

## University of Canterbury Exchange Report

Hi, my name is Shelby and I recently returned from studying abroad in New Zealand. I studied at the University of Canterbury in the city of Christchurch. I first heard about the study abroad program in high school and hoped that I could one day be a part of it. After having done so I can honestly say that it was the best experience of my life.

### Before Going Away

#### Flights & Application Process

#### Packing

beauty of hiking boots, they are so versatile. There's an abundance of beautiful hikes from beginner to experienced and it is a spectacular way to see the country. You won't regret having your boots!

A useful packing tip is to vacuum pack your clothing. Winter items are especially bulky and using this method allowed me to fit a lot more into my suitcase. The flats have vacuums so you can repeat the process when you return home.

### Financial

I brought \$100 NZ cash with me to get me started and then I mainly used a credit card. I have a bank account with TD Canada and I was never charged an "international fee" while I was away. If I needed cash, I used my Canadian debit card at an ATM, and once again I was never charged an ATM fee. This system was easy, straightforward and it worked great for me. I never opened a NZ bank account while I was there so I can't speak to that. However, a few people I know did open an account and it seemed to work out well for them, so that appeals to you then it may be something worth looking into. I would recommend going into your bank before leaving and speaking to someone regarding this so you know ahead of time what to expect and what will work best for you.

closet with drawers. Having your own bedroom gives you a place to get away and have time for yourself as well as a quiet place for study/homework. Along with the bedrooms, each flat has full Wi-Fi access, 2 shared bathrooms, both equipped with a shower, a kitchen fully stocked with appliances and cookware, a communal dining room and living room with couches and a TV. Each flat also has a balcony. The one thing that was missing was an overland while it would have been extremely nice to have one, it was pretty easy to make decent meals without. There is an optional meal plan but most students I knew opted out of this as it was expensive and the dining hall was a fair distance away. Laundry facilities are in a separate building within the halls of residence. The cost is \$2 to wash and \$2 to dry. cost4-0.04nF 0- -icostven207 c

There is a 17 day break in the middle of the semester, so I highly recommend you use this time to travel! I flew to Auckland and did a road trip around the entire North Island. It was absolutely amazing trip and I got to spend it with some really great friends. If you do decide to travel during this break, make sure you plan early! You can get cheap flights through Jet Star (a subsidiary of Qantas Airways) and hostels typically range from \$18-\$30/night (I suggest using the Hostel World App to find the nicest accommodations for the cheapest price).

Note: Be prepared to drive in New Zealand. I went with the mindset: "They drive on the left side of the road –no way am I attempting that" But I quickly realized that New Zealand is a land made for road trips and driving is the best and cheapest way to see the country. It was very easy to make the adjustment to driving on the left and as long as you focus on the road and drive safely, you won't have any problems. If you can travel with 3-4 friends to split the cost, car rentals are really cheap (including full insurance). On weekends, some great day trip destinations include, Kaikoura, Hanmer Springs and Castle Hill.

### Sightseeing

There are so many incredible things to see and do in New Zealand it is difficult to find enough time to get to them all. Some places I highly recommend you see and activities you should do include:

#### *South Island*

- Boat Tour through Milford Sound- a very beautiful and mystical place
- Visit Queenstown –Go up the gondola, luge down the mountain and if you're brave enough, go bungee jumping!
- Go kayaking in Akaroa
- Swim with fur seals in Kaikoura
- Hike up the Christchurch Porthills
- Star Gaze at Lake Tekapo
- Visit Mount Cook in the Southern Alps
- Abel Tasman National Park –coastal track
- Attend an "All Blacks" rugby game –they sell out every game so get tickets early or better yet, before leaving home.

#### *North Island*

- Visit Cape Reinga (northern most point in New Zealand)
- Go sand surfing down the Te Pahi Sand Dunes –incredible!
- Visit Hobbiton!
- The Māori culture is rich and diverse –attend

My greatest tip would be to remember that plans can change and some of the best experiences are the ones you were never planning for!

## After the Exchange

### What I learned

Studying abroad is an absolutely incredible experience. I learned that some of the greatest experiences start by saying “hi” to someone. That’s exactly how I wound up taking a road trip with three Kiwis up to Arthur’s Pass on just my second day in New Zealand! So don’t be afraid to put yourself out there! Although I was really happy to return home to see family and friends again, I very much miss my life in New Zealand. I was surprised at how quickly it became like home and I have definitely left a piece of my heart in this beautiful country







