

10-25-2013

Person to Person in New Zealand

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Recommended Citation

Hasenoehrl, Katherine, "Person to Person in New Zealand" (2013). *2013-14 Field Notes*. Essay. Submission 6.

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Field Notes from Abroad: Person to Person in New Zealand

I interviewed my flat mate Tom Payne, who has lived in New Zealand since he was born. He grew up in Auckland on the North Island but came to Christchurch for Uni (university) last year. He claims that there is a distinct difference between the two island environments. The north island is much warmer and most of the population is found on the beach. While the south island is much more “outdoorsy,” society on the south island enjoys getting their hands dirty and experiencing the land, hands on. However, all of New Zealand has a relaxed feel. No one ever seems to be in a rush to get anywhere. I also experienced this when arriving in New Zealand. At home, there is traffic and the sound of horns in every corner of the city. Most wouldn't bother looking your way at home; rather they are stuck in their own world. New Zealand instead is a new country that is slightly behind on their development. The population itself is only 4 million and because of this, tasks take much longer to accomplish. Society helps out one another because, without neighbor's assistance, nothing may ever get done. This surprised me most. Kiwi's welcome everyone with open arms and are willing to stop to give directions, unlike home.

Tom is an art major that spends all his spare money on camera gear. He has an eye that takes simple everyday landscape and makes it into something spectacular. I, however, do not have this ability. Tom claimed that Auckland's unique environment made him this way. “People living in Auckland really appreciate and admire the scenery around them, never taking it for granted.” This attitude sparked Tom's adoration with photography. I find this admirable. To find something beautiful, even in the most unlikely places, is a real talent.

Tom also displays a large interest in tramping (hiking). Tom gave me a list of places I needed to visit and explore on the south island of New Zealand when I first arrived. Proudly I have visited them all and tramped for several days throughout the diverse landscape. This has also inspired me to take advantage of the stunning terrain surrounding me at home.

Tom not only through the interview, but also through the time I have spent with him here in New Zealand, has reminded me not to take advantage of the resources surrounding me. He has taught me to

“enjoy the moment” no matter what it may entail. Not everything is perfect, it takes strength to find the perfect within the imperfect: to enjoy the snow-glazed mountaintops while hiking in the middle of thunderstorm and to appreciate what those have to offer around me rather than missing my family back home. This thought process has transformed my experience here in New Zealand, and I will continue this thinking upon my return. I have already been researching popular hiking locations around my home area, and instead of being sad about leaving New Zealand, I am rather motivated to come back.

Interview: Tom Payne (flat mate/roommate) October 25, 2013