

A Taste of the SPIRIT OF NEW ZEALAND *by Lynley Irvine*

On Tuesday 28 August 2012 four not so young WOW ladies ventured onto the Spirit of New Zealand tall ship which was visiting Tauranga as part of the Youth Development Program for the Spirit of Adventure Trust. Gill Needs, Lynley Irvine, Megan Harris, and Chris Glen jumped at the rare opportunity to spend a rather crisp morning aboard such a unique sailing vessel.

The excitement began when we all met at the Port of Tauranga docks. At the security gate people of all ages were buzzing in anticipation of a new and rare experience. She looked magnificent – a Barquentine design with three wooden masts and yard arms clutching the white sails - the square-rigged foremast and black hull a picture of a bygone era even though she was built in 1984.

Standing on the wharf, dressed for the cold, we each were ticked off the passenger list and gingerly boarded the ship down the gang plank. Finally we were all aboard! As we were invited to familiarize ourselves we ventured below to find the hammock-style sleeping quarters, the spacious galley and the tiered eatery....all looking well maintained and clean as you'd expect from a much-loved modern boat.

We had to wait a short while before setting sail, filling in the time taking photos of each other capturing the adventure. The Captain then welcomed us all aboard and wished us a very enjoyable time. We received our Health & Safety instructions from the First Mate who showed us how to use a life jacket of which there appeared to be plenty. He assured us that they don't usually get to use them! Thank goodness for that, we thought, as we started having visions of a man over board!

20 minutes later we were circling the inner harbour waiting on an incoming freight ship. It seemed so large when it cruised past us – definitely wouldn't have been room for the both of us in the Entrance. Once it passed we set off outside the harbour. Some of us thought we were going to sail inner harbour as was mentioned on the brochure. Too late to take a couple of Sea Leg tablets now!

The young crew scaled the masts and out on the yard arms to unleash the sails then with crew and some of us hauling the chunky ropes the sails went up, or was that down - I think it was both – hooray, we were sailing! – I was so relieved they didn't ask us to scale up the masts.

The sea was reasonably calm with a slight swell; people were happy, taking in the view, feeling the slow gentle movement of this lovely old timer and chatting away to other sailors. I secretly felt like rushing up to the bow and doing the Titanic thing....

Morning tea was on offer in the galley....help yourself style with tea, coffee and chewy afghans. Initially nervous about going below decks I eventually got the need for a quick toilet stop, if I could find it, but returned back up on deck only to find that the boat had turned around heading back to port! How did that happen!

After 2½ hours from leaving the dock we were back inside the harbour safely docked. It seemed to go so quickly. Heaps of photos to share!

I would highly recommend a sail on the Spirit of New Zealand if you get a chance – a great way to be part of supporting the funding of this most beautiful boat.
Go Spirit of New Zealand!