



TRAVEL DIARY

Amanda and Dave's
DOWN UNDER

The Couple: Dave Pedersen and Amanda Lavis of Kailua, Hawaii.

The Plan: Their jobs often required domestic travel (Dave works for the United States Department of the Navy, and at the time Amanda was a partner at a law firm), so when it came to picking a destination for their honeymoon, they wanted to truly get away. Ultimately they decided on a trip to the other side of the world.

Bucket-List Stop: It all began with a visit to Australia so Amanda could finally see a koala in person. In addition, the **Taronga Zoo Sydney** tour (taronga.org.au) let them feed a wallaby and hold a marsupial mouse. "It was magical," Amanda says. Afterward, they watched a practice run for Vivid Sydney, a festival featuring light installations and projections on

buildings, including the iconic Sydney Opera House.

On the Road: Once they landed in New Zealand, their goal was to see as much of the country's natural beauty as possible, so they hopped in a rental car. "We stopped frequently to take in the sights," Amanda says. "Even driving was an adventure, as it's on the opposite side and, Lord, does that country have switchback roads!"

Meal to Remember: The couple spent a lively evening restaurant-hopping at and around Auckland's Viaduct Harbour, which is home to roughly 30 places to eat and drink. They dined tapas-style at **Baduzzi** (baduzzi.co.nz), **16 Tun** (16tun.co.nz), and **Oyster & Chop** (oysterandchop.co.nz).

Seal Sighting: On the South Island, they met Paul Le Lievre, a farmer who runs the **Akaroa**

Seal Colony Safari (sealtours.co.nz). He drove them to the sea cliffs, where there were seals sitting on almost every rock. "It was amazing to see these animals up close and to share this experience with someone who has such respect for them," Amanda says.

Private Paradise: Dave and Amanda agree that their stay at **Peppers on the Point—Lake Rotorua** (from \$525 per night, peppersonthepoint.co.nz) on the North Island was the trip's romantic highlight. "Our cottage had an incredible view of the sunrise, and because it was off-season, we were completely alone the second night," Dave says. They were even the only ones at a four-course dinner: The chef whipped up mouthwatering dishes—including gnocchi that they deemed "little clouds of heaven"—just for them. —*Chrisanne Grisé*

TRIP STATS

Length: 14 days.

Breakdown: Two nights at Four Seasons Hotel Sydney; two nights at Skycity Grand Hotel in Auckland; two nights at Peppers on the Point—Lake Rotorua; one night at Villa 114 in Akaroa; one night at Matuka Lodge in Twizel; one night at Lakeside Apartments in Wanaka; and five nights at the Hilton Queenstown Resort & Spa.

Top tip: Amanda and Dave had a fast-paced honeymoon, so if you want a more relaxed approach, the couple recommend focusing on just one New Zealand island. "You really can't go to a bad spot," Dave says.

Clockwise from left: *Mount Cook, the highest mountain in New Zealand; the Sydney Opera House during Vivid Sydney, in Australia; the Hilton Queenstown Resort & Spa; a koala at the Taronga Zoo Sydney. Inset: The couple during their Flytographer photo shoot.*