



Sarah
from
Ingersol
to
New Zealand

“Kia ora, Greetings from New Zealand.”

The Long Journey of my Departure

My name is Sarah Sexsmith and I got the once in a lifetime opportunity to live in New Zealand for a year. To live in another country has always been a dream of mine and Rotary made it come through. My journey started with a stressful start. Unlike the other Outbounds I received my guarantee forms on July 20th. It was estimated that I was going to leave around July 15th so it was a very stressful waiting game for me as well as my family and friends when the estimated date of my departure had passed and I still hadn't heard from my host club. As soon as my forms came through I applied for my visa that night. It was an unsettling time not knowing when I was leaving but I made the absolute most of it. I got an extra month and a half to say goodbye to my family and friends and I cherish the extra time that I got to spend with them.

On Sunday night August 10 I got an email saying that my visa came through! How exciting but I was supposed to be there by Friday and it takes two days to travel! So that made the next day and a half completely hectic with packing up my room and bags. The two days flew by; I didn't even have time to click in that I was going yet until I was standing in my empty room with my bags sitting outside and it hit me that I was finally going! Going through the airport was on of the best experiences I have ever had in my life. On the one side before I went through security you really cherish every minute you have with your family because you won't see them for a year. And then as soon as you say goodbye and step through the security doors you're completely alone and you know nobody. Which sounds a lot more scary than it actually is. Because even though you don't know anyone you still have a list of Rotarians and host parents who are waiting for you on the opposite side.

Arrival

When I got to Auckland airport my district chairman, my host mom, and another Rotarian who I was staying with the first night were all there to welcome me. At this point I was going through every emotion you could imagine at once! If it wasn't for my emotions working in overdrive I would have been so extremely tired! My host family wasn't home on my first night so I stayed with one of the Rotarians from my club. I was overjoyed and full of curiosity when I first drove through my new home area! We went back to their house and I was extremely overtired by 5pm I barely made it through dinner.

The next day I went to a marae weekend and I got to meet all of the Inbound and Outbound students. The marae weekend was such a great experience; I got to learn all about the Maori tribes and culture. It also was great because I bonded with my fellow Inbound students as well as the Outbounds. However even though I enjoyed the whole weekend I had just arrived in New Zealand and my mind was still set in Canadian times so by 6pm I was completely exhausted because to me it was about 3am in the morning!

Settling in and Adapting

The first four nights my jetlag was pretty bad but then I got adjusted to it and it was fine. I started school on the Tuesday. My school is Edgewater College. Everyone in my school was extremely friendly and welcoming. The school assigned me with a buddy to take me to all of my classes and made sure I had someone to hang out with at lunch. I was put in this amazing class called Outdoor Education where we would go kayaking, rock climbing, camping, scuba diving and more! The only problem with my schooling was that I showed up in August and it was the nearing the end of the semester. So my teachers didn't have a lot for me to do. And then in September I was off for a couple of weeks for mock exams and now in November I'm off for exams and summer holidays! And I am currently extremely excited because this week all of us Inbounds are going to tour through the South Island for a couple of weeks. I've met all of the Inbounds from my district but we get to meet so many more Inbounds from all other districts in New Zealand and I cannot wait to tour through the South Island. We are going to see so many amazing sights and experience so many different things that you only receive from being on an exchange, like meeting a whole bunch of new people from different countries all around the world going through the same emotions and scenarios as you.

Loving my New Lifestyle

The thing that I love the absolute most about living in New Zealand is that no matter where you are in Auckland a beach is always only a half hour away or less. Coming from my home town where the closest beach is an hour away and it's a pretty unimpressive lake (no offence Canada but New Zealand beaches beat our Great Lake beaches in a heartbeat). Here my friends and I hop on the bus and get to choose between a variety of beaches that are all on the ocean. I spend most of my free time on the beach and I enjoy every minute of it.

Reflecting on my time in New Zealand

I have already been in New Zealand for 3 months and I find that surreal, my time is just flying by! Even though I have only been here for three months I have had the time of my life, I've made some great life long friends, I've gotten to see some parts of the most beautiful country in the world and I have developed such a sense of independence. Everyday I am so thankful to be here and I can't wait to share more of my stories in my next beaver tales.

Sarah