahoecheese.co.nz

Dinner was at **Charlottes Kitchen in Paihia**, which is perfectly suited for larger groups. The food is delicious. It is advised to make appointments for larger groups.

Address: 69 Marsden Rd, Paihia 0200

Phone 09-402 8296

www.charlotteskitchen.co.nz/

SATURDAY

AGM at the Waitangi Golf Course

The major focus of the pre-AGM conference was **'be prepared' with Sue Walke** from 'Walke and Talk' in Napier provided the audience with recommendations for the best apps when it comes to emergency cases, and which are very useful to have them as a tour guide

- AED Locations NZ
- St. John NZ
- Red Cross Hazards
- Met Service
- Geonet
- National Radio

Prominent guest speaker of the day was Labour MP and **tourism minister Kelvin Davis**. He believes the tourism sector should remain on the growth trajectory. "We have to bring tourism into the regions and develop a better destination management", he said at the meeting, which was attended by over 40 tour and driver guides. An international visitor levy of NZ\$ 35 will be one way to gather additional resources for managing the region. ProGuides has long lobbied for a levy like that, especially to fund the work of the department of conservation. Davis confirmed that 50% of the income of the levy will go to tourism and 50% to conservation.

"But it's a number game", argues PG chairperson Wilhelm Lehmborg. "We need solutions and ideas. The sustainability commitment needs teeth", he says. "If you talk quality, then do quality and don't just add up numbers. Make sure the more affluent market stays longer with more time to discover the regions. You minimize the environmental impact of flying by staying longer!" A **press release** by ProGuides NZ has been sent out to all relevant media and industry contacts.

The actual AGM was carried out in a relaxed atmosphere with no major issues. Chair, Financial Officer, Membership Secretary and Association Secretary were re-elected, as were two Ordinary Committee Members.

For dinner we sailed across the water to Russell, where we enjoyed scrumptious homemade food at the **Swordfish Club** in Russel. Although this is suitable for groups, you need to know someone who is club member for a visit. If you happen to do that, go for it. The club is wonderful and very Kiwiana.

SUNDAY

Sunday was famil day, filled with a variety of topics and stops. One of the most interesting facts that we learned was that New Zealand is on the brink of becoming an important banana exporter, at least the very far North.

We started the day with a number of visits in Kerikeri

Rainbow Falls was the first must-see attraction. This short, easy walk suitable for buggies, leads to the stunning Rainbow Falls on the Kerikeri River and is also accessible by wheelchair.

Puriri, totara, karaka, and manuka shelter the path to the viewing platforms. Rainbow Falls Road is on the left off Waipapa Road. Access to the Rainbow Falls is from the parking area at the end of Rainbow Falls Road or from the Kerikeri River Track itself.

Address: 34 Landing Road, Kerikeri 0230

Phone 09 407 0300

Next, we went to the **ecological sanctuary of Aroha Island**, which is a very nice holiday accommodation and camping ground. The number of lodges is limited and they start at NZ\$ 150.00. The Island is a 12ha sanctuary in the Kerikeri Inlet and is a short 12km drive north east of Kerikeri. A causeway links the island to the mainland, providing permanent and convenient vehicle access, however be careful when you drive a big bus as it is not that easy to turn around.

Address: 177 Rangitane Rd, Kerikeri

Phone 09-407 5243

Highlight of the morning was **Wharepuke Subtropical Garden**, which included morning tea at the **Maha Café** and a stroll for garden and art enthusiasts. Wharepuke offers also accommodation. It was here, where we learnt that New Zealand is about to become an important banana grower.

<http://www.subtropical.co.nz/writingBanana06.html>

Bananas such as Goldfinger or Ladyfinger are gross-feeders, we were told. They need lots and lots of animal manure and mulch to produce well. One day bananas might become a promising NZ\$ 82 million industry for Northland. Watch the space.

After morning tea, we walked through the garden, which is nearly two hectares in size and open all the year around. A sculpture trail of around 40 art works is set within the gardens. Resident artist Mark Graver and his partner Tania Booth truly live in paradise among this flourishing wonderland, with many rare and uncommon plants from around the world.

Nestled among the flowers and bushes, cottages invite to stay for a holiday. Is there a better way to relax?

