

Stephen M. Yoss
From: Queenstown, NZ

Thursday, 17 January 2008

Dear Family & Friends,

Hope this letter finds you well. Peter, Curtis & I find ourselves in the middle of our third week abroad. We spent the first week abroad in Fiji, last week in Auckland and this week in Queenstown. Thus far the trip can be summarized by warm weather, sandy beaches, and unfamiliar accents. However, things are going well for how early in the trip we are. We have recently settled in Queenstown, for the first of our extended stays.

Our first stop was at the Uprising Beach Resort at Pacific Harbor, Fiji. We had the pleasure of spending New Year's Eve in a cab traveling from the airport. When we booked our first accommodation, we thought it was local to the airport. However, to our dismay it was 2.5 hours away. After a long cab ride we were treated to great food and cold beer. We spent the next few days swimming in warm and clear waters and meeting local Fijians. For the most part the resort was completely empty. There were times that we were the only group on the beach for miles... Coming from Los Angeles, it was AWESOME.

After Pacific Harbor we took a bus back to Nandi (the largest city) and took a ferry to the Beachcomber's Island Resort. The beachcomber's is a resort targeted at single 18-25 year old travelers; it has the reputation of being the party island of Fiji. We spent our days on the beach or in the water. We spent considerable time enjoying the fresh taste of Fiji Gold Beer. One of the days we went SCUBA diving. As I have never been scuba

diving before, it was a

special treat. It only required a brief training session, and then we were allowed to dive to a depth of 12m (40 feet). Although it can be dangerous the whole experience was worth it. I will definitely dive again (Great Barrier Reef??).



About to go SCUBA diving. The whole experience was awesome! It's another world under the surface.



After the dive. Were pretty much experts now...



The resort had hermit crab races. Each crab was named after a country. Guess which country we were supporting... Somehow the USA crab didn't win. I petitioned to have the other crabs tested for steroids.

Timeline of Travel:

January 1-3: Uprising Beach Resort, Pacific Harbor, Fiji
January 3-7: Beachcombers Island Resort, Fiji
January 7-14: Auckland, New Zealand
January 14-April: Queenstown, New Zealand

Coming Up:

Milford Sound, High Adventure Sports, Christchurch, Dunedin, Doubtful Sound, & Possibly Steward Island (with the Kiwi Bird!)



The view City Bridge of Auckland, this is the view when you jumped. Auckland is known as the “City of Sails”.

We reached Auckland on January 7th and stayed in a backpacker’s hostel called the Fat Camel. While in Auckland I had the opportunity to try bungy jumping. Pete and I did our first jump from the Auckland City Bridge at 34 Meters (111+ feet). It was one of the most exciting and invigorating experiences of my life. I have put a video of the jump on YouTube. Search for “Steve Yoss Bungy Jump” and you will find it. Otherwise our time in Auckland was mostly uneventful, as it was just like any other big city.

As of this writing I am currently living in Queenstown which is a small town on the south island. The city is about 15,000 permanent residents with several thousand more seasonal residents. The city feels like an Aspen, Whistler or Lake Tahoe. It is small, friendly and very international. I live in a small apartment in the foothills of the mountains. While here I met up with Ian Murphy, a good friend and former roommate from LMU. He and I are currently sharing a flat. Below is the view from my front door. It’s nice to wake up to this...



Auckland political landmark site overlooking the city. As always... supporting my beloved Angels.



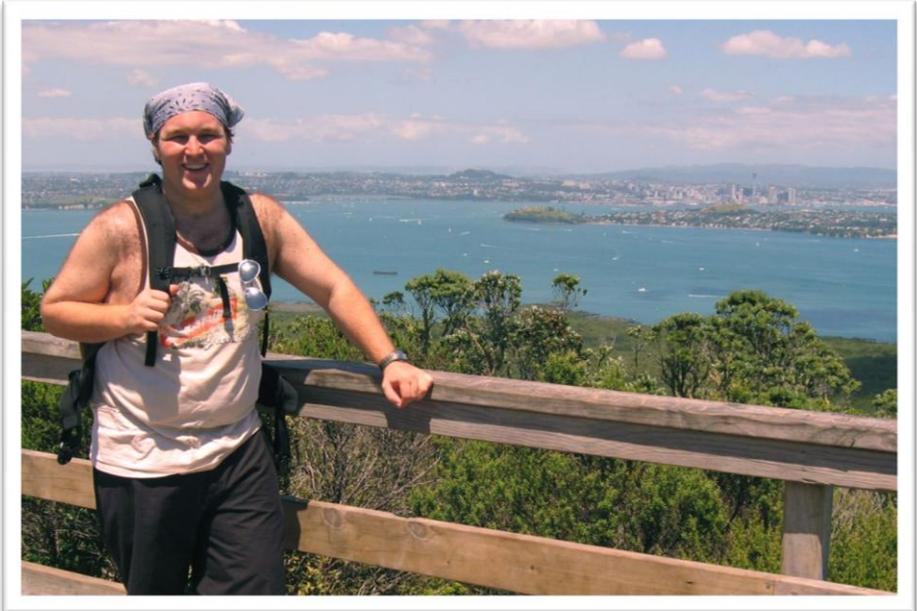
The view from my apartment. Unfortunately, this photo does not do the scenery justice. The mountains here are referred to as the “Remarkables”. Although not entirely visible, there is an enormous lake past the tree line. Also.... no smog!!

Queenstown is known as the “adventure capital” of the country. It is famous for extreme sports such as bungy jumping, sky diving, river boarding (think level five rapids on a boogie board), among other sports. We will definitely be doing the Nevis high wire bungy, which is a jump from 134 meters (439 feet). It features a total of 8 seconds of freefall! Queenstown is full of nature, therefore a great place to go hiking and camping. As this is the

southern hemisphere, it is the middle of summer. We will be here until about April, which is when the weather will start to get colder. I will definitely send pictures and videos of all the crazy stuff we do.

I hopefully will start working next week. I have applied at several types of businesses such as the adventure firms (sky diving, bungee jumping), accounting firms, and IT/Design firms. If I work at an adventure firm I would most likely be doing video/photo editing. However, since this is a small remote community there is a high need for people with accounting/IT skills. I have had a few serious inquiries. Although I'm sure the work would pay better, I didn't come to New Zealand to work in an office (or at least not right now). The best case scenario would be working at an adventure firm during the day and freelance working in accounting/IT for extra money. I have my interviews next week, so please wish me luck! More details forthcoming.

Lastly, I have a contact number. If you would like to talk to me you can call **(909) 297-5956**. This number is a local call to everybody in the States. That number forwards your call to New Zealand at no cost to you.



On top of another volcano on an island opposite of Auckland. "Heaps" of volcanoes in New Zealand....



Just prior to my jump in Auckland. If you are ever there.... make sure you do it!

Just because there is an ocean between us, does not mean that I am out of contact. There is only a 3 hour difference in time between us (technically a day and three hours...). Meaning when it is 8PM Pacific it is 5PM (the next day) in New Zealand. I'm also able to video conference through Skype; my username is "smyoss". Look me up.

I miss you all very much. However, I am having a great time experiencing new adventures. It is my goal to write a newsletter every six weeks with highlights and photos. Hopefully I will be able to put pictures up sooner. So please keep an eye out for my emails. I can't wait to share my stories with you...

CHEERS!
--Steve