

IACE NEW ZEALAND



Quentin Petit - Marie Finck – Mathis Dupont

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Acknowledgements

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Exchange Organization

Throughout our exchange, we formed a group of 16 people, consisting of 11 cadets and 5 chaperones, from various countries: Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the United States, and France. The chaperones were from New Zealand, but each country also designated a reference person, especially to supervise minor cadets. We explored the whole New Zealand by minibus. During this journey, our main stops were at military bases, where we stayed for an average of two days. The attached map shows the main places visited as well as the activities we participated in.



Places visited in New Zealand

Day-to-Day Program

Travel Itinerary

To reach New Zealand, it took us almost two days of travel. We met on the evening of Saturday, July 6 at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport. We made stops in Mumbai and Singapore before arriving in Christchurch on the morning of Tuesday, July 9.

Tuesday, July 9

After arriving that morning, we had our first immersion in the country. After meeting the other cadets and attending a briefing by Marc, our New Zealand guide for the exchange, we visited the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) Museum. Located in Christchurch, this museum houses an impressive collection of historical and military aircraft. We also had the privilege of visiting a fascinating workshop where old machines are carefully restored.



Wednesday, July 10

The next day, we explored Burnham Army Base before visiting the International Antarctic Centre, a museum that highlights this isolated continent. During the exhibit, we observed penguins, experienced a simulated snowstorm, and even rode in vehicles used in polar bases. Later, we visited the Christchurch control tower, where air traffic controllers gave us detailed explanations. After lunch at the Canterbury Aero Club, we ended the day with a visit to the Willowbank Reserve, where we had the chance to see a kiwi, the island's emblematic and nocturnal animal, which is endangered and hard to spot. We also saw many other species there.





Thursday, July 11

On Thursday, we traveled to Alexandra, a town in the southern part of the island. This long minibus journey allowed us to admire numerous landscapes. Along the way, we stopped at a beach to see the Moeraki Boulders, giant stone spheres scattered along the shore, creating a mysterious and captivating coastal landscape shaped by fascinating geological processes over millennia. Once we arrived in Alexandra, we shared dinner with local cadets and their families, who warmly welcomed us.



Friday, July 12

On Friday, we had the privilege of spending the day with some of the local cadets we had met the previous evening. They took us to Queenstown, a charming town located on the edge of a beautiful lake. We also had the opportunity to experience the thrill of jet boating, a thrilling activity involving high-speed river navigation. At the end of the day, we tried curling, which was a fun discovery for the three of us.



Saturday, July 13

Saturday was mainly dedicated to a long return trip to Christchurch. Along the way, we encountered new landscapes, including Lake Tekapo, a stunning high-altitude lake. Several stops in the mountains allowed us to admire breathtaking views and enjoy the snow. We also attended a Matariki storytelling session, a traditional tale linked to stargazing. This sparsely populated region, free from light pollution, offered ideal conditions for stargazing with telescopes.



Sunday, July 14

On our way to Blenheim, we saw seals in their natural habitat, basking on the rocks. Once we arrived, we visited the Omake Aviation Heritage Park, a museum dedicated to historic aircraft with spectacular displays. Later in the day, we explored the maintenance hangars at the military base.



Monday, July 15

We took the ferry to travel from the South Island to the North Island. During the crossing, we were lucky enough to see dolphins and seals, a magical sight! Afterward, we visited Wellington, New Zealand's capital, where we explored the parliament building, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and took a funicular to enjoy a panoramic view of the city



Tuesday, July 16

The largest museum dedicated to New Zealand's history, the Te Papa Museum, is located in Wellington. We spent the morning exploring it, as it is a vast museum. After lunch, we had the honor of being received by the country's military leaders, a particularly memorable moment for all of us.



Wednesday, July 17 and Thursday, July 18

At Ohakea Base, we participated in a traditional Maori ceremony, a very moving experience where we sang together and learned about Maori ancestral traditions. Then, the local cadets introduced us to military drill in a very pleasant atmosphere. The next day was extraordinary: the base's military personnel took us on a training flight with them in an NH90 helicopter! This flight left a lasting impression on us. We also had the chance to try out the base's various flight simulators, including the NH90 and the T-6 Texan. We concluded the visit by touring the maintenance hangars.





Friday, July 19

We continued our journey to Taupo, stopping at the Huka Falls and the "Craters of the Moon." After admiring these magnificent sites, we arrived at our youth hostel for the night and then enjoyed a swim in the hot springs by the river near Taupo.





Saturday, July 20

The next part of our exchange took us to Whenuapai Base, near Auckland. On the way, we made several stops, including a "duck tour" in Rotorua (in a WWII amphibious vehicle), zorbing, and golfing!





Sunday, July 21

Our final stop on the exchange: Auckland, New Zealand's most populous city. We took a walk and visited the Sky Tower. We took the ferry to cross.



Monday, July 22

For our last day, we stayed at the military base and had the opportunity to explore various fields. We learned about space, electronics, experienced virtual reality, observed 3D printers, met firefighters, and toured the interior of a C130 Hercules. In the evening, we spent time with three local squadrons, playing games and sharing a meal together.





Back to France

After a stopover in Singapore and then Doha, we arrived in Paris with wonderful memories and stars in our eyes.

Thanks to the Air Cadets commission for allowing the three of us to travel to New Zealand. This exchange was a unique aeronautical and human experience that we will never forget!

We would like to express our deepest gratitude again for the warm and generous welcome we received during our time in New Zealand. The four guides who accompanied us were not only knowledgeable but shared their passion for aviation and the military with such enthusiasm that it truly left a lasting impression. Their love for their country was evident in the way they introduced us to New Zealand, allowing us to experience its beauty, both in its breathtaking landscapes and its rich, vibrant culture. We were deeply moved by the kindness and hospitality of the people we met, and the insights we gained about the local traditions and way of life were incredibly enriching. This exchange has left us with memories that we will cherish for a lifetime, and we leave New Zealand with a profound appreciation for everything it has to offer.

Thank you very much,

Mathis, Quentin and Marie



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