

## Discovering the Beauty of Ordinary New Zealand Life *by Gordon Chan*

### Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), Wellington

From February to July, 2019, I participated in the Student Exchange Programme organized by City University of Hong Kong to study in New Zealand as an international student for one trimester. I attended Victoria University of Wellington which is located in Wellington, the capital city of New Zealand. Wellington is a cluster of businesses, political authorities, arts and cultures. Additionally, it is surrounded by a spectacular harbor and series of mountains. You may come across a wide range of eye-opening experiences when you travel around Wellington. All within a walking distance of each other. Although Wellington is a small capital, undoubtedly a suitable place for living and working.



*The living environment of Wellington*

Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) is the leading research institute in New Zealand. It is well-known for its programmes of Laws and Humanities. VUW has three main campuses located around Wellington CBD which are Kelburn, Pipitea and Te Aro. The first two are the ones which I frequently stayed at.



*VUW's Campuses*

## Life in Wellington

During the period of exchange, I stayed in UniLodge Stafford House which is located at the business centre. Two friendly and kind housemates lived with me during my stay and whom I frequently spent time with. Most surprisingly, I was invited to attend the graduation ceremony of my flatmate. It was really a precious opportunity to experience a graduation ceremony overseas which completely surprised and overwhelmed me.

Furthermore, I went to VUW with two buddies who studied at CityU. With the geographical location of Wellington, we travelled around New Zealand during weekends and explored the mystery and beauty of New Zealand. Since VUW had a trimester break during the middle of the trimester, I trekked to Australia and spent my Easter holidays in another country.



*My flat mates & Exchange Buddies*



*Trips to Australia*

## Things to Adapt

### 1. *Weather*

Rather than language and lifestyle, the weather condition in Wellington is something you really need to be prepared for, as the conditions can be extreme at times. New Zealand's Southern Hemisphere location produces a different climate from Hong Kong, the unique geographical characteristic makes Wellington "special". For example, it is extremely blustery! Wellington has an alia of "*Wind-ington*". The normal wind speed is almost equivalent to that of Typhoon No.8 in Hong Kong. You need to be prepared for breezy walks on the streets of Wellington all day long. Bring a windbreaker with you!

So, do expect to take some "shaky-handed" photos in Wellington...

### 2. *Lifestyle and Pricing*

Coffee shops are all around Wellington, you can easily find one around the corner. Due to the coffee culture in New Zealand, my coffee habit began. However, most of the shops in Wellington close before 6pm. There isn't much nightlife here. From an economical point of view, New Zealand lags behind other major cities in the world, which is far from my expectation. There are no shopping malls in Wellington CBD. The only shops you can hang out are the supermarket, supermarket and supermarket. During my days off, I would read lecture notes and complete assignments in the morning, walk to Museums and the supermarket in the afternoon, and sleep early at night. Just like a retired person!

In terms of lifestyle, the cost of living in New Zealand is quite high. When I first came to Wellington, I found it impossible to find food at a similar price as Hong Kong. So, I really took time to adjust my mind-set and discovered that a meal of around 10-15NZD (50-70HKD) was reasonable.



*Affogato*



*Ferg Burger in Queenstown*



*Sunday Market at Wellington Waterfront*

## Memories

### **1. *International Buddy Programme***

International Buddy Programme is a buddy programme organized by VUW to help international students adapt to living and studying in Wellington. My buddy, Jo, is a friendly and kind girl who always shared her experiences about what she had discovered. She even brought me to different places in the Wellington suburb. Some of the city centre places were only frequented by the locals. Finally, Jo invited us to her home for dinner and drinks. Her enthusiastic welcome made my exchange programme truly enjoyable.

### **2. *Flight Nightmares***

I found myself unlucky every time I travelled with airlines from Hong Kong to Australia/New Zealand. Delays or failure to land occurred often and I needed to spend extra days in the airport, because of the flight delays. I always thought that people would change their flight details if they knew I was on their flight, as I was that unlucky!

### **3. *Beauty of New Zealand***

Travelling around New Zealand is breath-taking! One of the most fascinating aspects was observing the unique landscapes and ecosystems.

And More...



*Jo (middle), our International Buddy*



*Flight delay in Brisbane, Australia*



*That Wanaka Tree, Wanaka, NZ*



*Queenstown, NZ*

## Learnt and Look Ahead

### 1. *Culture and Lifestyle*

New Zealand's lifestyle is entirely different compared to that of Hong Kong. No one hurries. Kiwis really enjoy hanging out with others and emphasize a work-life balance. They just enjoy everyday life and know how to relax after work. I like their slow-paced lifestyle immensely. Moreover, Maori culture is very important in New Zealand, the Maori community are the indigenous people of New Zealand. Living in a country with a unique mixture of Maori and European ideas also helped me to be more respectful to people from different cultures.

### 2. *Friendship*

The friends I met in New Zealand are the most precious treasure of this exchange programme. Even though we are from different countries, we still keep in touch and chat occasionally. My flat mates even plan to visit me in Hong Kong during term break!

### 3. *Worth to be Active*

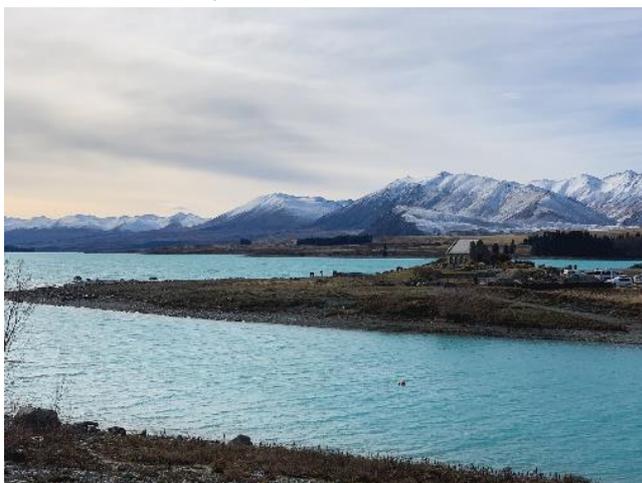
Being active and brave really helps you to improve your confidence in communicating with foreigners. Nobody will laugh at you when you make mistakes. Try to learn from language mistakes and speak confidently with fun. In addition, being active also helps to develop and enhance relationships with others.



*Skydive in Queenstown*



*Milford Sound, Fiordland National Park, NZ*



*Lake Tekapo & Church of Good Shepherd, Tekapo, NZ*



*Red Tarns Track, Aoraki/ Mount Cook National Park, NZ*

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