

Trip Report: Entirely World Famous – Ocean Blue Adventures, 1-2nd May 2010

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There are some bum jobs and there are some plum jobs – this one definitely falls into the latter category. How do you fancy a three month all expenses paid tour of NZ? You will have to go bungy jumping, white water rafting, diving, trekking, sky-diving, canoeing, wine tasting and more. The only catch is that after each incredible experience you have to do a short write up. Want to know where to sign up – well sorry but this job has already been taken, by Nicquel Rhoden from Australia and has been for over 80 days. In fact in only a few days time her three months will be up and she will become a normal mortal once again – albeit having had a fabulous experience, all expenses paid in case you'd forgotten.



So why do we care you wonder? Well for 36 hours (around about days 70 and 71 of her trip) we got to join Nicquel for part of the tour – the really wet bit – diving at the Poor Knights Islands, courtesy Ocean Blue Adventures – one of the sponsors for the event. You have to love having friends with a boat, especially when Kev the skipper cooks so well. Now all I need to do is find friends that run a vineyard, a ski resort, a hotel in Queenstown and maybe a brewery and I'll never be bored.....

Anyway, also on the boat were Rachel and Ben, previous live-aboard customers and winners of an Ocean Blue competition to enjoy a free weekend of diving, plus Mel, Kent and Kev the skipper.

Due to some mechanical issues with Nicquel's camper van (it had done a lot of miles) we knew that Nicquel wouldn't make it to Tutukaka until lunch time, so the rest of us headed out for a cheeky dive on the HMNZS Waikato. Ben (a Kiwi now living in Oz) also has a Leander class frigate (like the Waikato) purposely sunk in the area where he regularly dives, although it has been down for less than a year, so he was really keen to see what nearly 10 years had done to a wreck. As Rachel wasn't so keen to go deep inside Mel agree to dive with her and I agreed to show Ben the 'internal' highlights.

The excellent visibility of the previous weekend had gone and instead we had unusually bad conditions, but I don't think Ben cared. Although I only took him on a tour of decks 1 and 2 I hadn't realised how different the Waikato was from his Australian experience. Apparently his Leander frigate has been totally stripped of almost everything and there are so many holes cut into the wreck there are virtually no dark areas inside. The Waikato is far more exciting – as was evident from his face when we surfaced. A good start to the weekend.



Nicquel arrived at lunch time and we all headed out to the islands. We were a bit later than normal but thankfully the predicted strong winds never really got going so the trip over was quite comfortable. As Nicquel

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is not a qualified diver we decided to dive Blue Maomao Arch – colourful, lots of life and importantly shallow. And we were lucky, although we had lost the great vis. on the Waikato we still had it at the islands – at the western end of the archway we could see at least 20-25m and enjoy the site of a couple of stingrays cruising lazily about. As Mel and I returned through the arch we saw Nicquel being guided by Kent – and it was clear she was enjoying herself and not at all fazed by the experience. Maybe she had no fear left after all the bungee jumping and sky-diving.



We did have a bit more wind than we would have liked so for the evening we moored up in Riko Riko cave. Nicquel didn't want to do a night dive and Kev, Mel and I preferred to have a beer, but initially Rachel, Kent and Ben were all keen to dive. Unsurprisingly the smell of Kev's lamb curry started to gnaw away at their resolve and one by one they fell like dominos. First to go was Rachel, then Ben and lastly Kent who realised that there were no buddies left – beer all around then.

But Rachel and Ben did make up for it the next day with an exceedingly early morning dive – the second earliest dive ever since Kev has been the skipper – that's early! The rest of us just admired from a distance and enjoyed a nice cup of tea.

The second dive of the day and Nicquel's second proper dive was at The Canyons, a new dive site for me and I was impressed. It's a big canyon/wall and it was definitely difficult to stay shallow, or shallower than I would have liked. Where was my trimix when I needed it? I will definitely be back with trimix as soon as possible. But although it may have been shallow for me it was a good dive for Rachel – she came down to 30m with us, which is a big deal for someone not keen on going deep. Obviously it was the calming effect of having Ben and myself as buddies.... So where was Mel whilst all this was happening – guiding Nicquel and posing for photographs to go on the big website write up. (www.entrielyworldfamous.com)

The final dive site was Landing Bay Pinnacle, but as it is so close to one of my favourite dive sites Mel and I ignored the pinnacle and took Ben for another tour – this time into Taravana Cave. The entrance always astonishes me – well over 20m high and at least 15m wide, so big that it feels almost as if it is trying to suck in all the life from the ocean and I always expect to find strange things inside. Then just as the entrance starts to feel a bit far away you can turn into the side tunnel and head towards the intense blue light of the 'back entrance', itself quite a respectable size for a cave entrance. It's a dive that always inspires me and clearly Ben felt the same way – there was just one problem. Apparently it was a very expensive dive for Ben as 'Damn, now I know how good caves are I'll have to take cave diving classes.' Oh well – another convert to the dark side.

So all that remains for me to say is a big thank you to Kev and Jan at Ocean Blue Adventures for organising the weekend and a reminder that there are some amazing jobs out there if you keep your eyes open – you just have to be quick as everyone wants them.