

Kurashiki Ensemble Visit

The Kurashiki Ensemble visited Christchurch from 2–11 April to perform at two free lunchtime concerts in Cathedral Square and the Arts Centre as well as an evening concert at the Music Centre for a coin donation. Around 300 people enjoyed the very successful outdoor concert in the Square with a lesser number at the evening concert. The outdoor performance at the Arts Centre was cancelled due to inclement weather.

After their performances the visitors were able to relax and enjoy some of the many attractions the city and region have to offer and these included:

Willowbank Wildlife Park proved a popular choice with many films being shot around the park. The live Kiwis proved popular with about 5 kiwis being visible to the group. A great and relaxing meal was enjoyed in the Willowbank Restaurant.

The visit to the **Antarctic Centre** proved to be a highlight to their itinerary. Most had no previous experience with real snow and they enjoyed the displays and hands-on items. The experience of the Hagglund ride will be remembered for many years to come. A scrumptious lunch was served as part of the package deal.

The day trip to **Akaroa** was a real hit even though the bad weather did not allow them to go out on the Canterbury Cat to see the dolphins. Even though the 'Fish & Chip' meal was held indoors at the Gayety Hall, it was a real treat to them eating real fresh fish and chips from the paper wrappers, with loads of 'Watties' Tomato sauce. The visits to the Cheese Factory and the Wine Tasting at French Farm added to the day. Because of the rain in the afternoon, the group returned to Christchurch for a 2 hour shopping spree at Riccarton Mall.

The day trip to **Arthurs Pass** and the **Springfield Farm** visit were very popular. The day started with a visit to the Falconers Farm at Kowhai. A jet boat ride for all the team proved a real hit. The dog demonstration of sheep herding and the feeding of the sheep went down well too. The group experienced a well presented demo of sheep shearing and all had a go with the hand clippers and bought out the shop of Lanolin Oil products. A huge lunch was provided on the farm for the visitors. In the afternoon the group travelled to Arthurs Pass and wandered the village and through stones into the Bealey River. After an afternoon tea stop at Flockhill Station, many slept in the bus on the long journey home to Christchurch.

Just before the arrival of the Ensemble in New Zealand, two of the Ensemble members decided to get married while they were here so hasty plans were made. The bride looked stunning in her western wedding dress and the groom handsome in his dinner suit were complimented by beautiful weather and happy guests. The wedding reception was held at the Sign of the Takahē and had an unexpected twist to the proceedings. The bride and groom announced that the reception was not in their honour but in honour of the Ensemble's Conductor and Manager who were married over 30 years earlier but did not have the financial resources at that time to have a full wedding. Tears of happiness were shed by many and a great evening was topped off by the Ensemble performing some of their wonderful music without their instruments

The accommodation was marvellous at the **Windsor Private Hotel** in Armagh St. The owner and the staff did a marvellous job at helping them with their needs for the 9 nights of their stay. The maori staff members put on a very well presented maori concert and demo for the group one of the evenings and provided a very tasty evening meal. The full cooked breakfasts were almost too much to handle after the first 9 mornings!!

The bus transport was supplied by **Travlon Bus Company** and they were excellent in every way. Nothing was a bother and their driver is a great asset to the company and to the city.