

Profile: Tim Chatfield



Hometown:

Dunedin

Program:

Summer Camp USA (2005, 2006, and 2009)

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

3-4 months at a time

How did you find out about IEPs Summer Camp program?

I researched all the options and compared what each program was offering and picked the one I felt offered the best service, placement program, and cost/pay structure.

Tell us in a few hundred words which Camp you were at and what you got up to at camp? What was your role, a couple of highlights...

Where do you start... Unless you have been to camp it is hard to explain what it is like... Both my camp director and myself were a little worried about how I would fit in given that the majority of staff were American and 18-21 and I was 25 my first year, but there were no drama's – it was like I belonged! I arrived at the boat landing (that's right – my camp is on an island on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire) and was greeted by a bunch of US staff who were very friendly before taking my first of many 30 minute boat rides to camp. The place is amazing, the location and scenery are stunning, and the facilities may have been average, but everything else makes up for that! There is no other place like it on earth and it is my favorite place to be. I was a general counselor at Camp Lawrence, and this meant I got the best of everything – I was in a cabin of 11 year olds and helped them with everything from cabin clean up to dealing with homesickness (as well as dealing with the parents...) and had a range of different activities to instruct from riflery to swimming to frisbee. In the evenings we had campfires as a cabin, made s'mores (marshmallow and chocolate between crackers) and swam at one of the many swimming spots around the island or we would have an active night with our group of cabins. My schedule changed every two weeks, as did my campers. The variety was great as I got to do many different things and experience all aspects of camp life.

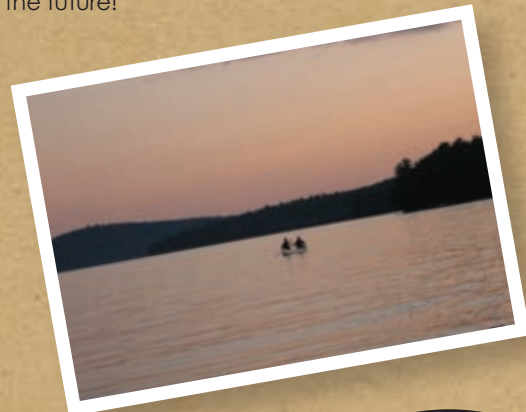
What are some of the experiences that you had which made an impact on you?

Camp in general was a life-changing experience for me! What can I say – after returning, everything got compared to camp life and there isn't a day that goes by that I don't think of camp, the views, and the people and fun I had. There are a few experiences which stand out for me though:

In my first year I helped many first-time campers deal with homesickness. When I returned in 2006, these guys were all excited to see me – dragging me to their parent on the landing to introduce me a year after we last spoke, or coming up to me to say 'see, I told you we'd be back!'

Also in 2006, I had a cabin of 12 year olds and one camper in particular who wasn't very popular. In fact he was a difficult camper who most people disliked. One day he found his disposable camera had been smashed and was quite upset. I'll never forget another camper who was an amazing kid – he went to the camp store and bought this guy a new camera from his own money, despite not liking him. I asked him why he had done this as it wasn't his responsibility, and his answer was 'because nobody deserves to be treated like that – I could see it was wrong and I had the money to correct it.' This year I sought him out as a senior camper and told him that this is my strongest memory of camp.

This year, I decided to take my cabin on an overnight campout where they cooked their own meals on an open fire and stayed up late. It was a huge success and my favorite moment of the summer. I put a lot of work into planning and organizing the overnight, but it was a big hit that the entire camp was talking about – I am sure it will be a regular occurrence in the future!



WORKING ADVENTURES WORLDWIDE

Were there any times that were hard?

Sure, there were always hard times, usually dealing with homesick campers, or lazy US staff, but the good times far outweighed the bad. I enjoyed every minute I spent on the island, oddly enough even the bad ones...

Did you travel after camp? Tell us about your adventures.

In 2005 I did a lot of travel. I had been working for 5 years and needed a break from life... After camp I travelled with two other international counselors. We went to Boston, NYC, Buffalo (not for long – BORING!) and Niagara Falls. I had a big road trip planned for after this going from Miami to LA, but Hurricane Katrina forced me to change my plans – thank god for travel insurance! After two weeks with these guys, I flew to LA and picked up a rental – a Ford Mustang – for two weeks of touring... I went to San Diego, Las Vegas, Hoover Dam, the Grand Canyon, and LA, before heading home with a 3-day stopover in Honolulu. I spent a ton of money, but don't regret a cent! The second year I went to camp and returned to NZ without any travel, and this year I spent a few days in NYC showing some first-time campers around the city before heading to camp. After camp I got a car and spent 4 days in Cape Cod, which by the way wasn't long enough...

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

The meal portions are huge – you could feed a family of 4 from a simple chicken dinner at a café!

Tipping – many people hate this, but I absolutely love it! and the service you get as a result is outstanding and I find it very rewarding to be able to show my appreciation and give feedback based on my tip. Leaving the money on the table and walking out of the café was also a little odd. You keep wondering if you got it wrong and they are going to chase you down the street.

I also found it odd that eftpas isn't a big thing in the US – their banking system is nowhere near as good as ours!

Do you have any advice for someone who wants a Summer Camp adventure?

I always tell people – if it is something you have ever considering doing, you have to go, otherwise when you are older, you'll be saying 'I wish I had...'

Did you have a good experience going on Summer Camp with IEP?

Definitely – I guess I have to say this, but back in 2005 when I first applied, Luke, the program coordinator, was fantastic. He always knew the answer, and even recognized my voice on the phone! I work hard to maintain that experience for those who are applying for the program now as it can be a daunting experience planning a trip like this.

Did you feel supported by IEP?

Very – every step of the way. Even when I got offered two different jobs at camp – counselor or boat pilot – Luke was there to help with advice on which would be the best option for me, helping me work out which experience I wanted more. And when I saw the boat I would have been driving, I definitely made the right choice!

What did you value about going to Summer Camp with IEP?

The support and service was second to none, but most importantly, even though it may have taken a little longer, the personalized placement was key – I couldn't have had a better match with a camp. When I decided to return, many people, even IEP asked me why I didn't want to go to a different camp – my response was 'why would I go anywhere else – Camp Lawrence was perfect and any other camp would always be compared to Lawrence – it couldn't get any better!' This is something I imagine almost every Summer Camper will say about their camp...

Would you do it again?

Without hesitation – I rearranged my entire life and moved to Auckland (A city I swore I'd never live in) just so that I can return to camp each year for as long as possible. If I could I'd live and work there every day for the rest of my life...

Did you gain anything from Camp that will benefit you in what you do next?

I have a lot of experience working with youth and in the outdoors. Camp certainly built on this, as well as my management skills. My goal now is to learn as much as possible about camp management so that one day I can be the Camp Director who is looking at hiring Kiwi's!

