Palmerston North, New Zealand

Lukas Heins

Program: Massey University Exchange, Fall

Lukas’ Major: Biochemistry

Academic Life: Classes were structured in a similar fashion to UW-Madison. Two of my courses had a lab component where the professor led the experiments. The majority of my classmates were Kiwis. Classes were a great way to meet and get to know local students. Additionally, most of my classes had a group project as a large component of the curriculum. Each component of each of my classes was led by the lecturing professor.

Housing: The majority of international students lived on campus in university housing, but I lived in town in a flat with four Kiwis, a Brit, and a fellow American. It ended up being one of the best parts of my experience. These individuals taught me more about Kiwi culture than anyone else who I met and ended up being some of favorite people in New Zealand.

Lukas’ Most Memorable Moment: The memory that sticks out the most to me was my first tramp (hike) into the bush. My friends had planned it and were positive they knew what they were getting into; I wasn’t so sure. We ended up wading up a river for around 3 hours and had to continue for a while after night had fallen. We were so excited when we saw an orange triangle nailed to a tree. It meant we had reached the end of our journey for the night, a four person hut. I remember waking up the following morning and looking out the window into the lush green mountains and being struck by how beautiful it all was and how happy I was with my decisions that had brought me to this place.

Cultural Differences: The Kiwis are much more involved in agriculture as a nation than the USA. They value their farmers, have opinions on how the land should be put to use, and as a whole are much more educated on how their food gets to their table. This affects the quality of the foods at the grocer, the health of the consumers, and the discussions that are taking place about conventional agriculture and the organic movement. It was very refreshing.

Advice for Someone Considering New Zealand: Photos don’t do New Zealand justice. The immense natural beauty of this nation can only be absorbed if you live it. It isn’t the type of beauty that puts a smile on your face and then fades away, but instead the type that inspires you to look more seriously at environmental issues that threaten it. It energizes you.

“Flexibility is so important when studying abroad.”