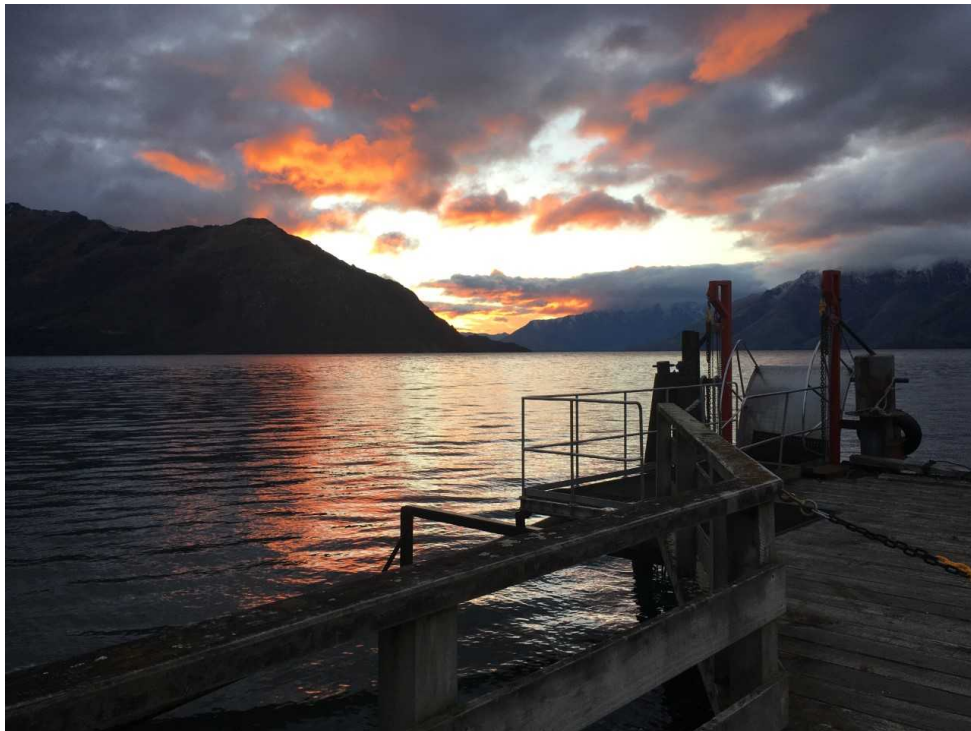


New Zealand Study Abroad May 2018
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The plane is about to take off. I'm terrified and I'm sitting between two guys I barely know. I've never been on a plane before and at this particular moment I'm starting to wonder why I paid so much money to be squashed in this tiny seat. I'm running through my packing list. Did I forget anything? Do I still have my passport? I just checked a few seconds ago, but I'm afraid I'll lose it somewhere.



There were so many things that I was worried about, but it only took one look at the beautiful landscape of New Zealand to know it was all going to be worth it. Every moment was a moment to experience the richness of God's creation and receive His promise of restoring our world someday. I met many people that showed me great hospitality and love. Aren't we Americans? Aren't we contributing to the problems that these people have to deal with? Yet they receive us with well wishes and open arms. It was both humbling and motivating.

Every day was a new adventure, full of information to learn and people to get to know. Do I want to go back again? You bet I do. Am I ready to travel somewhere new? You bet I am! Did I come back with a different world-view than when I left? Yes!

Coming back to the U.S. was the hardest part of the trip. I didn't want to leave. This felt like such a perfect place. I didn't want to wake up and not see the mountains. I wanted people to greet me with "Kia ora!" and show me their best pukana. It was hard for me to realize that I would even think that. Shouldn't I want to go back home to the place I've made so many other good memories?



I think those feelings were another way for me to realize how much the trip helped me grow as a person. I had to learn how to experience the culture shock and be grateful for the experience I had while I was there. Life is not perfect in New Zealand, just like life is not perfect here in the U.S. There's no difference between the beauty of either location. I am just more immune to the landscape that is in Indiana. If I really try, I can experience the same joy and peace here that I experienced while I was in New Zealand.

Now that I have had this experience and see my own country in a new way, I feel ready to greet travelers here in the U.S. and be proud of this great place I call home. It's wonderful to relate to them in how exhausting and exciting traveling is. It is exciting to share my love for my country.

Oh yeah, and those two guys that I had my first flying experience with? They are terrific people and I would take any chance I could to stop them on Purdue's campus to catch up. Studying abroad will change your life. If you are debating on going or not, DON'T! Just do it! Close your eyes and hold on tight because it's going to be a breathtaking experience!

