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Earth to Emma

travels, school, and everything in between

New Zealand Here I Come! – October 25, 2016



I am beyond excited to announce that I will be continuing my studies in international business and marketing at the Victoria University of Wellington this upcoming March-July through the international exchange program at University of Hawaii. On top of the excitement of this, I was also chosen as a Johnson Scholar and will be receiving a generous scholarship for my studies abroad. A huge thank you to Mr. William Johnson for giving me this amazing opportunity. This scholarship means a lot to me, and is helping me to further my dreams and career goals. One of the requirements of the scholarship is that I maintain a blog throughout my travels, so follow me here on my journey to the land where there are more sheep than people!

Preparing for takeoff – January 19, 2017

The past six months have been filled with planning and preparation for my upcoming international exchange. Some of the major things I have been doing are:

- getting a student visa
- applying for housing
- figuring out travel insurance

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- saving up
- figuring out flights and transportation

The most time consuming was definitely the visa, but good news is I got it! It was actually much easier than I had anticipated. In the past, when I applied for my 6 month visa in Australia, I waited for about 4 months and finally received it a couple days before my flight. New Zealand has a very user-friendly immigration website and getting my visa was FREE because I'm a student! Also, it only took about a month for me to get the approval email with my e-visa attached.

Applying for housing at VUW was pretty simple as well. There is a website with an online application that is very thorough and easy to use. It seems like they really care about matching you with the right people in the right place. My only complaint was that the housing application was rather pricey compared to other universities. It turns out that I was placed in Te Puni Village which claims to be the "Rolls Royce of university halls". I will be in a self-catered shared apartment with other international students and am super excited for meeting new people and experiencing living in this new place.

The travel insurance part is pretty simple. Manoa International Exchange requires you to purchase their travel insurance before departure, but so does VUW. So right now I am just filling out paperwork in hopes that I won't have to purchase both insurance plans. In the event that I do have to get both, I guess I will be extra covered in case I get hurt!

The saving up part has definitely been the most time consuming! This isn't required by either of the universities but I have taken it upon myself to get three jobs in hopes of saving up a ton of money for my trip. I am working as a barista at the Coffee Gallery near my house, teaching surf lessons with North Shore Surf Girls, and occasionally doing edible gardening with Foodscapes Hawai'i. I love all three of these jobs and am so thankful that I have been able to work with such amazing people and companies these past few months, but if we are being completely honest here.. I'm ready for a break!

My last task at hand will be getting a flight from Honolulu to Auckland. Luckily, I am blessed to have an Aunt who works for Hawaiian airlines and will be helping me to get over to New Zealand as a standby passenger. So for now, my date that I have chosen to fly over is February 16. This will give me a little over a week to hang out with my brother who lives in Manghawai, NZ before I head to Wellington on Feb. 28th.

Other than the list above, it has just been a combination of small things to get ready for NZ. Like packing up my shack on North Shore for move out, getting warm clothes for Wellington's cold temperatures, and getting ready for classes, spending time with friends, etc. I have no class schedule at VUW yet but am figuring that out at the moment.

Overall, I'm pretty stoked for the adventure ahead. I'm also really stoked for all of the planning to be over! No one told me that doing an international exchange required so much planning and paperwork. I know that it will all pay off though, and I can't believe that after this past 6 months of hard work I'll be living in New Zealand in less than a month.

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Xoxo
emma

Classes – *January 31, 2017*

While overseas, I'll be continuing my education in Business (specifically in marketing) and will be taking the following classes:

- Marketing Communications
- Market Research
- Intro to International Business
- Intro to Corporate Finance

Sadly, VUW hasn't given me approval yet on the finance class due to an insufficient educational background but I am planning on submitting a hefty petition in order to take that class. I am also taking a self-directed course with my favorite professor at UH in which I will be reading a couple books and writing papers about them.

In total, I will have 15 credits for the semester and will still be on track to graduate within the next year (given I am able to get into the finance class). Regarding course registration as an international student at VUW, it is certainly not a fast process. I started petitioning for classes about 3 months ago and was just able to register today. However, this is not a problem because the classes don't fill up as fast as my mother school's do so I shouldn't have an issue with holding a seat. Fingers crossed that I get into FINA 201!

The countdown is on. – *February 13, 2017*

Three days until I get on a plane heading straight for Auckland.

The stress of preparing and getting everything ready for my trip is really getting to me! To be honest, I haven't even started packing yet because I've been so busy with work, meetings, coffee dates, etc. Leading up to departure, I've been trying to fit in every last little bit of fun with friends and family. I recently rushed over to Big Island to see some family and friends and also got to do an epic three day hike with my boyfriend, Jared.



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What an incredible adventure! 3 days spent hiking 20 miles to an incredible remote valley on the northern coast of Hawai'i island. Seriously felt like I was stuck in a dream and I don't think I've woken up from it yet.

After coming back from the Big Island, I had exactly one week to get my act together and finish getting ready for my international exchange. I have compiled a list regarding everything that I have to do before I leave but I will kindly spare you the details of that list. Let's just say, it's a lot.

