

A Farewell to Alfriston, by Sarah Harders from Germany 2015

I can't believe I've only got a bit over 2 weeks left! It's gone so fast. On the one side it really doesn't feel like I've already been here almost 6 months, but on the other side I'm so used to the New Zealand lifestyle and the people that I feel like I've always been living here.

I must admit that it was a bit hard for me in the first few days when I didn't know where exactly I was and what the people I lived with were like. What time do I have to wake up? Who's doing my washing? How am I getting to school? Can I use the internet? Is there internet? What should I talk about with them? All these upcoming questions I've never had to ask before reminded me on how far I was away from home.

Weeks before I even came to New Zealand I kept thinking and worrying a lot about how my exchange was going to be.

But at the end all the nervous thoughts I had before I came here didn't really matter, because nothing can prepare you for what you're going into. You have to take everything as it comes. And whatever comes is going to be very exciting, just because it is all different from what you are used to.

It's incredible how fast I got used to the different lifestyle and felt home here. The people at Alfriston College are probably the biggest reason why it was so easy for me to feel comfortable. From the first day everyone at school was so welcoming to me, starting conversations and asking me heaps of questions.

I didn't know that it was possible to find friends for life

in such a short time, and I'm not only talking about people in school.

I also got really close to the

people I travelled with, for example on the South Island tour.



To be honest I like the Alfriston College school system more than my school in Germany because of the different whanaus. In whanau time I learned a lot about New Zealand culture, for example by practicing the haka. The whanau competitions and events like sports

day and cross country helped me to get involved, what is something I really wanted to be.

Back in Germany I don't have anything to do with students from other year levels. At Alfriston College the tutor classes make it possible to get to know students out of every year level, which is great! What I also enjoyed is that at Alfriston College I could choose from a variety of interesting subjects. Of course, my favourite subject is Outdoor Education. OED gave me the opportunity to see some beautiful parts of New Zealand's nature and do many fun activities with my amazing class. The trips we did also showed me about myself that I'm not as unathletic as I always thought I was and that I don't hate hiking, I love it.



When I'm back home really soon I'll look back on my stay in New Zealand as an unforgettable time, full of new experiences. I'll always remember all the amazing, welcoming people that made my time here so perfect. I'm proud to show my grandmother how much my English has improved and I can't wait for my parents to see that I've become more independent.

I learned a lot about myself and I'm sure I changed a lot in a positive way. I've become more confident in myself and the choices I make. Also I am less shy, which is what I'm really happy about.



If I would have the chance again to make an exchange I would only do one thing different: plan to stay longer than 3 months or half a year because as the saying goes "time flies when you are having fun!"

Good-bye beautiful New Zealand.