

THERE'S AN AWFUL LOT OF COFFEE IN BRAZIL

We are “*on the road again*” – or on the wing as it were, and heading to the Rotary International World Convention in Sao Paulo, Brazil. First up (after a one hour flight from Napier) at Auckland, we meet up with our travelling companions and go through an eleven hour flight through the night to Santiago in Chile. It takes so long that it makes me think how safe we are in NZ, being so far away from some parts of the world. I watch the recently released movie “*American Sniper,*” and that makes NZ feel even safer still.

In Santiago a Rotary friend of our tour organiser meets us with a bus and soon has us in our hotel in the middle of the city. We are lucky to have the guide for most of the people are speaking Spanish and I do not even know how to ask for the toilet!

It is around 1pm and we check in and go to our rooms, our bags will be brought up and our instructions are to be in the restaurant by 2pm. We make that deadline and sit down to a meal that lasts for two hours! Then we go to a meeting room for instructions (complete with power point) on what we will do in the next three days.

Back in our room it is nearly five o'clock and still no bags. We have not been to bed for 30 hours so we lie down and sleep – for 15 minutes and then the bags arrive. We unpack a little bit, find some new gear and sleep for another 45 minutes. Then we get downstairs and join the bus for a sight-seeing tour and dinner at 8pm! This is all great fun and we sure are glad to get back to the hotel and bed at 10pm.

The second day sees us on the road at 8am and on a sightseeing tour to Valparaiso, down on the coast. On the way we stop at a winery that grows 420 hectares of grapes – and turns them into wine of course. We check some of it out. They talk of converting their winery to being completely “organic.” To me it tastes pretty good as it is.

Next is a boat trip on the harbour. We see the navy parking area with boats from many nations and as well, a group (flock, gaggle, herd) of sea lions. Back on shore we head to a fancy restaurant for lunch – at 2pm! (That must be their regular eating time.)

Finally we make our way back to Santiago in time to change for dinner (with Samba lessons) at 8pm. We are back at the hotel just on midnight. I am really warming to all this activity!

Hence it seemed almost a shame to have to “sleep in” the next day until 9.30am! Then we did some sight-seeing in the city, a museum, a mall, then a Rotary Club lunch (at 2pm of course) and up the mountain to a lookout on the way home.

Back to hotel, but for only five minute to collect the wine purchased the day before, and head off into the country for a BBQ at another Rotarian's house. It was a one

and a half hour drive – like driving from Napier to Dannevirke for a BBQ! It was a great show.

Back home at midnight we request a 5am “wake-up” call and then pack bags so that we can get to our plane from Chile to Brazil. The tour guide helps us through the airport, which was most useful (for I have still not learned any Spanish) and then we get some breakfast. As we farewell our Chilean guide I promise to look after him when he visits us in NZ – with continuous sightseeing and leaving little time for rest!

Our flight is right across the continent to Sao Paulo and it is in the same time zone. We need a rest. Maybe it will be today! An arranged bus and guide take us into the city, explaining as we went. There are 12 million people living in inner city, 21 in wider metropolis and 45 million in the whole state!

This is bigger than big! It is one of the largest cities in the world. We pass some “better off” areas and one even has a slum in the middle of it! Those who do not qualify for the slum make up the 45,000 homeless people who live on the streets. We see some of them.

Our hotel is smart. We unpack (for a week). This is great! A quiet meal in the hotel dining room finishes the day. Next morning our bus and guide return and we tour the city. Despite the many skyscrapers, we notice many parks, lots of traffic and a few people lying around. We see some famous sights.

We visit a snake farm and a museum and then we get the driver to drop us at the Rotary convention centre which is some distance from our hotel. This enables us to register early for convention and then practice our navigation skills to get home on the metro train system. It gets too complicated and so we get three taxis (at around \$25.00 per car) for a 20 minute ride. Our cab happened to have five in it and the driver skilfully converted the rear hatch area into a seat for Eleanor.

Managing our tour team, now of 19, is like herding cats. Times and instructions blur and sometimes we are going the wrong way. Friday sees us head back to the convention centre, this time practicing our navigation on the train. It works and we get there.

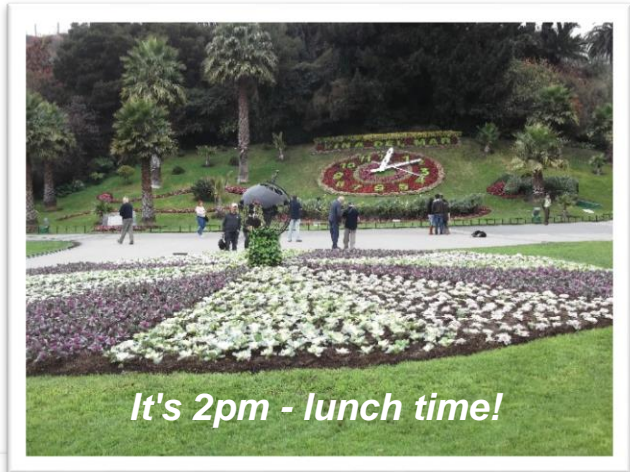
We discover that the influence of our consummate politician Winston Peters, extends even to Brazil, and by showing the official on the turnstiles, our driver’s licence, passport, or something with a date of birth on, those of us over 60, can ride for free! The arms of Winston reach a very long way!

One thing stands out in our tour so far. It is difficult to get a decent cup of tea in this country. A friend told us they make their own – and not from the leaves of the real plant. It is “flavoured,” iced, warm, or just plain rubbish. I switch to coffee for I realise that is why they say (or sing) *“there is an awful lot of coffee in Brazil.”*

The convention is coming up. More on that in the next issue.



A Chilean Winery



It's 2pm - lunch time!



Valparaiso from the harbour



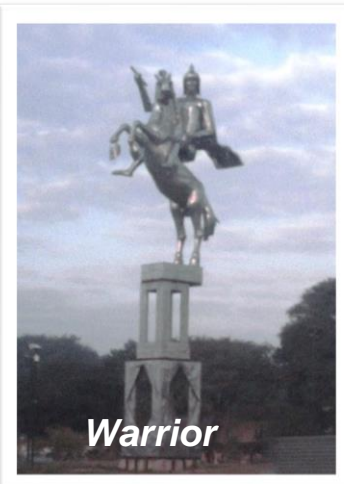
Brazil Icon & Monument



Sao Paulo Railway Station



Hotel Lobby



Warrior



Convention Venue