

At the end of their AFS exchange in New Zealand, we asked some recent AFSers from the USA to answer two questions:

- ❑ What elements of your host culture, compared to US culture, did you find most difficult to adjust to in the areas of family, school and/or social life?
- ❑ Please note any advice you would like to share with AFSers destined for your host country.

Here are some of their responses:

There was much more down time in New Zealand than in the United States. They all came together at night and watched the television for a few hours. In the United States we are always moving so fast there is very little time for this type of down time and family gathering. Experience everything! Leave no stone unturned and don't be shy. You only have a short time in your host country, make the absolute most of it! It goes faster than you could ever imagine.

**Joy, Semester, 2010**

I found when I arrived to New Zealand that the eating habits were most difficult to adjust to. This is because at home I eat a lot of pasta, and only have three main meals. In New Zealand, we had breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, sometimes supper, and always dessert. This was a huge change for me, as at home I do not eat as much. The school was another big adjustment because I had to wear a uniform there whereas in America, I do not. If you are going to New Zealand, be sure to know that it rains everyday at least for 5 minutes, and then it is sunny for the rest of the day!

**Sarah, Semester, 2009**

As Americans we take it for granted that competition is a part of daily life, but little did I know, no one really cared too much who was better at what and why. "Nevermind" isn't a rude remark; it's just their attempt to move on to the next topic of conversation. They didn't seem to dwell too much on little nit-picky things, or dramatic elaborations. Confidence is key! When you're on your own for the first time your first reaction is to cower in a corner, but don't! To many people shyness seems like you're just too full of yourself. Find the courage to go out there and introduce yourself, people aren't as scary and judgmental as they seem.

**Nicole, Semester, 2009**

It was hard for me to get used to the way school was run in New Zealand. I had to become more disciplined because they had exams at the end of the term and no

tests in between. I had to get used to studying at night every night so that I would do well on the exams. My best piece of advice is that you just have to go with the flow. New Zealand is a very laid back country. They make plans last minute and aren't too fast pace. It's hard to get used to but it is nice when you do.

**Bailey, Semester, 2009**

Do not go to New Zealand and expect it to be the same as the US. For awhile i had trouble understanding their accent and had to ask them to repeat things several times. Also New Zealand is such an amazing country and i found the kiwis to be naturally friendly and outdoors people so take advantage of every opportunity that you can because i did things that i would have never tried before and it was all worth it.

**Sarah, Semester, 2009**

Bring slippers you can wear inside the house, because you usually have to take your shoes off when you go into a house. Most kiwis wear slippers after they take off their shoes. Plus they're really comfy. I got some there for like 70\$ 100% SHEEP FUR. Love them. Definitely be open-minded when it comes to food.

**Allie, Summer, 2008**

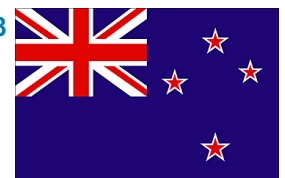
Do everything possible. Never hold back and take advantage of every opportunity offered to you.

**Eunice, Summer, 2008**

I did not live in a city when I was in New Zealand, I lived in a town. [It was] very different coming from NYC; I had trouble comprehending that the stores closed. The school day in New Zealand is also very mellow with lots of breaks and I didn't know what to do with all the free time.

**Alexandra, Summer, 2008**

I found school the hardest to adjust to. It's not that I didn't like it-- on the contrary, I love my NZ



school! But it was just so different than what I was used to. But once you're there for a bit, it just seems normal.

**Catherine, Year, 2007**

I just found their food the most difficult to adjust to. I wasn't ever used to eating that much and it was a bit difficult.

**Ashley, Summer, 2008**

The culture is very similar [to the U.S.]; the only part of New Zealand I found at all troubling was the lack of roads. They might find the US overwhelmingly big.

**Meara, Summer, 2008**

The culture was not all that different, but the little things around the house and the family dynamics, along with the ability to get around were the biggest changes in my life. The rural life was hard.

**Erik, Semester, 2008**

The Kiwi accent was a little difficult to understand but not too bad.

**Allie, Summer, 2008**

Things are pretty expensive, even though the American dollar is worth more than the New Zealand dollar everything costs more, especially clothes. Enjoy the Hokey Pokey Ice Cream!

**Alexandra, Summer, 2008**

Make sure to get involved any way you can. It's going to be hard just jumping into things, but when you do that people start seeing you as a student of the school, and not 'just another exchange student.' And trust me, when the students feel like that towards you, your experience is so much better. You feel like you belong there- not just a foreigner going to school there for a bit.

**Catherine, Year, 2007**

Take in the beauty of everything around you. Never get used to it because I don't think anything can compare to some of the places you will see.

**Elizabeth, Year, 2007**