Regarding preparations for school, I am pretty much set. My accommodation is set, my classes are chosen for the most part (still trying to get into that finance class), and my travel plans for the first week that I'm there are basically set in stone. On February 16, my mom and I will be flying with Hawaiian Airlines straight to Auckland where a friend will host us for a couple of days before we join my brother and his family for the rest of the week (and hopefully get to surf some waves). I am so happy that my mom gets to join me for the first week of this adventure, and it gives her another excuse to go back to New Zealand to see her family and friends.

After our time visiting with our loved ones, mom and I will head to Wellington where I will be moving into my new apartment on the 26th in Te Puni Village and saying goodbye to each other for a few months. After this, I will be attending an orientation on the 28th for international students. During the orientation, I will hopefully have my class schedule figured out and my international insurance paid for.

side note Communicating and coordinating from overseas is so difficult and this experience has given me huge appreciation for people involved in International Business. Not only do you need to figure out how to do everything over the internet alone, but you must keep in mind the time difference, the conversions for everything, and go to extreme lengths to get things in by their deadline (ex. rent money).

So, now that everything is pretty much ready to go other than all of my belongings that I'll be taking there, I just wanted to share a little bit about what emotions I am experiencing in the last week before my departure:

To be honest... I feel very melancholy and bittersweet about this upcoming adventure. The reason why I am feeling this is because I really am so happy with where my life is right now. I love my friends, my family, my shack, my job, the surf, the ocean, and everything in my life. I feel totally happy and content with my life right now on Oahu, so even though it may sound ridiculous, part of me is sad about leaving and going to New Zealand. I know that it's meant to be, but I can't help but feel a little bummed about leaving everyone and everything. I know that it will still be here when I get back but I guess there's a small part of me that worries that it won't.

Everyone keeps asking if I'm excited to go to New Zealand and to be completely honest, I am excited for the upcoming adventure but I'm just trying to focus on the now and enjoy my time before I leave. I don't want to spend my last days consumed in the future, but I want to enjoy the present and soak in this special time with my family and friends.

Prayers for me as I continue getting ready these next couple days.

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Xo
Emma

Week One – *February 22, 2017*

After being in New Zealand for 5 days my initial thoughts on the country are:

1. Stunning
2. Untouched
3. Less populated
4. Strict (lots of rules)
5. WAVES
6. Lots of cows

The plane flight to Auckland was wonderful, but trying to get out of the airport was quite the opposite (it was pretty horrible). I ended up getting fined a ridiculous amount of \$400 for bringing in a small jar of Manoa Kiawe honey as a gift for my brother and his family. Apparently, much to my surprise, it's extremely unlawful here to bring honey into the country. And stupid me didn't read the fine print on the agriculture card and thought that honey was encompassed in the food section that I had checked off. Most expensive jar of honey I have ever had.

Other than that ordeal, New Zealand has been great so far. The country is just absolutely stunning and I simply cannot believe how empty and unpopulated it is here compared to America. Everyone has been very friendly and kind, the food is great, the coffee is delicious, the beer and wine are refreshing, and the surf is incredible. After just 5 days of hanging out and exploring, the stoke of my 5 month stay here is higher than ever before.



Sunset at Te Aurai point

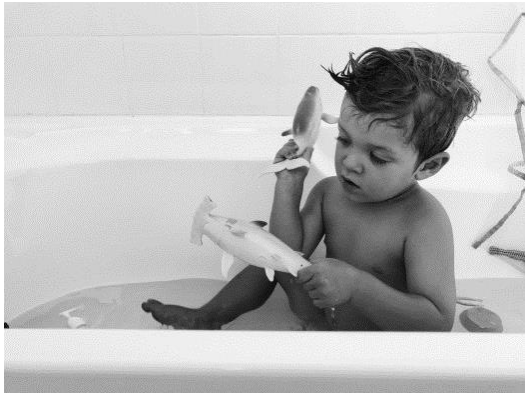
So far I've just been enjoying spending time with family and seeing what the beautiful north island has to offer. And much to my surprise there are a ton of cows here. I guess dairy farming is pretty huge in Northland so everywhere you go there are cows, and some sheep here and there. My brother lives in Northland on the East Coast of the North Island in a quaint town called Mangahawai. It has been such a pleasure getting to see how they live and how beautiful of a community they have here. Apart from the cute little cafes, the gorgeous beaches, and the delicious bakeries, Mangawhai has a special charm to it and I can see why my brother and his family love it so much.

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Enjoying a flat white at Bennett's cafe

Seeing my family has by far been my highlight of these past 5 days. I can't believe how much my nephew Marlin has grown just in the last 6 months that I haven't seen him. He's home from a vocabulary of a dozen words to one of a thousand in just a few short months. I feel so blessed to be able to spend this time with him as he discovers new wonders in life and grows into a little boy!



Bath time with Aunty Em

Apart from exploring and beaching it, I've also gotten to get a little surf therapy in here and there and do a little modeling for my sister-in-law, Caroline's, gorgeous market boutique, Caro With Love.

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Caroline has been building her brand in Mangawhai by hosting a tent in the local farmer's market this past year and has really made a beautiful impact on her community, to the point that she's been featured in the paper twice now. It has been a blast these past few days to be inspired by her and brainstorm ideas for the future of her business and to put some of the information I've learned in my marketing classes to some good use.

