



## Special Interest Articles:

- Don't Touch the Glacier
- Haggglunds

## *The Henrys International Travel Newspaper*

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## Antarctic Base



When you are watching the Tele and see a program on Antarctica with penguins and base camps what you don't see is all the support that's goes into it. Stepping foot onto the southernmost continent is almost like stepping on the moon because so much is involved on getting people there..

On the southern island of New Zealand in the main town of Christchurch the United States operates our logistics base there at the airport. The operation comprises several hangars, a tarmac and palletizing area where planes bring in supplies in from the U.S. and then are sent on the special planes that land on the ice. From

Christchurch it is a 5 and a half hour flight to the main camp we operate there called Scott Base. During the summer months they can bring in the main bulk of supplies on a special contain ship and oil tanker. They contract with the Russians to use one of the best ice breakers in the world to lead the way and then have to follow behind the ships with a special U.S. Coast Guard cutter in case of an accident.

Across from the base is the Antarctic Center where everyday people can go and learn about life and operations in the extreme icy polar land. Inside the center they have a chamber that you go into with special cold

weather gear and simulate weather conditions. On the trip we took into the chamber they dropped it down to around 25 degrees and then turned on the fans. When the fans stirred up a cold wind the wind chill factor dropped us down to well below zero. It seemed fun but we were only in there for 15 minutes not 8 months.

In Antarctica during the winter it can get so cold during wind storms that if you walked outside with normal cloths on you would die in less than a minute. They also have recorded the highest wind speeds there at over 200 miles per hour capable of blowing structures over.



## Land of the Rings



*A Waterfall near  
Queensland.*

One thing is for sure as you drive through New Zealand and that would be the pure beauty and rawness of the land. You can go an hour in any direction from any point and everything will look different. It is not too much different from California in that there are so many types of environments but in New Zealand they are just more extreme and untouched.

It is no wonder why they picked this country to film the Lord of the Rings series at. On the south island where most of it was filmed you have some of the most amazing valleys, mountains and coastlines I have ever seen and what is even more is that you might be the only person within a 25 mile radius.

We drove through areas that looked like Jurassic park with giant ferns and huge canopies over our heads. We went over high mountain passes with rocky landscapes and snow-capped peaks. We drove along the sea with wild seal, albatross and penguin colonies and we went through valleys as long as you can see.

You will find that the Kiwi's

all have a built-in sense of protecting their environment while at the same time maximizing how to enjoy it. All over you will see kayakers, climbers, hikers and snowboarders all with a free spirit attitude.

While we were there we did several different hikes, zip-lined, walked across swing bridges and went spelunking.



## "Oh Sheep"

The country of New Zealand is home to over



4 million people which in comparison to California makes it very unpopulated but they have to share the islands with 47 million sheep. If it is mutton or wool that you are after then this is the place for you as everywhere you drive the hills, valleys, mountains and every little piece of land is dotted with white fluffy lambs.

You will find it amazing how they raise sheep in some of the most mountainous, extreme locations and so remote from the outside world.

For fun my lovely wife Lisa when driving the car would always honk the horn whenever the sheep were grazing next to the road causing them to go into a frantic stampede.

## Don't Touch the Glacier



If you look for a very remote country that is far away then your list would contain New Zealand. Now you go to the less populated south island which is even more remote, a 400 mile drive and a half day ferry ride across the straight. Then you drive another 400 miles through mountains and storms all on single lane country roads to the farthest corner of the country. OK, you are now getting close to the Franz-Joseph Glacier but in order to get to the glacier you will need to hike for 2 more hours across rocky tundra. Ah, finally you are there but they have put up a fence and a big red sign saying – no, you cannot touch this big ice cube in the middle of nowhere as it is too dangerous.

Well good thing you have your super spy binoculars

that can detect rangers at a far distance and on this day there are no rangers in sight. So faster than you can say polar bear we were under the fence and touching icy glacier.

The size and mass of this thing is nothing less than

enormous and it slowly moves down the valley carving the earthlike a giant bull dozer. It is hard to see in the photos but the face was well over 100 feet tall and several miles long.

Before seeing the glacier I was picturing 2,000 year old perfect ice made from unpolluted snow but in reality the front of this mammoth was covered in dirt and rock. At the bottom was an ice cave with a river of melted glacier flowing out at a mere degree above freezing. “Note to self – do not ever stick hands into glacial waters to test temperature – always will be super cold.”



*“Maddie in the no go zone of the Franz-Joseph Glacier.”*



## Hagglunds



*"The Hagglunds all terrain arctic vehicle flying over a hill.."*

At the arctic center they operate two of the Swedish made Hagglunds all terrain antarctic exploration vehicles. These are the ultra cool tracked SUV's of Antarctica letting drive freely across the unforgiving frozen wasteland. They are a small compact tracked vehicle comprising two cabs linked together. Everyone inside wears headsets to communicate as the Hagglunds are very load with their high horsepower engines.

When we first hopped in to go for a ride we were thinking we were going to cruise around the block but oh were we in for a surprise. Like a roller coaster ride at a theme

park the Hagglunds have a all terrain park behind the center to show their stuff. We were lucky enough to sit in the front main vehicle and not the trailer being towed behind.

The park contains two large mounds that you fly over, a trench about 4 feet wide to demonstrate how the vehicle can pass over

cracks in the ice, did I say that the 4 foot trench was 20 feet deep. There is also a pond 15 feet deep but not to worry as the Hagglunds float and the tracks work like paddles. Capable of going fast enough to travel on streets the Hagglunds and having a built in trailer the Hagglunds would be the ultimate Home Depot car.



## Back in Time

Sometimes you drive into a town and nothing there has changed in the last 90 years except for the gas pumps. This is one of the nice things about New Zealand is that the people

and towns are relatively unchanged by modern society unlike the U.S. where you can go to the most remote place and you will find a strip mall with a Starbucks.

Like a old western cowboy movie all the small towns have a saloon, hotel and café that when you walk into will find the most friendly people to strike up a conversation with.

As cool as it is to go back in time after a while you start to miss the high speed broadband internet, 3G cell phone with web access and fast food restaurants on every corner. What can I say I've been Americanized.



*"Old town on the road to Grey Mouth."*

