

News Release

Life Lessons in Study Abroad

By Elizabeth Tollefson on Wednesday, July 12, 2017

In high school, she and a friend declared a goal to study abroad in college. This spring, Senior Malena Rupprecht, an elementary education major from Thief River Falls, Minn., achieved that goal with a trip to Australia and New Zealand.

Rupprecht transferred from Northland Community and Technical College to the University of Minnesota Crookston as a junior. Even before she arrived on the Crookston campus she had asked Rae French, study abroad coordinator, about the possibility of learning abroad in Australia.



Achieving her goal, Rupprecht and nine other students along with trip advisors Professor John Loegering and Lisa Loegering, assistant director of community engagement, traveled from May 8th to June 2nd along with a tour guide.

"I originally thought New Zealand and Australia would be very similar, but I learned they are very different and offer some great learning opportunities because they are unique," Rupprecht says.

"It is interesting how you can learn all about a place before you go, but when you are really there, it is different and unexpected," she continues. "Even if you are open-minded before you begin, one can always improve open-mindedness by traveling somewhere new because you can never really anticipate everything you will encounter."



The group hiked the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, a 19.4 kilometer climb that includes volcanic peaks and views of some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. Bungee jumping, hiking, visiting the Franz Josef Glacier, Milford Sound, snorkeling near the Great Barrier Reef are just a few of the other highlights.

She says she tried things she was afraid to try because she knew, "I am here once, so I have to do this or I will miss it altogether."

One of her special souvenirs of the trip is a children's book she purchased on the Haka, a traditional ancestral war cry, dance, or challenge from the Maori people of New Zealand. "I know I will use this book when I am in a classroom of my own and can incorporate it into my teaching," she says.

"I think studying abroad teaches you to be braver and more outgoing. I didn't know any of the other students going on the trip, but when you share experiences like we did, you become fast friends," Rupprecht reflects.

As she looks back at her experience, Rupprecht believes she gained a higher level of awareness and acceptance of others and of the differences in culture through study abroad.

The finale of her trip was spending two additional days in Sydney, Australia, before heading home. "A few of us chose to stay to see more of Sydney while we were there," she says. "The highlight for me was climbing the Sydney Harbor Bridge. It is something I have long wanted to do, and it was special for me to have the opportunity to complete this memorable climb."



Rupprecht shares these five important lessons from her trip:

Go with the flow.

Things aren't going to always go your way, so instead of getting worked up about it, just have fun.

Live in the present.

You might not ever have this experience again, so take it all in.

Be passionate.

Whatever you may end up doing, do it to the best of your ability.

Appreciate the things around you.

Some things might look the same as back home, others might be completely different. Either way, appreciate what you have in BOTH places.

Have an open mind.

Even if you thought you were open-minded before, there's always room for improvement.

In her final project, which she turned in as part of the credit she earned through her Cultural and Natural Ecology of New Zealand and Australia class, she uses this anonymous quote to help sum up her experience:

"We travel not to escape life but for life not to escape us."

Rupprecht has already considered where she might like to go next and looks forward to her next adventure. Confident that she learned some valuable lessons about living life, she is set to use what she learned no matter where life takes her.

The University of Minnesota Crookston now delivers 34 bachelor's degree programs, 22 minors, and 40 areas of emphasis on campus as well as 14 degree programs entirely online. These degrees are offered in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from more than 20 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

In the photos:

Top, right, left to right: Malena Rupprecht and Charli Schocker at Hobbiton.

Top, left: Students hiked the Tongariro Alpine Crossing.

Bottom, right: Top row from left to right: Emily Brook (tour guide), Bryanna Grefthen, Jack Wagner, Ryan Ratcliff, Alexandra Ogdahl, Leanna Haugen, Ashton Smith, Professor John Loegering and Lisa Loegering, assistant director of Community Engagement. Bottom Row: Steven Gonzalez, Michael Larson, Malena Rupprecht, and Charli Schocker stopped for a photograph during their hike of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing.

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