



Pedro

*From the Rotary Club of
Burlington*

to New Zealand

Kia Ora from Aotearoa

When previous exchange students had told me that times fly while on exchange I had a hard time believing them, but I've been here four months and I am amazed by how fast it has passed yet it also feels like a lifetime since I first arrived. I love New Zealand, I won't lie, it really wasn't the first place I originally wanted to go to but the moment I landed I fell in love with this little island in the Pacific Ocean.

I live in Howick, more precisely Cockle bay, it is an up-market suburb in eastern Auckland (the largest city in NZ) and I love it. My house is a three minute walk to the beach where the water is turquoise and the sun so strong it will roast you within minutes. I live in a nice semi-modern house with a nice view of the ocean. My current host family is a very kind couple in their early 70s who have really made me feel welcome and a part of the family.

The culture here is very similar to the British culture but its uniqueness comes from its Maori people who are Polynesian decent who were here before the British. There is also a large Asian population that has dramatically grown in the past ten years. People here love coffee and tea and it's widely shown by the countless cafés found everywhere

in Auckland. New Zealanders tend to enjoy morning and afternoon tea and in my area things also tend to get a little more formal.

Something I find very interesting about New Zealand is its climate. New Zealand is an island somewhat in the middle of the ocean and it has a bipolar climate. I wake up and it's a beautiful warm day but in an hour there may be severe rain and winds but it changes again in a short period. This is due to two fronts in Auckland one front coming in from the west (Tasman Sea) and another coming from the east (Pacific). This radical weather makes it difficult to dress appropriately for the day because I'll wear shorts and a t-shirt to school in the morning but in the afternoon I am near hypothermic due to the high winds and rain.

I go to Howick College (20 minute walk from my house), it's a public high school in the area but unlike public high schools in Canada here the students require uniforms. Luckily for me I am in year 13 therefore I am not required to wear one. Although I am in year 13 all my classes are year 12. I take a range of courses from Chemistry all the way to outdoor education. My first day of school was very scary, I wasn't given a "buddy" so I had to navigate myself to my classes through this immense school and I didn't have anybody to hang-out with nor was I introduced to anybody. But on the second day I met some international students from Germany, Italy, and Brazil and they invited me to their group and ever since I believe they are the best friends I've ever had. I also made some Kiwi friends but I was closest to my internationals.

The past four months I have done a bit of traveling around the North Island, most of which was with the school outdoor education department. My first host family took me to a dairy farm up north of Auckland. Dairy is their largest export category in New Zealand and Dairy Farms are found everywhere. They also took me out to the west coast to Bethels beach. It is a very dangerous surfing beach, apparently the best on the west coast of the north island. We walked out to this little island when the tide was low and slept in a minuscule cottage on top of this island. I've also done some trips with my schools outdoor education department. We went hiking and camping through volcanic landscapes for 5 days in Tongariro national park and we also hiked in mountains in a beautiful area called the Coramandel.

In New Zealand I try to make the most of everyday. I am always so busy and I love that it keeps my mind occupied from thinking about home back in Canada. The rebounds had told us that you will feel home sick, luckily it hasn't hit me and I doubt it will, it is only one year in your life but it is also a lifetime in a year.

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I know I will eventually go back to Canada but I am so happy I was given this opportunity to live abroad. Since the day I landed I believe I have matured tremendously, I have become far more independent and organized and I look forward to my eight months left in New Zealand.

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