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End of Semester and North Island

Julie Sadino
Linfield College

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06/17/2013

Hello everyone! Well I finished my semester today. The exams here are a lot more formal than at Linfield. When you enter the room you're given a card with a seat number and you have to sit there. You have to leave all bags and phones and everything besides a pen, water bottle, and ID at the front of the room. Then you have to fill out an attendance form and you can't leave the room within the first hour or the last fifteen minutes. Needless to say it was a very different experience from Linfield! This semester has definitely made me appreciate the community at Linfield, especially where academics are concerned. I like how I can pop in on a professor at anytime and they're willing to help. Maybe all big universities are that formal (since there's more chance of cheating) but it's nice to be a little more laid back at Linfield.

Prior to this final I packed up my notes and went on a quick tour of the north island. I took the Inter Islander to Wellington, spent a day or so there then went and did the Tongariro Apline Crossing. It's famed to be the best day walk in New Zealand and I will definitely agree that it was pretty cool! It goes through an active volcanic area and at the end you climb an extinct crater and look down onto the Emerald Lakes (which get their color from the volcanic soil). After that I went to Taupo, which is the largest lake in New Zealand (also an extinct crater). There I saw Huka Falls and Craters of the Moon, and went for a nice soak in a natural (and free!) hot springs. I then headed to Rotorua where I went to a Maori experience. It was in the evening and consisted of a powhiri (a formal welcoming ceremony), a tour around their "village", a haka, and a hangi (food!). The hangi was so delicious, especially after having so much oatmeal. The next day I went to Hobbiton because I had to do at least one Lord of the Rings adventure while in NZ. My last day in Rotorua, I did a quick (as in 20 km) morning hike through the Redwoods (obviously introduced) then went zorbing in the afternoon. I would definitely suggest zorbing! Basically you're rolled down a hill in a big plastic bubble, how is that not awesome? Since I'm not brave enough for skydiving or bungee that was my "adventure" sport. I then headed to the big city of Auckland. It's nothing special per se but it is a very smoothly run city with awesome public transit and organization. There I did the coast-to-coast walkway, which goes through the city and parks with stops at both Mt. Eden and One Tree Hill. I also got to see little kids playing rugby-- adorable. I then flew back and a couple days later took my last final. What a whirlwind!

It's really weird to have less than a week left and it's a weird mix of being sad to leave and being excited to go home. Still lots of time left, though, for at least one more good adventure!