

BAY OF ISLANDS

It is early in the morning when the Van Gogh arrives at anchorage in the Bay of Islands. This is a beautiful area to the north of Auckland, on the North Island of New Zealand.

This time we choose to spend our time in the small town of Russell, reached by fast ferry from Paihia. Firstly though, we need to tender ashore and take the complimentary coach into the town of Paihia.



Tony and Sheila are with us, and we spend a pleasant morning strolling around the sleepy town of Russell, with its wooden buildings, small shops and pretty little restaurants.

The town of Russell, although quiet now, used to be a busy whaling port, known by the Maoris as Kororareka. The local museum gives us an insight into life here at that time.

Back across the water in Paihia, we do a little souvenir shopping, before taking the shuttle bus back to the tender point. Here it is a 500 metre walk uphill to the Waitangi Reserve. Waitangi means "Wailing Waters" in Maori, and it is here that the controversial treaty, where Britain assumed sovereignty over New Zealand, was signed.

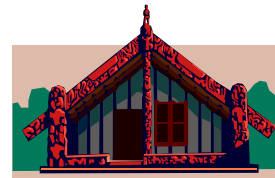
Treaty House built in 1833 (7 years before the signing of the treaty), was the home of the British resident James Busby. It is now a museum and is surrounded by flower beds where butterflies and bees flit among the Dahlias, Cosmos and Marigolds.



Alongside Treaty House is a Maori meeting house (Whare Runanga) built in 1940 for the centennial celebrations. This impressive building is guarded by fierce-looking, wooden carvings. We take off our shoes to visit the interior of the house, which is equally wonderful - just wait until you see the pictures!



A little further down the hill, an ornately carved wooden shelter houses a couple of Maori war canoes, again with fierce, red and black painted figureheads.



We have left ourselves little time to get back to the ship, and find ourselves just in time to catch the last tender boat back. At 3.58pm we arrive back at the ship, and at 4pm sharp the Van Gogh sails off towards the next port of call - Sydney.