Another one of the highlights of this week was having a barbecue at Caroline's parents in the hills of Mangawhai.

side story here

A couple days before we were supposed to leave, my mom was rushed to the ER and was not able to make it to NZ because of some health issues. We were bummed to say the least.

back to the bbq

So we are standing in the kitchen of Caroline's parents house and talking about how bummed we are that my mom couldn't make it after spending a couple days in the hospital back in Hawai'i. As we are talking about it, we hear the front door open and my mom walks in the kitchen. What a rascal!! I guess the doctors gave her the green light after a couple days and she hopped on a plane as soon as she could and surprised us, and what a great surprise it was! We have been having a blast all together and could not be happier that she got to join us over here.

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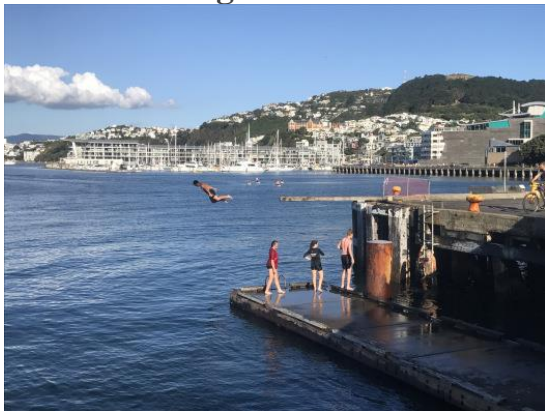
Exploring shell beach with Mom

So after 5 days, I just can't wait to see more of New Zealand. I've only seen a small piece of the country so far and am already loving it. I can only imagine what the rest of it will look like. On Sunday, I'll be catching a bus to Wellington to start my journey over there. I'll be riding the "Naked Bus" which will leave at 2:45 pm on Sunday and arrive at 7:55 am on Monday. It's not the fastest option, but it's the cheapest.

So the next time I write on here will most likely be on the bus, which has wifi, or in my new temporary home of Wellington. Until then, I will be enjoying the rest of my time with my family here in Mangawhai and hopefully surfing some awesome waves.

Tata for now,
Emma

Life in Wellington – *March 7, 2017*



The wonderful Wellington waterfront

A year ago, I did not picture myself living in Wellington, New Zealand. But sometimes life doesn't work out the way you planned and throws amazing opportunities in your face. I'm glad that I caught the opportunity to live in this amazing city for a time in my life and have been loving it so far.

My only complaint is the lack of surf.

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Other than not surfing, I have been filling my time with exploring the city, hiking (known as “tramping” here) through the bush and hillside, making new friends, going to music festivals, outdoor movie nights, having coffee dates, etc, etc. It has been quite the whirlwind of a week and to be honest, I am pretty beat. There is so much life and so many events going on in Wellington compared to North Shore, I am overwhelmed with opportunity! I keep having to remind myself to take it easy and not to burn myself out before I even get started.



Taking in the view on the Skyline Walkway

What has really stood out to me is the richness of the culture here. The city is absolutely teeming with art, music, and nightlife as well as daily activities. And the cool thing about it is that a lot of it is free or comes at a small price. New Zealand has done an excellent job at designing their capital to be a friendly cultural hub of fun, entertainment, and information. I can see why people from Wellington are so proud of where they live, I would be too if I were them.



Beanbags, sunshine, beer. What more could a girl want?

I ended up getting switched into a different hall of residence a few days before I arrived at VUW and am super stoked about it. I somehow landed one of the nicest flats in University Hall, which is just a bunch of flats in Kelburn (the suburb next to the university) that VUW purchased and rents out to students. I live in a spacious three bedroom flat overlooking the hills with two guys, one from America and one from Germany. They're horrible! Just kidding, they are awesome. I feel so blessed to have been placed in this flat last minute and am really impressed with the quality of the university's housing here. Not only do I have my own furnished, spacious room, but it also has a view! Lucky me!



The view from our dining room

As far as actual school stuff, classes just started yesterday for me and although I am a little overwhelmed by the work load ahead, I think it will be all be a-okay. The differences between university in New Zealand and America are pretty big but hey, at least all my classes are in English! Some of the differences are....

- A undergraduate degree takes 3 years in New Zealand instead of the 4 it takes in America.
- The school year is broken into trimesters instead of semesters
- A full work load is 3 classes instead of 5
- Classes aren't called classes, they're called "papers"
- Not only do you have a weekly class session, but you also have a weekly "tutorial" for each class
- There's pretty much only one test and it's at the end of the trimester

So yeah, it's different here but I'm sure it won't take too long to get used to it. I ended up enrolling in Market Research, Intro to International Business, and Popular Media. The last one doesn't have much to do with my Marketing major but I wanted to pick something for myself and it looked interesting to me as well as beneficial to my studies in the long run.

Luckily, I got to limit my weekly class schedule to Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday so that I could have 4 day weekends. I figured that if I'm going to go to school in another country, then I'm going to try damn hard to explore it. So, this weekend, some of the other international girls and I are planning a road trip to do some hiking and adventuring before school gets intense. The weather forecast predicts rain for the entire weekend, so we are hoping for a freakish beautiful couple of days to swoop in move the rain out of the way for us.

