



Sarah

from

Ingersol

to

New Zealand

“Kia ora, Greetings from New Zealand.”

It is now February and I am writing my second beaver tale that represents the halfway point in my exchange and saying that feels so unreal almost like a dream. It feels like I should be writing my first beaver tale. These past six months have just completely flown by and it scares me to think that in the time I've already spent here I will be going home in that exact fast pace of months. In these last three months since my last report it has been the best three months of my life.

Same country but yet completely different country.

In my last report I talked about being excited for the South Island Trip, well I went and it was incredible it definitely has been the highlight of my trip thus far. Twenty-two exchange students and I traveled all through the south making life long bonds and friendships. There were so many moments, memories and places that I will forever cherish from this trip but to sum up my top three favourite things that we did would have to be:

1. The Doubtful Sounds. Which is located on the very South West end of the South Island. We took this ferry from Te Anau to the park and then drove a bus over this windy road with waterfalls and amazing nature along the way. Since we were so high up at one point it snowed a little bit (it all melted as soon as it hit ground; there was very few patches of snow on the ground) but all of the South Americans got to experiences snow for the first time. (To be honest coming from a Canadian point of view I was not as thrilled to see the snow. I mean it's New Zealand. I came for the sunshine and beaches. I'm avoiding contact with snow for as long as I can). Once to the bottom and by the water we got on this boat and took a tour through the most beautiful place I have ever seen in my life. It was just such a spectacular sight, nothing but water and nature for hours. We went right out to the open ocean then turned around and came back. It was one just such a rare experience to see that much of nature and not see any other kind of boat or tour anywhere.

2. Able Tasman. It is just something words can't describe; everything about it was breath taking. We hiked for six hours and barely covered any of the park. I definitely want to come back and do more. We went to this place in the park called Cleopatra's pool where there was a natural rock water slide! It was so much fun!!

3. Queenstown Nevis Bungee. 134 Meters up over a river in a canyon. Three... Two... One..Bungee! Don't think just jump and you will experience the most unreal sensation that is simply impossible to describe! I can honestly say this was one of the best feelings in my life and I cannot wait to do this again.

Coming back to the North.

When I came back from the South Island I switched host families the following day. When I switched families I entered a family with one of the things I missed the most about home... a toy poodle. My dog back at home Charlie who I miss like crazy has been temporarily replaced with a...um....better behaved version of him. So when I found out I was extremely happy! When I arrived at my host family Christmas was a few weeks away which felt strange considering I just moved in but I had the most amazing Christmas, even though I have never felt less Christmassy in my life. I mean it was 20° and they don't eat pumpkin pie!! That's just not Christmas! But my host family truly involved me and made me feel like I was part of their family. So experiencing my first summer Christmas is something that I'll never forget!

Summer Thrills

After Christmas I traveled like crazy spending a lot of time on the beach. My host family, as well with some of the Rotarians from my club, took me to some pretty amazing places. I was extremely grateful that on New Year's Day I climbed up this mountain "hill" that sat on a cliff and watched the first sunrise of 2017. The only time I got up at 5:45 and thought it was worth it. It was just such an amazing experience to have had. I saw nothing but the vast sea with a few small islands and the sun rising. It was a moment I will cherish forever. A few other key highlights from the summer where scuba diving with my class, snorkelling by myself, sledging, lugging, going to Waiheke Island and Rotorua, and just spending time on the beach with my mates.

New School Year

Unfortunately summer holidays came to an end and I had to go back to school just last week :(But I got to miss the first few days of school to go on a school camp just for the year 13 students. It was so much fun!! We went over to this island owned by a farmer and 44 of us camped on the beach in tents. I made some really good mates on that trip. We did a lot of fun activities and did a survivor day on the last day. We also got to see a kiwi in the wild which is a rare thing to see! Once back in school I am enjoying it more then my first couple months. I took classes that appealed to me more and I know more people and have more friends at the school. I mean I still wish I was on summer vacation but as far as school goes I'm really enjoying it.

Future Plans

In my future six months I want to make the most out of every day I have here. I don't want to leave things behind that I regret that I didn't do. I have had such an amazing six months I can't wait to see what the next six months bring me.

Sarah,