Eva Hayes

Essay

Accepted to: UConn, PennState, Suffolk, UCSD, Quinnipiac, Northeastern, SUNY Binghampton

The most confusing sentence ever spoken to me was, “Grab your togs and jandals and we’ll go in ten.”

I had no idea how to obey these instructions. *“Aren’t they supposed to speak English here?”* I thought. I had only been an exchange student in Auckland, New Zealand for six hours and I was already lost.

This was my first encounter with Kiwi slang. After embarrassingly asking for some clarification, I was informed that we were headed to the pool and these were words for bathing suit and flip-flops. This was just the beginning of my realization that although I was in an English-speaking country, it would still be a very foreign experience. I was introduced to a new language between the accent and the slang, and definitely experienced cultural differences.

At first, I thought that it would be dizzying to be 8,831 miles from my home, my friends, my family and my culture. But there I was making friends from all over the world, discovering Auckland and learning so much. I realized I loved the change in scenery and the opportunity to engage in a different experience.

The differences are what fascinated me; everything from driving on the opposite side of the road to seeing maps that featured New Zealand in the center of the world, to celebrating Treaty of Waitangi Day, but not Halloween.

Yet even with these interesting differences, I still saw so much evidence of worldwide connection; like hiking up the slopes of Mt. Ruapehu which I had seen at home on my TV screen, in the movie Lord of the Rings, and finding Kiss My Face lip balm, which is manufactured in my hometown.

This trip and my other travel experiences have taught me to adapt to new situations, work with others as a team, be outgoing and take risks. These are valuable skills that I am eager to apply to my studies and in any situation that requires problem solving and cooperation. I am excited to pursue a course of study that allows me to use these qualities in a challenging academic field.