

Profile: Charles Gerard



Hometown:

Auckland, New Zealand

Program:

Work USA Plus

Total length of time spent overseas / or intended length of travel:

12 months

Tell us in a few hundred words where you lived and what you got up to in the USA?

I spent my first 6 months living in Mammoth Lakes, CA. This is a beautiful ski resort high in the eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains. I worked as a lift operator and had the time of my life! I got to ski everyday and spend my time outdoors with one of the most magnificent views in the world! I am now currently spending my summer months on Mackinac Island in Northern Michigan. I heard about this place from some friend I made in Cali. It is this really quaint little island situated in between lakes Huron and Michigan, where all motor vehicles are banned so the main form of transport is either horse-drawn buggies or bicycles. I'm working at the Grand Hotel, the largest summer resort in the world, a truly special place that makes you think you have stepped back into the 1880's.

How did you find out about IEPs Work USA Plus program?

Through some friends who had been part of the program in previous years.

What are some of the experiences that you had which made an impact on you?

Working full-time and having to fend for myself financially was great. Plus travelling on my own put me in circumstances where I was out of my comfort zone, but it was great as I have made many great friends from America and around the world.

Were there any times that were hard?

The most difficult thing has been at the Grand Hotel where I worked July and August without a day off!!!! I will never complain about hard work again!

What is something unexpected/ different/strange about the USA compared with other places you have lived?

Cheap food (huge portions); tipping EVERYONE!; the fact the very few American's knew anything about the rest of the world - I was asked if we spoke English in NZ, whether NZ was next to Turkey, and if there were actually wizards, elves and hobbits everywhere (seriously!!!!). But they were always very interested to find out more and genuinely interested in NZ.

What did you find valuable in going to the USA on an IEP program?

Knowing I had a group of knowledgeable people I could contact if I had any difficulties.

What next? Where to next?

I finish working on Mackinac Island at the end of October and plan to travel down the East coast from Boston to Florida, seeing friends and family along the way. Then a road trip from Florida to California through the South by way of New Orleans and the Grand Canyon.



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