Fingers crossed!!

Until next time,
Emma xo

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Rotorua/Taupo Road Trip – March 14, 2017

Here's a cheesy vid of the little road trip some of the other international students and I did over the weekend. Natural hot springs, waterfalls, rivers, zorbing, hiking, and just plain enjoying our youth.

<https://videopress.com/v/C8qR39Yk>

April already? – April 6, 2017

Time flies when you're having fun.



After spending over a month in New Zealand, I've decided that I may not ever leave. Actually, I have to because my visa runs up in August. But if I had the choice, I would muck around in this beautiful country for at least another year or so.

Apart from my love affair with NZ, life has been all too good to me lately (school, friends, adventures, etc). Things have been picking up with university and deadlines are approaching but the fact that I really enjoy all of my classes makes my projects more fun to me than they are tedious.

My current schedule goes a little something like this:

- IBUS 201- International Business
- MARK 203- Market Research
- MARK 310- Arts Marketing

Monday: 9:30-11:20 am IBUS 201 lecture, 12:40-2:30 pm MARK 203 lecture, 3:40-4:30 pm IBUS 201 Tutorial

Tuesday: 9:30-11:40 am MARK 310 lecture

Wednesday: 10:30-11:30 am MARK 203 Tutorial, 12:30-1:30 MARK 310 Tutorial

Thursday-Sunday: Weekend!!

I somehow managed to schedule my classes into just three days a week, so 4 day weekends are a common occurrence for me. I had a schedule similar to this back in Hawai'i and I think it's essential for me, mostly because I can get my work done during these days but also because it allows me to go on adventures for several consecutive days without having to cram activities in to your average Saturday Sunday. Like this one...

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Surf trip at Mt. Taranaki



I'm more than happy to announce that my surf hiatus is no more! I have been blessed by fun barreling waves every weekend for the past month and also by meeting people who share the stoke. It was almost trippy how sad I was getting because I couldn't surf, I knew it was an important aspect in my life but I didn't think it was THAT important. I almost felt like a drug addict having withdrawals from waves, as weird of an analogy that is. But I'm back on the surf train and I couldn't be happier.



The local Wellington break, Lyall Bay

Other than uni and surfing, I've been doing a ton of hiking (which they call tramping here), going to gigs with friends, babysitting, road tripping, attending art workshops, etc. There is so much to do here, it's almost difficult to pick an option sometimes.

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It's quite a nice change from the laid back lifestyle in Hawai'i, where there's rarely an event and if there is then you know the whole town will be there. Here, there is always something going on every day and you can choose basically whatever you're interested in going to! And if you're not feeling a night out on the town, then there is always the option to go explore the outdoors and get amongst NZ's beauty.

Speaking of getting outdoors, my fall break will be coming up in a week which is super exciting, but what's even more exciting is that my sister is coming from Hawai'i! We will be having a classic Em & Lis sister trip, running a muck together on the South Island and doing awesome sister stuff. All we've got is a car and a tent, and a real thirst for adventure! I couldn't ask for a better person to spend my break with and I can't wait to see what the South Island has to offer.

Well, that's pretty much what's new with me! Tata for now,

Xoxo
Emma

Slowing Down. – April 10, 2017

We live in a society in which our days are measured by every small tick of a clock.

Every second is precious. We speed in our cars wherever we go and we get annoyed waiting in lines for more than five minutes. We send small messages back and forth through our smartphones rather than interacting face to face. Our children are addicted to 7 second looping videos and social media platforms and have little to nothing of attention spans nowadays. Is no one seeing the correlation of children being diagnosed with disorders with the rise of technology? When did this come about? How did we evolve into an instant society? I may not have these answers, but I do know that we need to slow down.

We need to slow down and take our time. We need to look up from our phones and pay attention to where we are walking. I am sick of going to a coffee shop or waiting in line somewhere and seeing everyone on their smart phones. Imagine the personal relationships we could make with different individuals if we were not so consumed with the piece of technology in our hands. Sure, social media has been a fantastic way for people to connect. However, I believe that it is being abused and turning individuals into self-consumed robots. How can we not be selfish individuals if we are constantly looking at ourselves? No wonder all of our young girls hate their bodies. They are exposed to stick thin "Instagram models" from the time they are old enough to hold a smartphone in their hands. These are now the role models of our youth. Vine famous, Instagram famous, YouTube famous, technology consumed people.

It makes me scared to think that if I have a child in the future, they'll have to grow up in this kind of society. Lately I've been wondering if I even want one at all. When I was a kid, there were no computers in our houses, or smartphones, tablets, etc. We played outside and used our imaginations like kids should. Video games and computer games were not a thing until I was in my pre-teens, so my very formative years of childhood were spent outside rather than looking at a screen. Nowadays,

kids can operate an iPad before they can even talk. And yes, I used to know a 2 year old that could do this.

