

# Life on the Road with Lynne and Bill

By: Lisa Jansen. 8 Jul 2020. Photography by: Lisa Jansen/Tourism New Zealand

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**Lisa Jansen caught up with a couple who (bravely!) took their 9-metre motorhome to Great Barrier Island**



Great Barrier Island

Last summer, I was once again off to Great Barrier Island for a few weeks to escape the holiday craziness on the mainland. It was my fifth year on the island and, interestingly, this year, I noticed a few more motorhomes and caravans – looks like the RVing community is slowly discovering this little paradise. However, I only met one couple brave enough to take a 9-metre motorhome over to the island known for its narrow and windy roads.

Lynne Haines and Bill Mitchell were DOC camp hosts on Great Barrier Island for two months over summer. We met at Medlands campground, and, of course, I was curious to know how they've found handling such a big motorhome on the island. Lynne did admit that it can be a bit of a challenge. "The roads are definitely something else over here. But we mostly just

drive the motorhome from campground to campground and then use our bikes to get around, so that makes it manageable. And the beauty of this place is worth the effort."

Lynne and Bill discovered the RV life back in 2011 when they bought a 4-berth Daihatsu Delta and started exploring the country on weekends and during holidays. "At the time, we were both still working full-time, so we used the motorhome to get away whenever we could."

In late 2014 they upgraded to a very comfortable 2008 six-berth Bürstner A747-2, and two and half years later, they decided to go full-time.

Once they were in a position to stop working full-time, they decided to rent out their house in Blenheim and enjoy life on the road. And so far, they've loved every minute of it. "We love the freedom and flexibility. It's great to be able to stay that extra night or more at any one area and move on if we don't like it or the weather is bad."

Another big perk for them has been the chance to reconnect with long lost friends and family on their travels around the country – and of course, making some new friends along the way.

Both also enjoy the diversity of the lifestyle. They take on occasional part-time work, like at Carnival in Queenstown, or pet and house-sitting over the winter months. They volunteer as DOC camp hosts and at events such as the NZ Rugby Sevens and the Wanaka air show. And, of course, their travels also offer lots of diversity and things to do. "We're usually drawn to places that offer good fishing and walking and cycling tracks as those are the activities we enjoy."



It's easy to see why The Catlins is on Lynne & Bill's must-see list



Having been motorhomers for almost ten years now and full-timers for three, Lynne and Bill have seen a lot of our country. Among their favourite areas are Golden Bay at the top of the South Island, Doubtless Bay at the top of the North Island and now Great Barrier Island, which they visited for the first time last summer.

Given how long they've been on the road, it might be surprising to hear there are still several places they haven't been to yet. But knowing from my own experience how easily you can spend weeks exploring and enjoying a relatively small area, I get it. "One of the things this lifestyle has taught us is not to rush, but to really explore an area before moving on. We are looking forward to one day soon get down to The Catlins, which we've heard so many other travellers rave about. Taranaki is also high on our list."

With a mobile home like their Bürstner A747-2 they will get to explore those areas, and the rest of New Zealand, in style and comfort. With lots of space, a permanent dining table and lounge, lots of skylights and large side windows, and substantial insulation and heating for the winter months, the motorhome makes for very comfortable living.



Lynne and Bill and their 9m home on wheels

Lynne and Bill also value the large storage capacity and how easy it is to drive considering its size. "We really love our mobile home. It ticks off 98 percent of what we want. The only things we would want to change if we could is for it to be rear-wheel drive and to have a bit more ground clearance to make it a bit easier to get to those off-the-beaten-track places."

Given their motorhome is perfectly set up for off-grid living, the two don't often stop at commercial campgrounds, apart from the odd winter stop-over taking advantage of the NZMCA CampSaver specials rates. Instead, they prefer to stay at DOC camps and freedom camping spots such as Perfume Point in Napier, Kina Golf Club in Tasman, the Mangonui Yacht Club in Doubtless Bay and other off-grid sites.

"There are so many amazing spots that it's hard to pick just a handful of favourites. We particularly love any spots that are beach- or lake-front. There is just nothing better than waking up in the morning to a new day, new scenery and new adventures."



Above: The comfortable lounge area. Below: The kitchen





As seasoned RVers, Lynne and Bill have many tips for the rest of us. One of them is to be sure to chat with locals and fellow travellers. "It's a great way of learning about 'hidden gems' yet to be discovered and to make new friends."

They also recommend to "go and see for yourself. Don't let someone else's experience change your travel plans. Sometimes it's those areas others didn't like much that we have enjoyed the most."

Another very practical tip the two of them shared for those that need to stay connected to the world, is to have mobile phones with more than one of the big networks to increase the chances of having coverage. I've since followed this advice and have already been to a few places where only one of the networks provided coverage.

As long-term RVers, Bill and Lynne had many more tips. If you want to learn more from people like them, follow their number one tip: Chat to other travellers and locals to exchange stories and get advice about life on the road and hear about hidden gems.



Medlands Beach Campsite