

THE REST OF THE STORY

Martins learn about wool from pros in New Zealand

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Rae Martin, co-owner of Russell Martin Carpet & Rugs in Naperville, has always wanted to go to Scotland. Her husband and co-owner, Dave Martin, has always wanted to go to New Zealand. But with a sore knee, she put off any trips for a while until Dave said he would take her on a trip of a lifetime after her knee replacement.

She had the surgery and Dave surprised her with tickets — to New Zealand.

"At first I had to grow into the idea," Rae admitted with a laugh. "But once we got there, it was the most beautiful place on earth."

After a 13-hour flight, they took a few days to adjust and then they began their monthlong journey mixing fun with business, a firsthand look at the wool industry.

The couple visited three sheep farms and were hosted for a few days by Ross Townshend, CEO of Wools of New Zealand.

It helped them to learn how sheep are raised, sheared and how the wool is selected for carpets.



COURTESY OF RUSSELL MARTIN CARPET & RUGS

Rae Martin, co-owner of Naperville-based Russell Martin Carpet & Rugs, watches some Alpacas during a recent trip to New Zealand with her husband Dave Martin. They visited some farms to see how wool is sheared, gathered and selected for wool that goes into rugs and carpets sold in the United States.

"The CEO had his own helicopter and asked us if we wanted a ride," she said. "He took us for a ride over Hamilton and we saw the countryside and

we also noticed a lot of people here had their own planes and helicopters to get around."

In fact, she said Townshend was

planning a trip to Shanghai in a few days.

"They travel a lot. It's exhausting," she said.

Then Dave was given the chance to watch how sheep are shorn and was invited to do some.

Dave took the sheers in hand and started on one leg of a sheep. The rest was done by a professional hand on the farm.

"The sheep survived," Rae laughed.

About 300 to 400 could be shorn in a day, she said.

They hold the sheep back toward the worker, and once off their feet, the sheep go limp and can be quickly shorn, she said.

"The sheep really don't like to be shorn," Rae said. "But it takes about 3 minutes and when they're done, it's like they hop, like they have springs on their feet."

While their business portion of the trip lasted a few days, the memories will last a lifetime.

"I'm still trying to convince him we're not moving there," Rae said. "We have three grandchildren here, we're not moving there."

But she's still waiting for tickets to Scotland.