

Waihi Gold Mine Run

By Dennis Shepherd

A fine Sunday morning saw most cars assemble at the Marist Rugby Club Car Park with our usual range of models. The post Lock Down enthusiasm was evident with lots of smiles at having the freedom to travel a little. Others joined us along the way but the nature of the Tauranga to Waihi Road, frustrates the average Jaguar driving enthusiast.

This was the first Club run for Jenny and I, with the new 2013 XFS Premium Luxury Jaguar we picked up in Auckland, seven weeks ago. A little frustrated with the ninety to fifty kilometre/hour restrictions and a few members of the non-Jaguar driving public who don't seem to want to drive around corners like we do in our cars, soon got me feeling that I should just relax!

I'm driving a Jaguar! It has an awesome Meridian sound system, and we are fortunate not to be in Auckland still under Level 4 restrictions. A scenic detour down the Athenree road to Waihi beach saw us join back onto the Tauranga – Waihi Road. At that point, hearing the Supercharged V8 Jaguars amongst the F Types, XKR's and F Pace R was just awesome. That really was the highlight of the drive. Most of us "Lite Up" our Jags from that intersection to make up for not being able to go beyond the supermarket over Lock Down. Great to see new members, Dallas and Sharon with their lovely black XKR.

All 31 "Mask Members" arrived at the Gold Discovery Centre in Waihi, boarded the bus for the 90-minute tour with Murray as our tour guide and John the bus driver.

First stop was a viewing area looking out over the open cast mine just at the back of the Waihi shopping area. I had lived in the Waikato for 40 years and am guilty of never once stopping to view what Murray our guide affectionately referred to as "The Hole of New Zealand".



Mount Maunganui would fit upside down into this hole with lots of room to spare. It is planned to continue to mine this so it will be bigger still and when mining is discontinued, it will be turned into a recreational lake for the town.

Murray gave us a very interesting history of the mine, it's geology and an explanation of the extraction process of gold and silver.



From there we boarded the bus and drove back on the Tauranga Road a short distance before turning left up to the Portal to the underground mining site.

There are 175 kilometres of tunnels under the Waihi town, some nearly 300 metres below the surface. The mining company employ around 700 people in the operation.

We were then driven up to the tailings lake which has become a nesting site for a wide range of birds, including the New Zealand Dotterel. Approximately 15,000 tons of rock is processed per week to extract the gold and silver but to get that material, 45,000 tons a week is removed. The tunnels are back filled with the excavation material, once the ore has been extracted. I was impressed with the restoration /conservation efforts of the mining company, creating productive pastoral hills, native tree planting and the future planning of recreational areas.



Following the tour, we drove a few hundred metres to the Waihi RSA for lunch and a catchup with everyone without masks. We were allowed to eat without mask wearing so we go to finally recognise who was hiding under the array of mask wearing Jaguar enthusiasts. Another big thanks to Noel and the Events Committee for another great outing.

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