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## Glowworm Caves and Truffles

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## Glowworm Caves and Truffles



*Hobbit hole from the Hobbiton Movie Set*

After Leaving Sydney, my travel group and I then flew out to the north island of New Zealand. We started in Auckland taking a day tour of a bunch of different volcanoes around Auckland. We stopped at about five of those volcanoes and hiked around them.

We took a tour to the Hobbiton movie set which was so much fun! We walked around the Hobbit holes and their nature walk that was put in after the attraction was opened. Everyone was treated to a free ale at the Green Dragon by the tour guides and we tried out a few of the props that we could interact with. It was so much fun to see the movie set as well as some parts of the landscape that were used in the films!!

Next, we traveled a bit south to the town of Rotorua. In Rotorua we first stopped at the Maori Cultural Center. For lunch there we tried a Maori hangi - a traditional way of preparing food in an in-ground pit, usually foods like potatoes and chicken. The hangi tasted so good and there was so much food piled on our plates - it was like Thanksgiving dinner! After lunch we stopped at a building with a dark room for housing kiwi birds. The kiwi birds were really cool! We then went hiking around different paths to see the famous Rotorua geyser and mud pits.

The town of Waitomo is known for the Waitomo caves. We hiked underground into the sandstone cave. There were huge stalagmites and stalactites all over of sandstone, which were really cool to walk through. Our tour then went further where we could see the start of glowworms along the ceiling. Taking a path into the glowworm section of the cave, we then took a boat ride on a river that goes through the glowworm cave and were floating right under them. They looked like stars!!

On our last day in Auckland our original plan of going to Piha Beach failed - one of the black sand beaches in New Zealand - we came across a ferry that offered a short ride to Devonport beach. While it's no black sand beach, it was better than nothing, so we decided why not go to Devonport for our last full day in New Zealand. Upon leaving the ferry at Devonport we explored the beach and the open park that was along the coastline. The area is mostly local cafes and artsy stores where we found lunch in a local Italian cafe and

also stopped at a Devonport chocolate store for truffles. We were told about the lookout at the top of the hill in the middle of Devonport, which we then made our way to. We hiked up to the top of the hill where we could overlook all of Auckland. Before leaving Devonport we all stopped for some ice cream where we tried the special New Zealand ice cream flavor called hokey pokey (we were told by everyone to try it)!

New Zealand has been so much fun! I would love to visit again and see the south island too!!

My entire time abroad has been an amazing experience!!

Madison