A study performed by Kaiser Family Foundation found that “on average, kids from 8-18 spend 7 hours and 38 minutes *a day* using entertainment media. That’s one hour and 17 minutes, or nearly 20 percent, more than they spent on such media five years ago” (Alderman). There is data out there that proves that ADHD and attention disorders are on the rise since technology has advanced in the past decade or so. Do I really want to bring other lives in the world that will have to grow up with this? In my thinking lately, I’ve concluded that if I do have kids in the future, I’m going to have to homeschool them and raise them on a farm or something along those lines.

I know that it isn’t ideal for me to wish that we lived in a society without these things consuming our everyday lives but a girl can only dream. I just want to live an authentic life spent making relationships with people face to face. What if the person standing in front of you was your future husband or wife, but you were too busy looking down at your phone instead of striking up a conversation with them? I bet in coffee shops back then, people actually talked to each other and socialized rather than stared at their screens. We complain about how hard it is to find a spouse, and we search for them on the internet. But maybe the means by which we search for these people is the whole reason why we have a hard time meeting spouses in general. If we simply looked up from our screens, we might actually see these people face to face.

Don’t get me wrong, I think technology and social media has been an amazing invention in the modern world. I feel that we are more connected to each other globally than we ever have been, and it will keep growing from here out. The only thing that rattles me is that even though we are connected globally, we somehow forget how to stay connected locally. It might be impressive to have thousands of followers on your Instagram or twitter from around the world but do you have actual friends you hang out with in your town? Do you know your next store neighbors, or the people you sit by in school?

These are questions that I think a lot of people need to ask themselves these days, including myself.

Perhaps you should take a moment to slow down.

Xo
Emma

April Adventures – May 1, 2017

Well, another amazing month has come and gone.

This month has been especially awesome though because I got to hang out and do the famous Tongariro Alpine Crossing with a couple of old friends from high school in Idaho who have been living in New Zealand for the past year. I also got the pleasure to travel around the South Island for two weeks with my sister during my school holidays. Those two weeks were filled with some of the best times I have ever had, and I will cherish the memories we made for the rest of my days.



We started the trip like every epic adventure starts, with complications. I always say “It isn’t an adventure unless something is going wrong.” First of all, I completely spaced on the fact that one usually needs a credit card to rent a car, so we were almost car-less if it wasn’t for our mom coming to the rescue and giving us permission to use her card information (thanks again Mom). Then, when we were three hours into our drive to a remote camp spot on Lake Tekapo, I realized that I forgot the sleeping bag that I had borrowed for my sister to use. But of course I brought everything else you could possibly think of, including things we didn’t need (except for the chocolate, we needed that). I just forgot the one thing that would provide my sister warmth during the negative degree nights. Luckily enough, we made an amazing friend at our campground that night who had an extra sleeping bag.

The next day, we awoke to a colorful sunrise over a secluded lake surrounded by vibrant autumn trees and cried tears of joy over the beauty that we had woken up to. After a gourmet breakfast of hot cross buns and peanut butter, we drove off with our wonderful new friend Lucy on an adventure to Mt. Cook National Park, where our jaws dropped at the land that surrounded us. We ended up doing a few different hikes and having a dance-off with these three Australian brothers on a swing bridge. This led us to a fun night of drinking boxed wine and belting out Elton John’s “Rocket Man”.



We all parted ways the next day and Elisabeth and I started our journey to Lake Wanaka, where we swam in the brisk waters and basked in the sunshine. We ended up meeting a super awesome goofy ginger dude named Jimmy, who we ended up staying with for the next couple of days and creating some of the best memories. You know that scene in Lord of the Rings when the trees come alive and one of them walks out and says “My friends used to live here”? Well, Jimmy took us there and we had a magical time, which naturally ended in rolling around in the moss and Elisabeth and I chasing sheep.

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After Wanaka, Lis and I headed to Queenstown and met up with our dear friend Lucy. That night, we were lucky enough to get the opportunity with the grandparents of the family Lucy Au Pairs for. We were totally spoiled with our own floor in their beautiful home, with heated blankets and breakfast made for us in the morning. Talk about Kiwi hospitality! After another “see you later” with Lucy, Lis and I made the trek to Fiordland National Park, where we spent two days awestruck in nature. This was one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen, it will forever hold a special place in my heart.



On our way back from the Milford Sound, we stopped to hang out with Lucy again in Queenstown one last time and got the proper night out, complete with mechanical bull riding, dancing on table tops, and singing karaoke for free cookies (all the while being completely sober).



