



SMEAL International Programs Newsletter

January 2007 Vol. I #3

Amanda Harper, Finance major, studied abroad in Wellington, New Zealand, Spring 2006.

A new country, a new culture and a new adventure all awaited me in Wellington, New Zealand. The four and a half month study abroad program there enabled me to explore a beautiful country, meet a vast array of people and interact with a unique culture. Yet, upon my return home, I realized that the experience did more than just that. My stay in New Zealand was, without a doubt, one of the best experiences of my life and it taught me a great deal about myself by fostering a new understanding, a new appreciation and ultimately a new me.

For the most part, my decision to study abroad in New Zealand was an easy one. I always knew I wanted to travel abroad for a semester during college after I traveled to Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia in high school on a school trip. Ever since then I knew that I would one day return to New Zealand. I loved the part of the country that I had the opportunity to see and was eager to someday experience more of it. Yet, as decision time approached, I began to consider other countries.



ton for the spring of 2006.

I wanted to return to see more of the magnificent country I visited in high school, but I was nervous because I didn't know anyone else who was going and I had never been so far away from home for so long. I considered countries in Europe because they would have been a little bit closer than the 14-

While studying in New Zealand, I took 3 classes: Maori Society and Culture, Maori Business and Art History. My most interesting class was Maori Business. I am a Finance major here at Penn State, so I thought it would be interesting to learn about the business practices of their native people. The differences amazed me. The Maori people have developed a unique culture that is very in-tune with nature and extremely connected to their land. I was surprised to learn in my class that the majority of Maori business is centered on the land. The amount of wealth and opportunities of an individual, family or company is based a great deal on how much land they own and how valuable it is. I was so used to learning about American business – cash, stocks, trading – here at Penn State, and I was shocked at how much the Maori value their

Hintz Study Abroad Scholarship
<https://intranet.smeal.psu.edu/students/uprog/edabroad/index.html>
March 21, 2007 Deadline

I was so used to learning about American business – cash, stocks, trading – here at Penn State, and I was shocked at how much the Maori value their land and resources and incorporate those values into their everyday lives.

The term *Tangata whenua* (literally, "people of the land") is often used by Māori to describe themselves in such a way that emphasises their relationship with a particular area of land.
 - from Wikipedia





I was lucky enough to have my parents and aunt come and visit for a week. Living so far away from home and being away from my family for so long made me homesick at some points during the semester, so I was happy that they made the trip to come and see the incredible country that I had told them so much about.



land and resources and incorporate those values into their everyday lives. From taking two Maori classes in New Zealand, I had the privilege of interacting with, learning about and understanding such a different culture. It immediately became obvious to me that the Maori people are so proud of who they are and where they come from and could not have been happier to share their stories with us. They are a culture that is continuously struggling to advance in society, and it meant the world to them that we were so eager to learn about their history, customs and traditions.

My light course load granted me a lot of time to tour the country. Before classes started I was able to travel through most of the North Island, and on my two-week spring break I got to see the entire South Island with a group of friends. The opportunity to travel allowed me to interact with other New Zealand natives as well as people from other countries outside of the classroom. It also gave me the chance to see just how beautiful the country really is. Because only about one-third of New Zealand's population lives on the South Island, huge expanses of land exist between towns with everything from rolling green hills to huge lakes to snow-capped mountains. The landscape is absolutely breathtaking.

During my excursions through different parts of New Zealand I did many things that I never thought I would have done. For example, I went white water rafting down a 20-foot waterfall, took full-day hikes through glaciers and along coastlines and went sky-diving from 13,000 feet in the air. However, one of my most memorable times in New Zealand was a weekend I spent at the house of one of my Kiwi friend's, Briar. She was a native New Zealander that lived in my building who I grew to be very close with. Her family lives on a farm in a 103-year-old house about two hours north of Wellington in a small town called Marton. From the moment we arrived at her house, I felt like I was part of a traditional Kiwi family. We were introduced to everyone and then immediately put to work. We helped her younger sisters make a fire, prepare dinner and bake a pumpkin pie. Briar's mom is a nurse, and her dad hunts and manages a number of forests around the area. It was amazing to see how much work they did at home, aside from their regular jobs, just to

provide for their children. Her mom's main responsibility was to run the farm, keep the animals clean and healthy and maintain the garden while her dad provided the meat for every family dinner. Her family was almost entirely self-sufficient as they rarely bought anything from the grocery store because everything they needed was right in their backyard. All five kids helped with the chores around the house everyday. They did things like cooking, cleaning, feeding the animals, and gardening. On one evening her dad was kind enough to take us overnight to one of his forests so we could experience the type of things he does while he is hunting. We stayed in a small cabin with no electricity, woke up before the sun came up, and took a two-hour walk through the bush. It was so peaceful out there. We walked lightly on the damp path and only talked in whispers as to not disturb any of the animals. Back on the farm, Briar's mom let us herd and shear the sheep, milk Gladius (one of their cows) and feed the chickens. We helped her churn butter and make bread and scones from scratch. At night we sat and talked with the entire family in the living room huddled around the wood-burning stove. I was so lucky to meet Briar and have the chance to experience what it is like to live on a real New Zealand farm. Her family was so welcoming and did everything they could to give us a true New Zealand experience.



I gained so much from my study abroad experience in New Zealand. Not only did I get to explore another country and come to understand a different culture, but I also grew as a person and learned a great deal about myself. I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to travel abroad at such a young age. I learned so much about the history, traditions and goals of the Maori society. I traveled the entire country and saw the most spectacular sights for which pictures could not do justice. I formed bonds with different people that will last a lifetime. I grew as an individual as I became more independent. As a result of studying abroad, I am now more confident in myself. I had the most wonderful experience studying abroad in New Zealand. I am fortunate I got to do, see and learn everything that I did and hope that I will be able to return someday. *- Amanda Harper*

Questions/Comments about this newsletter

Contact
Tina Jacquette
tmj1@psu.edu

previous newsletter issues available at:
<http://www.smeal.psu.edu/uprog/oip/index.html>