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Person to Person in New Zealand

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Dunedin, New Zealand

12/12/19

A Message From New Zealand

Meeting the people of New Zealand has been one of the greatest parts about being abroad. I have had the wonderful opportunity to live in a flat with two other international students and one Kiwi host. Within our complex there are 28 other international students and 9 other Kiwi hosts, which has allowed me to meet so many people from various backgrounds and with beautiful stories. I decided to interview my Kiwi host, Jess, who I have lived with this past semester and have noticed some differences and similarities firsthand.

I think what surprised me most about the lifestyles of a Kiwi is their constant desire to always help and have fun with others. They are more often than not cracking jokes, because they don't take life too seriously, which is something I truly admire. The lifestyle is much slower paced and relaxed in New Zealand, which I fell in love with. In the United States, people are generally much more caught up in their personal success, money and workload instead of appreciating life for what it has to offer and the people surrounding you. People here go out of their way to make sure you feel recognized and consistently demonstrate their care and compassion for their fellow Kiwis.

Although English is the primary language in New Zealand, the population is still largely made up by Maori people and Pacific Peoples. This has been very interesting as Maori terms are becoming increasing more common in everyday things. Signs, introductions, and songs on the

radio will all have immediate translations which illustrates the high level of appreciation the country has for others and its own history. Yet Jess also touched on the fact that throughout primary and secondary school they often learned Maori heritage and New Zealand history. However, world history was never a required course, indicating that many classmates of hers never had the chance to learn much about the rest of the world in school.

To be honest, many similarities were noticed between Kiwis and Americans throughout my time here including most meals, yet certain food choices became an interesting new scene. They are known for their various meat pies, which you can find at any grocery or convenience store, gas station or café alike. In addition, they pride themselves on their fish and chips, burgers and meat stews. In New Zealand their meat production is taken seriously, and there is an abundance of sheep, 6 for every 1 person, and cattle being raised. The livestock animals always look well taken care of and have so much land to roam. When shopping in a grocery store you will experience some simple differences; you will find eggs on the shelf and limes for \$49 per kg. The fact that New Zealand relies on much of its produce to be imported meant that many fruits we are so fortunate to get cheap in the States were missed, including berries and grapes.

One of the greatest observations was how safe this country is. With the frequent bouts of violence, disagreement, and political grief in the US it was refreshing to see the perspective and actions of a different country. Due to the country being much smaller, you can count on feeling safe almost anywhere. As a young female, I along with my Kiwi host always felt comfortable walking home at night even alone because violence is rare. To my surprise the police force does not frequently interact within the city yet the campus safety team was

constantly walking around to ensure the safety of their students. The government set up is much different as well and with a female prime minister at the forefront, it was empowering to see! Jacinda Ardern, the prime minister, was efficient and made decisions to benefit the good of everyone.