

Studying abroad in New Zealand

As a sophomore I went to Auckland, New Zealand to study through the IES program spring 2005. I am a biology major who hopes to eventually go onto graduate school. Although I decided to be a Biology major beginning of my sophomore year, I decided that going abroad was an experience I could not miss out on just because I feared getting behind.

I took an Introduction to Metaphysics course that filled my Philosophy requirement, a Christian Theology course, Cell and Molecular Biology and Marine Science. Both Science courses counted towards my Biology degree. If I could go there again, I would take a Maori (the indigenous group of New Zealand) art or culture class or an Environmental Science class. My favorite class was the Marine Science course as it incorporated environmental issues facing our marine environments, field and research projects on current issues in marine science, as well as the unique oceanography and geothermal activity of New Zealand. Classes were significantly easier than the biology courses at Wofford, but the University I attended offered a wide-range of Biology courses and other courses that I would not be able to take here at Wofford. I felt I had to take some courses that would fill necessary requirements for a Wofford degree, but if I could choose again, I would take courses unique to New Zealand instead of classes like Philosophy, Christian Theology, and Cell and Molecular Biology, all courses one could take in the states. It was interesting, however, to adjust to their different teaching styles and to learn from a very different perspective.

Auckland is the biggest city in New Zealand and a busy, modern city, which is completely opposite of New Zealand's predominantly rural cities. I enjoyed living in the big city as I have never experienced a city with a population over 1 million before. The city catered to travelers and was easy to travel to and from. Within 30 miles, there were beautiful beaches east and west of Auckland and gorgeous farmland. The city had much diversity, including a very large population from Asia, and the Maoris, the indigenous people of New Zealand. The "kiwis" were extremely friendly and open-minded towards Americans and visitors from all over the world. They are a well-traveled group of people who are extremely tolerant of people visiting or moving to their country from another country. They are extremely active and enjoy the different outdoor activities their country has to offer.

I was able to travel around New Zealand often and even went to Tonga, a South Pacific Island near Fiji through the IES program. There we learned much about a third world country trying to develop their country while maintaining their unique culture and protecting their environment. I learned a lot and it was the first "field trip" I enjoyed. We were also able to hang out on the tropical beaches, making for an enjoyable trip. Traveling New Zealand opened my eyes to how much the world had to offer and time and time again I heard from fellow travelers that it is truly the most beautiful country in the world. From gorgeous beaches, "splunking" in the hidden caves of farmlands, hiking volcanoes, kayaking in the crystal clear waters of the South Island surrounded by snow-capped mountains, traveling abroad gave me an experience I could not have dreamed of. I learned more about myself and the world around me than I will all four years at

Wofford. I recommend everyone to go abroad regardless of your major or constraints because it will work out and definitely be worth it.