



Desiree

From Palgrave to New Zealand

Kayaking, Bungying and Tramping around New Zealand

Churr (meaning yeahhhhh).

Yes. Well where to begin? I think I'll start by saying that the past 3 months have been probably the best times I've ever had. No exaggeration on that one for sure.

My time in New Zealand so far has been amazing. Since my last Beavertale, I have been on a tour of the beautiful south island with 17 other exchange students.

We celebrated a Kiwi Christmas, new years on the beach, and so much more. But I think I'll start with coverage on the South Island.

My District, 9920, and Northland District, 9910 joined together to form a group of 18 on an amazing tour of the South Island. We did so much in so little time (3 weeks went by really fast!). We started off in the bottom of the North Island in Wellington, and then hopped on the Interislander ferry, which brought us to Picton. That same day we kayaked to Mistletoe Bay and spent the night there! Now I could go through everything we did but to avoid boring you, and making my fingers bleed of excessive typing...I'll shorten things up (somewhat). We visited and saw the sights in most major cities of the South Island, which

included Dunedin, Christchurch and Queenstown. One of the most memorable places for me was Christchurch. Last year around this time, the city was hit with a terrible earthquake, and unfortunately over the Christmas holidays another one struck the city again. But when we arrived it was quite amazing, because a city that is usually bustling and energy-filled was just pure silence. The city is slowly rebuilding, and it was amazing to see some of the progress made right before my eyes rather than through a TV screen.

During the trip we also stopped and did the famous Routeburn track! This is a hiking, or as the kiwis would say 'Tramping' trail through some of the most beautiful NZ outdoors. This was a 3-day trek and we would tramp for about 4-5 hours each day and then stop and spend the night in huts along the way. The walk definitely was strenuous at times, especially on our second day...when it was pouring rain...and we had to wait 2 hours for a helicopter to pick us up to take us around a mountain ridge because of an avalanche warning. We also had to (deep breath here!) carry a huge 12-16kg tramping bag on our backs. Sounds kind of hellish right? Not in the slightest. It is the most amazing experience, and to be able to do it with such great people was awesome as well.

Another really cool thing about the South Island trip was the opportunity to do either a bungy jump or sky dive in 'The Adventure Capital of the World', Queenstown. Now, myself being the free-spirited, 'you only live once' preacher and all around crazy person I tend to be, at first I jumped (pardon the pun) at the idea of the bungy jump. But it's obviously a lot easier said than done. I was about to back out until I just remembered that faith is always greater than fear...and with all the mocking I was getting from the rest of the group—I figured I had a great amount of faith behind me (ha ha ha). My friend from Belgium and I did the jump together, and when we stood on that little platform about to jump I nearly cried. We got closer and closer to the edge and low and behold the bungy assistant yells..."3, 2, 1 BUNGY!" and we fell. No words can describe. Well maybe the words we both screamed when we fell...but I don't think those are quite made for public reading. Ha ha! I would do it again in a heartbeat. The bungy, the kayak, the tramp and the trip altogether.

As I returned home it was nearly Christmas and after a last exchange student get-together in Auckland to meet the mayor my host family and I quickly escaped to their bach on the Coromandel in Pauanui (pronounced 'PAW-WA-

NU-EE'). My family had a bach (no, more like castle) right on the 'Waterways', which is basically a neighborhood of houses on a canal (for the 'elites...' hee hee!). My first few weeks consisted of swimming, walks on the beach, going out on the boat for a fish (yeah! My host dad had a boat!) And just relaxing. But you may be thinking..."What? Swimming..? in winter? Now Desiree...that's just whack." It is summer here in New Zealand and celebrating my first Christmas not wearing a big old winter coat to a family Christmas dinner definitely was an adjustment. But who can complain! I'm totally keen for an ice cream at this time of the year without getting cold from eating it! Now if that was fun, my New Years celebrations were even better.

My fourth host family has a bach about 30 minutes away and so they invited me out to theirs for new years. Their bach was at Whangamata ("FONG-A-MATA"), which is one of the main party towns on the Coromandel in the summertime. So new years was definitely busy with teenagers everywhere. I can easily say that this past New Years Eve was one of the best nights of my life. At the surf club with friends, partying on the beach! Sweet as bro. Sweet as.

And so here we are 6 months in. I just started school again and moved onto my third host family. Wow. Everything has been amazing! And although I haven't picked up an accent just yet, I feel like this is literally home to me now. I've grown so much, and can't wait to see how much more is in store. My flights home were just booked the other day, which is definitely a reminder of how fast time flies.

I love New Zealand, and I thank the Rotary Club of Bolton, District 7080, 9920 and The Rotary Club of Pukekohe for making this experience so amazing thus far.

Thank you.

Cheers, and E Haere rā, !

Desiree