Address: Wharepuke Subtropical Garden

190 Kerikeri Rd, Kerikeri

Phone 09 407 8965

www.accommodation-bay-of-islands.co.nz

Next stop was **Café Jerusalem**, where we enjoyed a scrumptious lunch, traditional and authentic Israeli cuisine made the old fashioned way. Tasty, fresh and full of flavour.

Address: Café Jerusalem

83 Kerikeri Rd, Village Mall, Kerikeri 0230

Phone 09-407 1001

<https://cafejerusalem.co.nz/>

Living Nature welcomed us just after lunch in their beauty supply store in Kerikeri. Shop and manufacturing site have opened for us and the major part of the group grabbed the opportunity to shop for healthy cosmetics options, even the guys didn't shy away from getting glowing face treatment cream. If you are on the way with a group, you better ring them before, the store usually opens from Monday to Friday, from 9 to 5, and Saturday from 10 to 5.

Address: Living Nature
1246 State Highway 10, Kerikeri 0293
Phone: 09-407 7895
www.livingnature.com

After we filled our shopping bags, we head to **Te Waimate Mission House**, where we met **Alex Bell**, who manages the Mission House for the Heritage Society since 2018. He shared his in-depth knowledge about the land, the settlers and the Maori links with them enthusiastically. The museum is well worth a visit and suited for large groups. However, it is recommended to make contact first, and try to get Alex as a tour guide. He is amazing. The museum is open every day until 4pm.

Address: Te Waimate Mission House
344 Te Ahu Ahu Rd, Waimate North 0472
Phone 09-405 9734
www.heritage.org.nz/places/places-to-visit/northland-region/te-waimate-mission

Last stop of the day was the **Treaty of Waitangi Museum**
Two excellent documentary movies inform about the whole history of the founding document of this nation, and how things developed afterwards.
Very well suited for large groups

Address: Te Kongahu Museum of Waitangi,
Tau Henare Drive, Waitangi
Phone 09 4027437

MONDAY

As if the weekend wasn't filled enough with impressions, discussions, inspirations, our way back to Auckland was another treat.

First stop was **Kawakawa** to visit the most famous toilets of New Zealand, the ones that were created and build by Friedensreich Regentag Kunterbunt **Hundertwasser**, the artist who was born Friedrich Stowasser in Vienna in 1928.

Address: 60 Gillies Street, Kawakawa

Before we were heading to Whangarei to see more of the legacy of this fabulous artist, we visited the **Kawiti Glowworm** caves, south of Kawakawa. They are an alternative to Waitomo, if you have a smaller group of people. Bizarre karst features, stalactite formations and spectacular glow worm caught our eyes. The caves are owned and operated by the Kawiti family. The tour along a wooden boardwalk took us through the 200 metre limestone cave system to an exit, from which we enjoyed a bushwalk through amazing rock formations and impressive fauna.

Address: 49 Waiomio Rd, Waiomio 0243

Phone: 09-404 0583

<https://kawiticaves.co.nz/>

We skipped the Whangarei waterfalls to head straight to the town basin in Whangarei, where we were introduced to the exciting **Hundertwasser Art Centre Project**, a huge museum, build in the style the Vienna artist was known for. **Pam Tohill and Andrew Garrett** from the Prosper Northland Trust told us the story of the project and all the obstacles they had to fight on their way. It required a lot of passion to stick to the idea. They managed to raise 26 million in two years to proceed. "Art makes people happy," says Pam and the benefits this museum will have for Whangarei and Northland will be the proof. The museum is due to be finished by the end of 2020, exactly in time for the first cruise ship to arrive in Whangarei port in December 2020.

Information about the project

<http://www.yeswhangarei.co.nz/>

Last stop on our trip home was Waipu. At the **Waipu Settler Museum** we met **Fiona Mohr**, who was happy to answer all the questions we had about the story of the Scottish settlers who came to Waipu in 1853 under the leadership of charismatic Reverend Norman McLeod. After having first formed a community at St Ann's in Nova Scotia, they set sail again in search of a new life that would ultimately result in the founding of Waipu. The museum is open daily from 9.30am to 4.30pm

Address: Waipu Settler Museum

36 The Centre, Waipu 0510

Phone: 09-432 0746

www.waipumuseum.com/

After that it was back to Auckland. We were all in great spirits after all the inspiring impressions. Even being stuck in rush hour traffic didn't spoil our good mood. Well done, Sharron Hickman, tour guide extraordinaire.