We headed back to Wanaka the next day and met up with our good ol’ pal Jimmy and all of his

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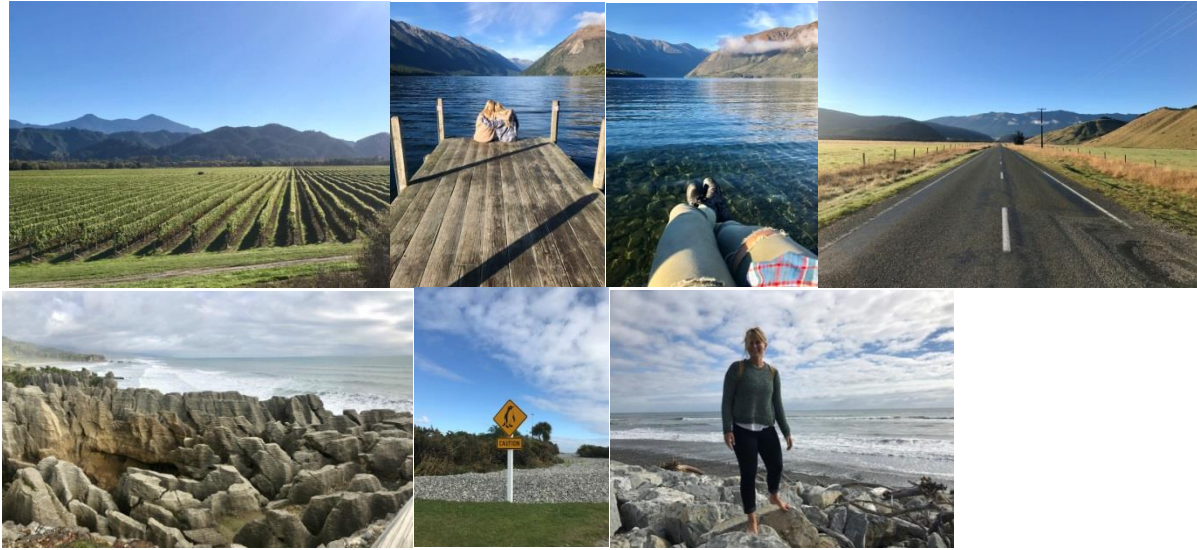
friends, including my wonderful friend Lauren from Idaho. We spent the day soaking up the autumn sunshine by the lake and paddle boarding, with plans to head to the West Coast with Jimmy and Lauren the next day where we would do the Copland Track.

After a slow start to the day, we started the 7 hour hike around 12:30 pm and got to the hut around 6, just in time to watch the sunset and spend a good amount of time soaking in the natural hot springs. Let me just say, the mud in these pools was definitely the highlight of the hike. I'm pretty sure Jimmy smeared every centimeter of his body in it.



We finished the hike with some cold beers at a pub in Fox Glacier and ended the night with a bonfire under the stars on a crystal-covered beach on the west coast.

After some crystal hunting and sad goodbyes, Lis and I spent our last couple of days driving up the coast to Picton, where we did some caving and sight seeing. We ended up treating ourselves to a night in the cutest hostel I've ever stayed in (The Lazy Cow) and made our way up to Nelson Lakes National Park and through wine country before we took the ferry from Picton to Wellington. It was home from here.



The best part about the trip was that we ended up pretty much disregarding any of the plans we made, we just got in our car with a tent and went where life took us. In my opinion, that's the way most trips should go. And if we really want to get deep, which I do because I'm a D & M whore (deep and meaningful), I truly believe that's the way life should go. Sure, you can make an exhaustive list of plans and create expectations, but it never really goes the way you planned, and that is a beautiful thing to me.

Elisabeth and I saw some of the prettiest sights we will probably ever see in our lives, but it was the people we met along our journey that made it so worthwhile. You know, those people you say "see you later" to instead of "goodbye". It's the laughs that you share together, the tears of happiness, and the joys and special moments in life that you experience in the company of others that make life worthwhile.

Every single day, I find myself absolutely amazed by the natural beauty of New Zealand. But I know that when I leave, it'll be the people I've met in this beautiful place that I'll miss the most.

South Island Road Trip – May 4, 2017

<https://earth2emma.wordpress.com/2017/05/04/south-island-road-trip/>

I actually go to Uni. - May 7, 2017

Since this blog is really about studying abroad, I should probably write a little about my studies.

We are now halfway through the trimester here at Victoria University of Wellington and things are not too hectic for me to be honest. It is just a lot of staying on top of readings and continually

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working on assignments that are due in a few weeks time. For example, just before the break I turned in an assignment for Marketing Research that ended up being 30 pages long.

I am currently working on a 4000 word assignment for Arts Marketing that focuses on a specific business/company within the arts world and the report will focus on a particular market segment, expand on its description and provide recommendations for marketing to this segment. For this assignment I chose Vincent's Art Workshop, a place that I personally go to very often. Vincent's is the oldest creative space in New Zealand, established in the 80's in response to government policies of the deinstitutionalization of mental hospitals. Although their general target market is those who suffer from mental illness, they are welcoming to everyone of all walks of life. I found out about Vincent's in my first couple weeks in Wellington and have been going on a pretty regular basis ever since. They have every type of arts and craft you can imagine, from paints to ceramics to screen printing. And the best thing about it is that it's completely free of charge for everyone. Which is really nice for me since I am a poor college student with none of my paint supplies here with me in Wellington.

So, apart from that project, I have a couple others I'm working on for International Business and Marketing Research, and other than that I generally try to stay on top of my weekly readings.

University here is very different from what I'm used to in America. Instead of having midterms and quizzes, there's just a few hefty assignments and one big test at the end of the trimester that's worth like 50% of my grade. No pressure, am I right? It doesn't leave much room to mess up. So I feel like I really need to step up my game and work my butt off to get good grades over here (not that I don't back home).

