



Our NZ adventure

What does "abseiling" mean? What about "waka-ama"? Have you ever tossed your gear in the "boot" before heading out to practice? During one glorious week in February, myself and seven of my teammates from San Diego Outrigger were able to experience that and so much more! We took up the invitation to join the Taniwha Grizzlies as they and 40 other teams from New Zealand, Australia, and Tahiti raced in the '08 Takapuna Beach Cup event in Auckland, New Zealand.

From the minute we submitted our on-line request for a canoe and chase boat, we were treated with exceptional kindness. Rod, Lara and Dallas, whom we met over the internet and through a mutual friend, met us at the airport and carried all of us and our luggage to our hotel in Takapuna Beach, a delightful and quaint little town at the surf's edge. Before we left the airport, Lara had made two phone calls and hooked us up with the two additional paddlers, Henryetta and Lisa, who would round-out our 10-person team. As it turned out Lisa was from the states, but now makes her home in New Zealand. Later that evening the Grizzlies, host club of the event, had a special BBQ to welcome us to their country, town and race. Prior to our arrival, we inundated poor Rod and Dallas with our tourist queries, and in one short week we went inner tubing in an underground cave in the pitch darkness where the rocks above were lit by tiny glow worms, hiked the thermal sulfur grounds of Rotorua, soaked in hot mineral baths along Lake Taupo, explored a Maori Village—hiking, climbing and then jumping from great heights into small pools of water, sliding down waterfalls, and went abseiling (similar to rappelling) from great heights under waterfalls in the beautiful Blue Canyon National Forest.

On Saturday we were fired up for the race. I know that

New Zealand photos courtesy of our team as well as www.Pictue.co.nz



returning victors in both the men's and women's divisions were plenty ready to defend their titles, and they had the crews to do it. We had a good opportunity to see them briefly, from the back, until they all disappeared around the looming island of Rangitoto. Nevertheless, we pushed on, fighting as hard as we could against all odds—wind, fatigue, jet-lag—and still we had smiles as wide as Rhode Island across all our faces as we made our way through that last 20 minute piece.

We truly embraced the island motto "Discover it, live it, love it!"

I've been around paddling for about 14 years, and I have seen all kinds of events, and I'm planning on bringing this style of relay racing to our shores this next winter. I think I'll call it the Grizzly Relay. On Sunday, everyone had to do 24km - four laps each of a two-mile(ish) distance. We all lined up at the start. The horn blew and we took off for the first lap, once we

returned to the beach, one of our replacement paddlers had to tag the boat and run back up the beach through a chute and then back to the canoe before we could take off for the second lap of paddling; we repeated this and if I can be honest- I am not a runner, so the running 'sucked', but was a great way for spectators to watch the race as it unfolded. We placed second in our division!

After the day's event, we all hung out at the beach as they called out names of participants for 'spot prizes' kind of like the "raffle" that we do at the OC1 championships. I came home with a brand new hydration pack, a stellar race jersey, and seven cd's worth of great memories and a host of new friends.

If you are looking for an exciting, new and challenging race for next year, you ought to try this one, but take at least two weeks there because there is so much to see and do in New Zealand.

Cheance Adair

