

# Profile: Hannah Grainger



## Hometown:

Motueka, New Zealand

## Program:

Summer Camp USA

## Tell us in a few hundred words which Camp you were at and what you got up to at camp?

Camp Sloane; my home for the next two months was a traditional co-ed camp situated next to a lake that reflected the mountains and birch trees.

The comforts of life were now gone as I was introduced to my room; a canvas tent with eight bunk beds, no electricity with the locals hanging around....squirrels, chipmunks and every type of bug.

A week later my room mates arrived - 11-13yr old girls excited and nervous for their next two weeks at camp. As camp life began my days kept me busy, teaching kayaking to kids 5 sessions a day every week, coming up with skits to entertain and talks to inspire.

The weeks were filled up with exciting activities from roasting marshmallow around the camp fire, bucket skits, water aerobics, square dances and overnights in the tents and tee-pees.

## What was your role at camp?

Counsellor, kayak instructor and a friend to many!

## Top 3 memories of Summer Camp?

1. When we first arrived at camp a few of us girls walked into the bathroom and heard something rustling around and then saw this little grey thing with a long tail darting around in the toilet cubicles. Us girls starting freaking out jumping up on the bathroom sinks screaming- then we realised it was one of the common found locals - a squirrel- then it was a race to the tent to find our cameras to take a photo of our first ever seen squirrels.

2. Our overnights were every two weeks - these were always dreaded by the kids, but we always came back with great stories. It was a time where we could chill out around the campfire, telling stories and eating smores. One time the girls decided they didn't want to be cramped in the tent so decided to sleep under the stars. So the next morning we woke up to with bugs bites covering our face, sopping

wet from the dew and sand all through our sleeping bags - but it really was a night to remember as going to sleep looking at the stars above and waking to the beauty of the lake in the morning was a memory not to forget.

3. The very last end of session campfire was one that brought tears of joy and sadness. Awards were given out, speeches were made, our hand-made rafts were sent out on the lake as a final farewell. We celebrated our good times we had together, the friendships we had built over the last two months but also the hard times we persevered through. But we made it that we weren't going to say goodbye but rather see you soon!!!

## Was there a camper that stands out in your mind? If so why?

One of the girls came to camp with the worst attitude, never did what you said, disrespectful and obnoxious, but to really see this girls attitude really change over the six weeks she was there was amazing. I really did grow to love her and you really start to see past her bad behaviour.



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

The greatest impact camp had on me was realising the impact I had on these kids' lives. When you have kids thanking you and writing letters after camp to you thank you for just being there to listen to them and care for them and teach them new skills and offer little bits of advice I really realise I could make a real difference in the kids lives.

**Did you travel after camp? Tell us about your adventures – where did you go?**

After camp we all went to NYC for the night - had a good party night, then did a bit of shopping and then went on the boat to see the Statue of Liberty the next day. NYC was so different from what I'm used to - everything so big so many people - a city that really doesn't sleep. That night we flew into Miami, lived through Hurricane Irene and had a great 5 days. The beach was amazing; sun bathing and a little bit of swimming (there were lots of jellyfish in the water). Loved chilling in the hotel pool and air con rooms. Orlando Sea World we had the experience of adrenaline filled rollercoaster rides and jumping whales and flamingos and other awesome sea life you never see back home. Fantastic travels but it's really the people you meet and travel with that makes it what it is.

**What was your accommodation like?**

Living out of a tent with no electricity with the squirrels, frogs and bugs visiting at all times of the day really did add to the whole experience of Summer Camp USA. It's a real great way to experience camp life and nature at its fullest.

**What is something unexpected/different/strange about USA compared to home?**

The culture is very different. Camping, water sports and building fires was just a norm thing for me, but for a lot of these kids who have been brought up in the city their whole life, they have never got to experience this sort of thing other than at camp. It took a while to learn the tipping culture over there but it was great how the food and a lot of other things are so much cheaper than back home.



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

Go for it! You learn a great variety of skills, builds character and the best part, you make so many friends from all over the world! It can open up so many other doors to your future. Really is an experience of a lifetime!

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

Yeah it was great going through IEP! They sort out your placement and everything for you. All you need to do is tell them your skills and fill out heaps of paperwork.

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

I was well prepared about everything before I left NZ; from where to go and how to get there to the difference in culture.

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

Working amongst a different culture was great and helped me continue to learn how to relate to others. But mostly gaining more skills in working with kids and youth as this is what I do when I am back in New Zealand.

**What is next for you?**

Enjoy my second summer in a row in New Zealand working as a kayak guide and then head back to summer camp with a bit of traveling before and after.