So, there's an update on how I'm doing in Uni! All in all, I'm really enjoying my classes and am quite impressed with the quality of education at VUW and am very happy with my choice to come to this university!

Xo
Emma

Crunch time. – May 19, 2017

Well, we are now halfway through May which means that lecture period ends at the end of this month... which subsequently means that I have a ton of huge assignments due in the next couple of weeks.

Then after that, I'll get about three weeks for a "study period" and then I'll take my finals and go back to Hawaii! I can't believe how fast time is moving, it's insane.

I didn't really realize how long I've been here until I looked in the mirror and noticed how white I was. I've been in New Zealand for about 3 months now, and only have 1 and a half months left

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before I go home and go straight into summer classes back at University of Hawaii. I decided on going back early so that I can graduate in the December and be finished with uni.

Other than that, life has been pretty good over here. It's starting to get really cold here in Wellington... Almost too cold for me to go surfing anymore, which is quite the bummer. I'm so spoiled by the weather and warmth back in Hawaii, I definitely don't take it for granted anymore. I mean, there aren't many places in the world where you can bet on sunshine and rainbows almost every day...

Even though the weather isn't as nice here, it's still a great place to live. Actually, Wellington just got named as the #1 city in the world to live in! How cool is that?! I can definitely see why. There's always something fun happening, and the city is central to both the north and south islands. Great location, cool museums, awesome cafés, and much more. My favorite thing to do in Wellington is go for a walk through the botanic garden on a nice day, grab a coffee, and hang out with friends. At night, you can always bet on some live music somewhere, which is probably my favorite thing to do, the venues are awesome and the music scene here is so fun.

I recently went to a concert for Thomas Oliver, a local kiwi who's made it pretty big recently... You should look him up!

Other than school, gigs, and the occasional hike, I've really just been enjoying my time here and taking life day to day. Just trying to soak in the present as much as I can and live in the now!

Tata for now,

xo
Emma

Uni struggles. – May 30, 2017



VUW's Pipitea Campus- where my lectures and tutorials are held

To be completely honest, I am so stressed out with uni right now. Just in the past two weeks I have had a group presentation, a 4000 word assignment worth 45% of my grade due, and another 2000 word assignment worth 25% due in a couple days, along with another group project. Then lectures

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end and I have 2 weeks to study my butt off for my finals that will each be worth 50% of my grades. I NEED A BEER.

Attending VUW is actually a lot more difficult than I expected when it comes to academics. Maybe it is because I have not fully assimilated into the ways of Kiwi university, but I have found my studies here to be quite challenging and frustrating at times. After speaking with other international students at VUW, it seems that they are also having a difficult time adjusting to the academics here and not receiving the kind of grades they would get back home.

To me, the grading is much harsher here than back home and the assignments are much more complex. Instead of having multiple assignments, tests, and presentations throughout the semester like in America, the classes here will maybe have one or two lengthy assignments with an enormous final exam at the end of the semester that weighs almost half of your grade. I find this to be rather intimidating, not allowing much room for even the smallest mistakes. I do not necessarily dislike the way university is done here, but I am certainly not used to it and this makes things very frustrating and difficult for me at times. However, I am accepting of the challenge and I am ultimately very impressed with the quality of education and the facilities VUW offers its students.

Jammin' through June – *June 12, 2017*

Wow, June already?! Where has the time gone?

I feel like I arrived in New Zealand just yesterday. But then again, February 16th feels like a lifetime ago. So much has happened in the past four months, I wouldn't even know where to begin! So I'll just focus on the happenings of the end of May and the beginning of this month:



May was filled with lots of studying and grinding through large assignments. Luckily, I made it through (not going to lie, I had a few mental breakdowns). Thank God for the small two-hour time difference between here and home so I could call and complain to my poor mom. But other than the tedious schoolwork that filled the last month, I've mostly just been chilling out in Wellington and enjoying time with friends. Since coming to New Zealand, I've been gone exploring almost every single weekend. So, although it was weird to stay in the city for over a month straight, I really got to embrace city life and make the most out of my surroundings.

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cheesy side note I just wanted to shout out to all of the amazing individuals I've met and gotten the chance to share friendship with here. You guys have made my time in New Zealand and will always hold a special place in my heart. *back to the post*

When I wasn't in class, studying, or working my life away in the library, I generally grab a coffee or something with a friend. My current obsession has gone from Raglan Roast to this cafe on Cuba Street called Midnight Espresso. It has one of the cheapest coffees in town and cake that is TO DIE FOR.



Not going to lie, I got cake there with friends at least three or four times last week.... mind you, we always share the slice. I can't help myself! They change the cake every day, and my curious nature and sweet tooth are drawn into the store every time I pass it.

Okay, enough about cake. Let's talk about what's been going on the past couple of weeks!

The beginning of June was marked with the deadline of assignments and the end of lectures and tutorials. I turned in my assignments, attended my last lecture, and immediately peaced out of Wellington.



