

KIA ORA – A Student Exchange To Auckland, New Zealand, From July To September 2015

Four German girls from St. Marien School Regensburg on the other side of the world

“Hi, we’re Theresa, Leonie, Eva-Maria and Elena. We’re your exchange students from Germany. Nice to meet you.” When we first met our host families at Auckland Airport, their reaction was so overwhelming that we felt welcome from the very first second and this impression was confirmed later. After an exhausting 30- hour journey from Munich via Bangkok to Auckland - including an unscheduled return to Munich after just one hour in the air - we had finally made it. We had arrived in New Zealand!

In fact it had all started two months before July 15th when Mr Fischer put a note on the monitor saying that he was looking for girls who would like to visit our partner school in New Zealand for a few months. For weeks and weeks interested students met during breaks and in the end four lucky girls were selected. It was us. As we were so excited about the trip, July 15th came really fast and our journey began.

We can say that every one of us had an unbelievable and unforgettable time in New Zealand, starting with our wonderful host families, who were the best you could have wished for. Each of us stayed with her own host family and the only time we met was in the breaks at school or when all of the “international students” had meetings or participated in trips or other activities. We were part of the Epsom Girls Grammar School family and the school uniform made us feel like real students there. At the beginning, wearing it was a bit strange but after a short time we almost slept in it. School in general was interesting. We did not have to write assignments or essays so we could totally absorb the new impressions and be busy making new friends (which was strikingly easy). One main difference between German and New Zealand school life is that using technical devices, e.g. your laptop and smart phone, is just a normal way of working. So things like overhead projectors are old fashioned. And the teachers do not ask pupils to come to the board and tell the class what was taught in the previous lesson. The few times we German girls saw each other (including some Maths classes) were filled with conversations about all the amazing experiences we had had on the weekends: standing on top of the Sky Tower, visiting Hamilton and Rotorua, eating Sushi in Wellington, seeing the legendary “Hobbit” and “Lord of the Rings” movie set, taking a trip to the South Island, going to the National Museum or Mission Bay Beach – only to name a few things. The mix of mountains, the sea, unique landscapes (with not as many

sheep as you would expect) and big cities make New Zealand an impressive country. Although it is so hard to get used to the fact that all New Zealand people consistently drive on the left side of the road, the Kiwi attitude towards life is quite relaxed. But there is one thing that Germans can hardly believe: every teenager we talked to was crazy about leaving the island and going to Europe or America to be “part of the real world”. For them, NZ is so isolated that Germany seems like a dream that everyone is reaching for once in their lifetime. It does sound weird for Europeans that the closest place is Australia, which is about three hours away by plane.

But before we forget it – the native culture, called “Maori” is quite a big deal there and we pretty much enjoyed the Maori language, games and food. We had the pleasure to see the typical Maori dances, listen to their music and learn how to handle “Pois”.

And while we are already on the topic of strange things – spaghetti on toast and the fact that a “Hot Dog” looks very different might be quite interesting to mention...

Our exchange passed by way too fast, and in the end we had to leave with a heavy heart. Theresa and Elena left after four weeks, Eva Maria after six and Leonie visited her friend in Wellington for another three weeks after she had spent four weeks in Auckland.

Collectively, we can say that it was an incredible time with lovely people and great memories in a beautiful country that is definitely worth a longer visit.

Last, but of course not least, we would like to give a big “thank you” to our great host families for their hospitality, the school management of EGGS, to Mrs Maria Blanco, who was always there for us in New Zealand, to Mr Fischer, because without him this exchange would not have been possible, and to our parents for letting us go.

Kia Ora!

(Kia Ora is a Maori expression meaning “hello”, “goodbye”, “fare well”)

By Leonie Klinger (G 10A), Theresa Rösch (G 10D), Eva-Maria Jungmayer (G 10D) and Elena Hammerschmid (G 10A)