

Placement Realities for Hosted Students in New Zealand

To have a great experience in New Zealand the student and natural family should research about New Zealand and the area they are going to be living in. The following issues and information in the 'Haere Mai' handbook need to be seriously considered to help with pre-arrival preparation. Thorough preparation and awareness of New Zealand realities will result in an amazing exchange!

- **English** – English will be the first language in the family, community and school. Students will need to make a serious effort to learn and speak English to settle well into the exchange.
- **Smoking** - AFS New Zealand does not accept students who smoke and most host-families do not smoke. It is illegal to purchase cigarettes if you under 18 and you cannot smoke in public places such as restaurants and schools. We expect all students to tell the truth about their smoking habits in their application papers. Many host families have complained about the lack of honesty when it comes to smoking and this is not acceptable.
- **Rural placements** – 90% of New Zealand's hosted students are placed in rural areas, often on farms or in very isolated areas. AFS New Zealand cannot guarantee any specific requests for placements (cf. International Participation Agreement). All students should research about the area where they are going to prepare for their experience. Students who feel that they could not cope or adapt to a rural lifestyle should re-think coming to New Zealand on an exchange.
- **Pets and allergies** – 99% of New Zealand families have pets that live indoors. Students who cannot live with pets either due to allergies or dislikes will not be accepted. Because of New Zealand's climate mild allergies can sometimes worsen.
- **Diet** – An AFS student should at all times fully participate in New Zealand family life, including eating the same food. AFS New Zealand cannot accept students who do not eat meat (unless for very special reasons e.g. religious or medical reasons) as meat is very much part of the New Zealand diet.
- **House-hold chores and farm work** – New Zealand families always share the house-hold chores and an AFS student will also be expected to help with cleaning and chores around the home. If the student is living on a farm they will be expected to help out with (sometimes) physical jobs on the farm. This is a part of New Zealand culture and life!
- **School participation** – An AFS (YP/SM) exchange is an academic programme. Full school attendance and participation in school life is required. AFS students are considered to be New Zealand domestic students and do not have a specially designed school schedule or exemption from class work. During the 'study breaks' it is expected the students will take part in community service work if not sitting school exams or fulfilling other school responsibilities.

- **School terms** – The New Zealand school year starts in late January and ends in November for exams and ‘study break’ followed by a 6 week summer holiday. There are four terms per year with a 2 week holiday approximately every 10 weeks.
- **Sport and cultural activities** – The student should take part in activities that will be beneficial towards their programme participation and intercultural experience. All schools do provide sport and cultural activities and also the host-family and chapter volunteers can help the student find clubs, teams or projects to become involved with.
- **Phoning/emailing home** – AFS New Zealand strongly recommends that students limit their contact with their natural family and home country friends. Limiting the contact helps to maintain the students focus on the intercultural experience. The student and host-family should discuss phone and internet usage and agree to some rules.
- **Visits from home** – We advise against visits from relatives and home friends during the programme as it can negatively affect the intercultural experience. If visits are to occur, we recommend that they take place at the end of the programme or after 6 months or more. Permission is needed in advance from AFS.
- **Respect and appreciate** - All AFS students need to remember that their host-family and volunteers are also sharing in an intercultural experience and providing their house, food and time for free. At all times, the student needs to be involved with their host-family and chapter and to be respectful and appreciative.
- **AFS chapter involvement** – All students are to attend and to become involved in their local chapter meetings, functions, and AFS promotional activities.
- **AFS camps** – There are three camps for all year programme students and two for semester students. The Gateway Camp (6-8 weeks after arrival) and End of Stay Camp (4-6 weeks before departure) are free and compulsory for all students. The Mid Stay Camp is not compulsory and is not free, this is held at the same time as the End of Stay Camp (for year programme students only).
- **Community Service** – It is required of all AFS students in New Zealand to complete 40 hours of community service while they are on exchange as part of the Global Education Framework. Host-families and volunteers can offer assistance with this.
- **Programmes cannot be extended** – All AFS programmes cannot be extended, e.g. if you are a semester student you cannot change to year programme.