



41 Club New Zealand

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REPORT ON 2008 TOUR TO CHINA & EUROPE

On August 29th, 2008, a group of 28 members of 41 Club New Zealand flew out of Auckland for a 13 hour flight to Beijing, China at the start of what proved to be a memorable trip. We spent a week in China visiting Beijing, X'ian and Shanghai.

A 12 hour overnight flight from Shanghai to Munich and a 5.30am arrival saw us greet the last two members of our group (we were now the full sized group of 30 people) and our Swedish bus driver, Tord Bergman, who had driven about 2300 kms to meet us with our bus.

This was the start of a month of not only visiting countries such as Austria Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Italy and Germany, but of being hosted in homes of 41'ers in most of these countries. Again, we were given the opportunity to share in the daily lives of these new found friends, and to experience their way of life. It all came to and end in Berlin on October 4th.

For me personally, the highlight was when Drew Cochran, President of 41 Clubs in G.B. & I., flew to Berlin to present me with the Association Award for services to 41 Club worldwide.

To single out one particular group is difficult, but the generosity of the Romanians was just wonderful, their spirit of optimism was unbelievable, especially when you realise that they have only been free of Soviet Union control for something like the last 18 years. They know they have a long way to go, but they are determined to get there, and if a short visit from a group of Kiwis can help, then the news is all good.

After a trip such as this one, it is only natural to reflect on all that took place, and I believe that the most important thing is the contact we made with people from another part of the world. By sharing this contact with them, we were able to tell them a little about New Zealand, while we had the opportunity to learn a lot about their country. Contacts such as these are important, and if they can lead to a greater understanding of others, then we should be satisfied that our Club has played a part in this process.

As this was my last tour as your National Tour Leader, I must first of all say "Thank you" again to 41 Club New Zealand for entrusting me with this position, and I must say a very big "Thank you" to my wife Margaret for all her support over the past 20 years, with all the trips I have planned and led overseas. Without that support, I could not have done it all.

To my successor, Derek Johns, I wish you every success Derek in your future plans and endeavours, and you know that my support and help will always be available for you.

Peter Butchart