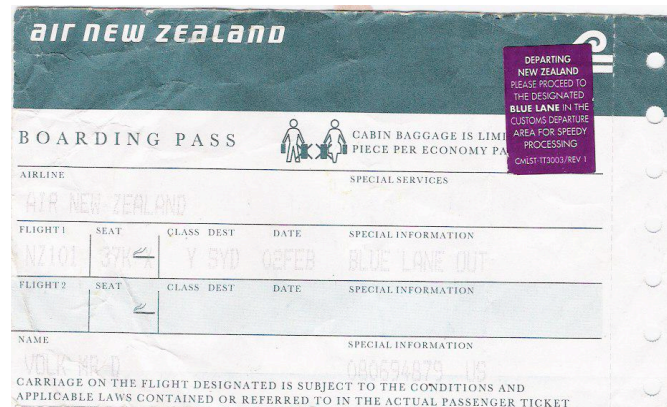


Chapter Eight

An Ugly End to a Magic Tour

"We're not like the others. We're your friends."
--Hunter S. Thompson, "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas."



Riding Magic was great until the end. Sadly, the firm forgot the job isn't finished until the paperwork is done.

Admittedly, Magic is no-frills, but it did make same-day hostel reservations for riders. All passengers had to do was pick two or three hostels at their destination in order of preference. The bus driver relayed the information and the front office made the calls. If the first hostel was full, Magic notified the passenger and booked the second. So, I assumed I would be at the Parnell Garden Lodge. After all, the driver never told me otherwise.

Unfortunately, I assumed wrong.

At first, I was told I didn't have a reservation.

The manager of the hostel said Magic tried to reserve beds for two passengers but only one bed was available and the other passenger had already claimed it. There was a Volk listed on the reservation sheet but he, too, had already checked in. When I called Magic, a representative said there had been a mix-up, but wouldn't accept responsibility or offer an apology. Nor would she help me find another hostel. Fortunately, the hostel worker took called nearby hostels and found me another place.

That is how I found myself rushing more than a mile with my fully-loaded pack on my back to get to the next hostel before someone snapped up the last remaining bed, and cursing the day I ever bought a Magic ticket.

I didn't expect red-carpet service, but I felt the company should live up to its part of the bargain and help find lodging. Otherwise, an apology would have been nice.

Years of working in customer service taught me most companies strive to keep patrons happy. If something goes wrong, they'll at least apologize (even if they can't fix it) because they know the importance of word-of-mouth. Not Magic. It seemed as if they felt they no longer needed to bother, because they had my money and my trip with them was over, even if they did mess up the end of it.

The company's attitude is indeed unfortunate; I would have happily recommended it to travelers headed to New Zealand and people reading this book. Instead, I often find myself recommending the Kiwi Experience.