My entire time in NZ, I have been absolutely frothing to go to Raglan and surf those glorious left-hand point breaks. But Raglan is a bit out of the way from Wellington so I figured I would just have to save it for the next time I'm in this country. Luckily, I met this awesome German traveler named Timo who was keen to make the trip up to Raglan with me. So I packed my bags and hopped in Timo's hippie van right after my last lecture. I can't express the feelings of happiness and refreshment I felt when leaving the city after a month. It's not that Wellington is a bad place to be by any means, but I get stir-crazy. It's cold here, I don't get to surf very often, I don't have a car to take myself places, etc. These things being said, I was feeling stuck in one place and just wanted to get out. Luckily, I got to explore for a week and surf my brains out.



Raglan is like a little slice of heaven. I can't even believe that a place like that exists on Earth. Not only is the surf absolutely incredible (talk about a goofy-footer's dream), but the surrounding country is stunning and untouched and the little town is adorable. It's a small and quiet place, but it is wonderful and perfect in its own way. There isn't much to do other than surf and chill. When I think about it, it's pretty much New Zealand's equivalent to the North Shore of Oahu. No wonder I love it so much. I felt at home the minute I stepped foot in the town.



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While in Raglan, I stayed at this amazing hostel called Solscape. It's an eco-retreat nestled at the foot of a mountain, overlooking the ocean. Let me tell you, this place is unreal. Not only is the location perfect, but you are totally immersed into an eco-friendly peaceful environment filled with love and happiness. I stayed in a train caboose that was converted into a bunk room. You can also stay in earth domes made of natural materials, or stay in a tipi-forrest. It's an awesome place and I would highly recommend staying there or at least visiting if you are ever in Raglan.



Now after my trip I feel refreshed and ready to study!!! Ha, just kidding. I do feel refreshed, but I am dreading studying for these massive three exams coming up. I don't usually get too nervous for exams but there's a lot riding on my performance this time. I haven't been getting the grades I want since I've been here and that has been a huge downer and pressure on me. If I don't get good grades on these tests, I run the risk of losing my scholarship. No pressure, right?

I'm nervous about it, but I have faith that I'll pull through and kick ass on these exams.

WISH ME LUCK!!!

xo,
Emma

Slammed with Exams. – June 22, 2017

The past couple weeks of my life have gone a lot like this:

7:30 am- Wake up and drink coffee in bed/look out my window/read my book

8:30 am- get out of bed and make breakfast

10:00-11:00 am- start studying

4:00 pm- go for a run/ workout

... then after that maybe go back to studying or hang out with friends.

That's pretty much my routine lately, which isn't so bad actually. Although hours of studying can become a real drag, I've been lucky enough to be able to meet up with friends every day and study with them and get coffee at some point.

I definitely feel the pressure of these exams. Coming to New Zealand, I had no idea how different the schooling would be. Back in America, I usually get A's or high B's on all of my assignments, but here a 68/100 is a normal grade. I think it translates to a B actually, which is really good for a big assignment. This is very discouraging to me, however. Even though my peers have been getting similar grades, I still can't help but feel like I've failed myself by getting these grades on my assignments that I've spent countless hours on.

I'm having a difficult time trying not to get down on myself about it to be honest. So, in order to combat this I will just have to kick butt on my exams! My mom always told me that you can do anything you put your mind to, and I completely agree with this statement. If I focus hard enough and study properly, I know that I am capable of getting good grades on my exams. But I have also come to the realization that I shouldn't get down on myself because I have been trying my hardest, and that's what matters in the long run. I'm not receiving disappointing grades because of my lack of effort, I have been giving 100% this entire time.

Apart from my exams, I was lucky enough to take a study break and go on a surf trip over the weekend to Cape Palliser and Castle Point. WOW!! What an incredible and refreshing weekend. It's funny how surfing and camping and being in the wilderness can seem to magically cure everything. The sun was shining the entire time and the waves were pumping. I got to surf one of the spots that was on the top of my list to surf outside of Wellington, called Ning Nongs, and explored some of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. After surfing some prime waves at Cape Palliser, we made our way East to Castle Point and stopped at this remote beach nestled in the hills. We drove through a farm with a couple hundred sheep to get down to the beach, where we set up camp for the night and had a bonfire on the beach. The next morning, my body woke me up just before the sunrise. Everyone was still asleep, so I got up and took a stroll on the beach to watch the sun come up. This is hands down one of my favorite memories from my time in New Zealand. With no one on this massive stretch of beach and only country surrounding me, I felt like I was one of the only people in the world. As the sun rose above the ocean, I sung and danced and spun around with joy in my bright blue footie pajamas. That morning, because of my geographical location, I was one of the first people in the world to watch the sun come up.

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It's moments like these that I will remember for the rest of my life. I can still feel the warmth of the sun on my skin from that morning, and the smell of the ocean air. I can recall the joy and happiness I felt in that moment of time, and the fullness of peace in my heart. I just sat there after a while closing my eyes and taking in my surroundings, and trying to bottle up everything I was experiencing in that moment. Because I will never have that moment ever again. The present is now, so appreciate it while you can.

This is what travelling is all about, the simple moments where you're just living in the now and soaking up as much as you can. It changes you a little bit, and you become a different person because of these little moments. I love it.

Prayers for me as I enter into my exam week!!

xo,
Em