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Exploring Hamilton and Raglan

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Kia ora koutou katoa!

So, we've been in New Zealand for five weeks, four weeks of classes, now. Boy, is time flying by!

We've been studying a lot and we had our first test in New Zealand last week. We are all taking an anthropology course where we are studying New Zealand and the Pacific. It's really nice to have a class with all four of us in it, so that we can discuss material, get clarification and help when we need it, and study together.

Besides studying and attending classes during the week, we have been able to explore the city of Hamilton and visit Raglan, a surf city on the west coast.

Although Hamilton isn't a Wellington or an Auckland, there are fun things to do here. We usually walk the forty-five minutes into town to explore. On calm, sunny days the walk is beautiful. We've located many tasty places to eat (for when we get tired of cafeteria food), beautiful art galleries, the Waikato Museum, the Hamilton Gardens, and places to shop as well. I find the gardens enjoyable for picnics on sunny days and it is fun to maze through all the different cultural gardens too. The museum is currently featuring a great exhibit on rugby—perfect timing with the upcoming start to the World Cup. We have also found great parks and walking routes along the Waikato River that are wonderful to explore.

We made a weekend trip out to Raglan with six American friends we made down here. We stayed at a Backpackers where we could rent surfboards and wetsuits for \$25, and borrow other equipment such as kayaks, skim boards, bikes, and skateboards, for free. The people we met there were truly enjoyable. One night, we went out to a pub to watch a rugby game between the All Blacks and South Africa, and we met a gentleman that willingly coached us through all the teams' statistics and the rules of the game. We explored the beach and picked up some cool shells. Some of us surfed and some of us kayaked. Raglan is a cozy, laid-back town and we really enjoyed the atmosphere.

A couple weeks ago, we also went on an excursion to a stud farm and a dairy town in Cambridge, a town just outside of Hamilton. We signed up for this activity for \$10 through the International Office here at the uni. Cambridge Stud is known for breeding million-dollar studs and it was a great opportunity to learn about horses and what exactly goes on at stud farms. We had no idea that horses were so popular down here; we thought they were all about sheep! Cambridge Stud was actually the home of Sir Tristram, a multiple champion sire of Australasia with a record of 45 individual Group One winners. He has now passed, but his son, Zabeel, now resides there and is a champion himself. The dairy farm was just as interesting. We got to see and pet calves that ranged between couple-days-old to week-olds. We also were able to observe the milking of mature cows and learn how that process happens.

It has certainly been a great few weeks of exploration and we look forward to every weekend so that we can explore more of New Zealand.

Cheers,

Maya