

## The Harder the Way the More Worthwhile the Journey

**“It’s a great little car. There’s just this one minor thing you have to do—make sure you keep the radiator filled with water whenever you go up a hill** —otherwise it will overheat,” the redheaded Aussie woman told us in a matter-of-fact tone.

“Oh, that doesn’t sound like a big deal,” my husband exclaimed, as he cast a sideways glance towards me as if encouraging my agreement. *Sure, it’s not a big deal if you’re driving in Kansas*, I thought to myself, *but this is New Zealand – land of endless, infinite rolling hills and mountain passes*. My mind immediately went to work calculating just how many so-called “hills” we might ascend during our two-month stay.

Our original intentions were to get around New Zealand via the bus system. **However, as fate would have it, during our second week on the South Island** we went on an 11 mile trek that traversed wildly fluctuating slopes, passes and rocky outcroppings that had left my knees, as they say in New Zealand, “flat out”.



After the trek I wasn’t able to walk without experiencing excruciating pain in both knees. They would heal, but it would take a month or two. Seeing as we only had two months on this trip, we were forced to consider other transportation options like buying a car for our remaining stay there (which seemed like a ludicrous idea at the time).

**Rousing myself from my mental gymnastics**, I realized my husband was waiting for me to give him a response. His eyes beamed with eagerness and anticipation. How could I possibly disappoint him? And the price was just right—\$280 US dollars—what a bargain!

### All for just a couple hundred U.S. greenbacks

**In New Zealand, travelers buy what are commonly referred to as “backpacker cars.” These are clunker cars that have been recycled and driven around the island umpteen-plus times.** A shoe-string budget tourist buys a backpacker car in the hopes that it won’t break down on him—gambling that it will not only get him safely around the Island but that it will still be in good enough shape at the end of his journey to sell to the next unsuspecting tourist.

So, for just a couple hundred US greenbacks we purchased our dream car—a 1990 Honda Civic—and in doing so entered the unfettered freedom of life on the open road.

It was about as good as it gets, driving our backpacker car with the sun shining on our faces while green pastures and white grazing sheep zipped past us at highway speeds.

Unfortunately, our state of heightened euphoria lasted for just a few hours until we encountered the first mishap in what was to become a multiple string of zany mishaps.

**We were getting back into the car after a short rest stop. My husband inserted the key in the lock and after a few seconds I heard his “uh-oh” (and a few other adjectives which I can’t mention here). I knew** by his comments that whatever had occurred wasn’t good. Then he told me that the key had broken off into the lock. We made a few phone calls at a nearby store and waited hours for a locksmith to arrive. I remember turning towards my darling husband and saying, “Isn’t this great?! This is where the real adventure begins—when nothing goes according to plan!!!” Little did I know at the time just how very little things were going to go according to our plans.

### The plot thickens...

The locksmith quickly made a new key and we were once again on the road. We were chatting excitedly. Life was good again. We decided to pull into a picnic area for some lunch and then we hopped in the car to resume our adventures. As we put the car in reverse it made an awful, grating sound. And to make matters worse, we were unable to remove the key from the ignition!

**The only way to stop the awful grating sound was to keep the car in drive, so we did the only thing we could, which was to drive to our next destination.** Meanwhile we brainstormed about how we might resolve our dilemma. Driving the car until it ran out of gas didn't seem like a viable option. We finally agreed that our most promising solution was to stop in a town that looked like it might have a mechanic's shop even though it was past normal store hours.

**We drove to the next town and immediately pulled into the first gas station we could find.** My husband began to explain to the attendant about our crazy predicament. Meanwhile we discovered that if you wedged the gearshift somewhere between Park and Drive, the awful grating sound would stop, but there was just one small problem—you couldn't take your hand off the gearshift and you still couldn't pull out the key or turn the key to turn off the engine.

While my husband explained our situation to the attendant we watched the engine temperature needle rapidly progress dangerously towards "hot".

The attendant wasn't a mechanic and, like us, didn't have a clue as to what to do. My husband desperately tried to pull the key out while manipulating the gearshift. No luck. I did the only thing I could think of doing in my anxious state, which was to place a pillow between my husband and the dashboard in case the radiator exploded.

## By sheer force and pure willpower

**Our situation would have been comical at the time if it weren't so downright frightening.** Once again I tried desperately to pull the key out—still no luck. *This is just ridiculous*, I thought to myself, *something has got to change*.

Finally, in a last dramatic attempt, I declared to myself and the universe-- *the key HAS to come out!* So I leaned over and pulled on the key as hard as I could.

I don't know if it was my conviction, inspiration, sheer stubbornness or the skies of heaven bursting open and a lightning bolt crashing through, but the heavenly sound of silence greeted our ears—such beautiful silence I have never heard since. I looked at my husband as a bead of sweat dripped from his face. We were saved! I didn't have to watch my newly married husband go up in flames!!! We were saved!



**Because of our adventures and mishaps we encountered countless "angels" on the road**, most notably the mechanic who replaced the radiator at cost and the locksmith who opened his shop for us after hours and discovered that our original key had been made from the wrong template, so made us a correct key, refusing to take any money for his services. Because of his expertise we permanently eliminated the problem of getting the key stuck in the ignition.

## Creating a worthwhile journey

Our adventures forced us to interact with regular people and get to know them at a very basic level. Our mishaps opened us up to our own resourcefulness and joy for what it means for me and my husband to work together as a team while traveling in a foreign country.

**It seems, in retrospect, that my husband and I began to live more fully when nothing was going according to plan.** I wonder why our "real" lives should be any different. And why is it then that I often demand instant results that unfold perfectly when I set out to achieve a goal?

It seems that it's human nature to want to avoid trials, struggles and challenges. I wonder why we can't just sit back and enjoy the sometimes crazy and zany journey called life—just like when we indulge in a good adventure movie or novel.

**Maybe if I choose to see my personal and business life as an exciting adventure, I can sit back and receive the beauty and the blessings amongst the imperfections,** and experience my true humanness not only with myself but with those who surround me on my incredible journey.

I'm reminded of the words of Wilfred Thesiger— **"No, it is not the goal but the way there that matters, and the harder the way the more worthwhile the journey."**