



# JINXED IN NEW ZEALAND

## A comedy of errors in Palmerston North

by Andrew Redfern

Our house sit in [Palmerston North, New Zealand](#) was our third ever house sit and in fact the first house sit we ever secured. We looked after a golden retriever named Rocket whilst his owners, Dennis & Brenda, visited Europe.

We were still new to the game of house sitting and learned several valuable lessons in what turned out to be a month of "a comedy of errors".

### 1. Know who to contact

The handover went very smoothly in this lovely home in a great part of town. We stayed with Dennis and Brenda the night before they left and dropped them to the airport the next morning in the car included with the house sit.



On the way home we called into the supermarket to collect a few essentials and it was after shopping that disaster struck! We were unable to re-start the car! No lights! Not even a splutter when turning the key!

### **In Australia we call the NRMA or RACQ but who do we call in New Zealand?**

Perhaps we could call our home owners, but then it dawned on us that we didn't have their numbers in our phones. In fact, we quickly realized that we didn't even know the address of where we were staying. All the contact and emergency details were sitting on a lovely printed sheet of paper on the kitchen bench back at our house sit.

Both of us sat there for a few moments staring straight ahead. Christopher then decided to check under the bonnet. Without touching a thing, he climbed back in and turned the key. It started first go. Talk about dodging a bullet!

Over the following week, the car intermittently refused to start. We reported it to Dennis' son who was our emergency contact. He suggested we take it to the local mechanic, who rather surprisingly found nothing wrong! However, after this visit, it did start first go every time and we suspected a loose connection was the cause.

**First lesson learned – always have emergency contact information with you and take a record of any critical phone numbers the moment you receive them.**



## 2. Be aware of the weather

Of the 32 days we stayed in Palmerston North, it rained on 28 of them. We jokingly told Dennis and Brenda we were building the second ark in their backyard. The rain would not have been such a problem, but Rocket had to be walked twice a day – rain, hail or shine! This we dutifully did, donning raincoats and carrying umbrellas, as well as suiting up Rocket in his own rain jacket.

As a long haired golden retriever, Rocket could become quite sodden and at times, muddy. We ended up with a trail of towels throughout the house, always coaxing him to walk on them (which he hardly ever did) to prevent extensive carpet vacuuming.

August, in Palmerston North, is known for its windy, wild weather and we certainly experienced this during our time there. A few weeks into the sit, we lost the majority of our television channels. Despite re-scanning the TV, we could not get back the missing transmission. One afternoon, when returning from a walk in between the rain showers, I noticed that our antenna was pointing in a different direction to our neighbors – could this be the problem? Had the strong winds blown the antenna around?

Finding the ladder and extending it to its full extension, I clambered up on the roof and twisted the antenna around whilst Christopher ran back inside to check the TV reception. Sure enough we were back in action and could now watch more than one channel.

**Second lesson learned – check the weather of the location you will be house sitting.**



### 3. Google is your friend

As part of our daily routine, Christopher would take Rocket out for his nightly toilet stop around 10pm. During this time, I would move Rocket's bed from the lounge room into the bedroom. The whole routine went quite smoothly until one night, once again during a storm, the external electronic gates decided to "play up".

The property entrance security gates were large, black and heavy. They were motor operated by either the remote or keypad, and they slid behind each other to open. Christopher left the house with Rocket, punched in the gate code and nothing happened. Then with a crunch and a whirr, one of the gates started to move and the other didn't.

This resulted in the gates separating, and as they came apart, one fell towards Christopher and Rocket. Grabbing it with one hand and struggling with Rocket and an umbrella, Christopher called out for help. I was unfortunately unable to hear as the house was double glazed and the rain was pelting down.

Gradually Christopher inched the gates back together and continued Rocket's toilet routine, coming back inside looking like a drowned rat. Next morning we set about reconnecting the gate cable which had become unattached.

After trying to work out the physics, we turned to Google to look up the user manual for that particular model of gate. And in no time at all we had the job done.

Third lesson learned – look up user manuals online for operating and repair instructions. We have subsequently used this trick to look up manuals for lawn mowers, televisions and many other gadgets and appliances.



*Rocket watching TV*

#### **4. Every button has a purpose**

Although we parked in the carport, the house also had a garage, to which the door was not visible from any part of the house.

As we were getting used to the house we mistakenly opened the garage door by pressing a key on the car remote that didn't seem to do anything. It wasn't until the next door neighbors phoned to ask why the garage door was up, did we realize what we'd done.

Along with setting off the alarm a number of times it certainly was a month of adventure which we look back on now and laugh.

We thought we were having all the bad luck, but Dennis and Brenda also had things go wrong during their trip. Brenda fell over and injured herself quite badly on their second day away. All their checked luggage was lost and its whereabouts unknown for over two weeks. In fact, they weren't reunited with their bags until they landed back in New Zealand.

They were very pleased to be home and we certainly learned some valuable lessons and skills as house sitters.

**One thing this lifestyle teaches you is to be a problem solver and solution finder.**

## **Communication is always the key**

Despite our month of things going wrong, we have been invited back several times to take care of Rocket but as yet, our schedule has not allowed for this opportunity. We look forward to whatever challenges our return visit may present.

# author bio

**Andrew & Christopher**, known as Global Wanderers are currently house sitting in Palm Springs, California, USA. They have been traveling the world together since 2005, visiting many locations including Egypt, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Originally from Sydney, Australia, they discovered house sitting in May 2016 as part of a planned relocation to New Zealand. Rather than "settle down", they now travel full-time looking after people's pets and homes.

Enjoying adventure style travel and "living like a local", Christopher is a keen photographer whilst Andrew always seeks out a local yoga class. You can read more about their travels and adventures at:

<http://GlobalWanderers.com>

or find them on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#)

