

If you see her say hello.

We are on a road trip, off to New Plymouth, cocooned in our hire care with Mark Kermode and Simon Mayo's Film Review podcast. We are off to look at a campervan.

We have lost Meredith, our previous campervan, or more precisely she has been stolen. Its all quite upsetting, and I know it shouldn't be because its just stuff really, but it still is. For a while I wondered why it was so upsetting and I guess its because that sort of thing just doesn't happen here.

New Zealand does have some drawbacks, some things are expensive and there is limited choice. Also strange things will happen like at the moment we are having a banana shortage as the boat with them on didn't turn up. However there are some huge advantages. In some ways it is quite old fashioned, not in terms of technology, we have all the requisite shinny gadgets, but in more human values. Steph describes it as respect, people have more respect for each other and I have to agree, people very rarely swear in public, and there is a feeling of safety here. We regularly go swimming and leave the house open. We leave a spare key outside, last year the door was damaged in an earthquake and was open (not just unlocked) for a week. Many people here don't bother with contents



insurance. So having the van stolen was a shock and it struck at the core of the advantage of New Zealand. I suppose in retrospect we did rather roll out the red carpet, it's a 5 to 10 minute walk from the house to the van, we left lots of stuff in the van and it was just road taxed and had 10,000 Km of road usage charge just put on and it was parked in a very quite, not overlooked road. Even so, as I say it was a shock.

Steph filled out the insurance papers, and to be fair they have settled and given us the full value of the claim, so now we are off to see a replacement, must think of a name.

Anyway life rumbles on. And our planned trip back to Europe is hurtling towards us. The plan always was to come to New Zealand for two years and see how it goes. And well, life being life, it turns out its been two and a half years but we are last going back to Europe. Sorry I don't mean to be confusing, we are not leaving New Zealand, we love living here and we are going to be back in New Zealand in September to qualify as residents.

Conversely we may not live here forever but we will give it another couple of years, the experiment continues. In the mean time we need to go back to Europe and reconnect with friends and celebrate birthdays and cook mom's tea, that sort of thing. We want





to give ourselves enough time to enjoy and time to not feel too rushed so we are going for four months, that should be enough to do things (though I suspect we will run out of time). We cannot really afford to be people of leisure for all that time so we are going to try and work as well, oh and have a holiday in Laos and Cambodia on the way back, after all if we made it too simple it would just be easy.

Steph has been filling out forms. Poor her, two years ago she had to prove she was an OT to work in New Zealand, and now she has to do the whole thing in reverse and fill out mounds of paperwork and get her shots to work in the UK. Mind you it is a bit of a first world problem I suppose. She needs to prove that she is entitled to work and the nearest office to do that is in Sydney so we had a tense week sending her passport there and having it returned, now safely back so all good. I think she is pretty much good to go now and should be able to pick up locum work in the UK as apparently other migratory people do this as well. On the other hand in contrast to the well planned health care system the IT industry is unlikely to know what resources it

needs until the week before it needs them. So I am more likely to be skyperviewed (Skype interviewed, a word I just made up) the week before when I am jet lagged and in the US. I am sure it will all work out or at least be interesting.

Speaking of the US, I cannot be any more precise than that. The trip back starts with us going to see Andrew and Liz in Auckland and Bunny and Allan in Houston, now it turns out that they have all moved house and I don't know their new address. Should I read anything into this? Maybe.

Its strange, and the road trip has helped us step off the mad rushing train of trip preparation for a bit and be normal, sit in a lovely coffee shop in a church near Bulls, walk on the beach.

The little bits of life do carry on, a very nice birthday party for Sarah and Catherine around a beautiful 1920's swimming pool complete with little changing cubicles next to the pool right in CBD in Wellington. We went to a completely mad 50th Birthday party with the theme being it's a 5th birthday party complete with party games of pass the parcel and a three legged race.



Great fun.

We have been enjoying our somewhat idyllic life on the beach, we have bought a new (pre-loved) table that hopefully will not blow away down the beach (actually it still



may need tying down). The view is so lovely it does rather impinge on TV watching. And we must have gone completely native because we have even barbequed and Steph's wet suit hangs on the deck ready for her when she get home after work so she can jump into it and jump into the sea. Speaking of native, we got to go into Wellington for Waitangi day and spent a lovely sunny afternoon meeting friends

and listening to bands on the waterfront.

We have made it down to the Basin Reserve to watch the cricket, it all very low key after going to the cricket in India, we sit on the grass bank and sit in the sun, somewhat bizarrely there is a sign the says that we are not allowed to bring sofas into the ground, do people really try and do that? I guess so or they



would not need the sign. Steph does her knitting and strangely there are a couple of people further along each with a spinning wheel spinning away.

So as well as trying to sort my CV out for prospective contracts in the UK I also have to try and sort what I am going to do when I get back to New Zealand. The team I am currently on is being transitioned to Auckland and I could do with a change so I am looking around to try and see if I can find another team that will have me. I sort of fancy doing something completely different so I have approached the mobile team (as in mobile phones/tablets) to see if they think I will fit. Not surprisingly they wanted some evidence that I could pick it up. So I set myself a project of developing an app and I have to say its been a blast, though it has occupied most evenings. I have produced an app called MeasureMe which is a low friction subjective measurement tool that helps people create a pain, energy or sleep diary. Check it out on google play. I have to say I think its gone rather well to get the app into the store from a standing start in four weeks isn't bad. Anyway we will see what the mobile team make of it and if they think they can find a home for me.

Steph is also trying to sort out here work. For her its all about succes-



sion planning which makes her sound like some sort of monarch planning to abdicate, but apparently it actually involves deciding who gets to do her work while she is away.

We are creeping into autumn, its still quite hot some days but we have the occasional chilly evening and badminton has started again. Badminton is a winter activity here as its too hot in the summer so its nice to see people we haven't chatted to for five months.

Right so we are driving home, Steph is catching up on the Archers, and we have bought a new van, called Ewok. Steph will fly back next weekend to collect her but all in all a very successful weekend.

