

# Profile: Emma Butler



## Hometown:

North Shore Auckland, 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?

I was placed in Wildwood Ranch Camp in San Diego, California. The camp ran for 8 weeks. It was a Salvation Army run camp and every week we got new kids (though some did return more than once). The kids came from all types of backgrounds. We got up to a lot at camp; once a week we had to sleep in Tipi's and that was an experience! It was slightly different to camping and we also had to wake up at 5am to take the kids on a hike to see the sunrise, which was a challenge but very fun!

What was your role at camp?

I was a female counsellor and I taught a dance class for 2 hours a day.

Top 3 memories of Summer Camp?

1. Meeting all the lovely staff, counsellors and kids.
2. The dance performances the kids did on Friday nights.
3. Dress your counsellor day – especially my first week!

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

There were definitely some characters and the kids were not shy in the slightest! I had a wonderful bunch of girls my second week of camp. They all became such good friends, no bullying and they would comfort each other if one of them got homesick. They write pick-me-up notes to each other as well as to me. They wanted to try everything and made that week very rewarding.

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

Some of the kids came from very rough backgrounds and at times it was heartbreaking, but it wakes you up to what is really happening in the world. It was very humbling seeing them just be kids at camp and enjoy playing games and learning new things. Hopefully it was a summer they will never forget.

Were there any times that were hard?

My first week was very hard; I really did not realise what I had got myself into. As I have mentioned the kids were not shy, and certainly did not want to listen to their counsellor with the funny accent! But I had such great support from the other counsellors and ended up realising I was there to make sure the kids had fun and were safe.



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

I went on a Contiki Tour after camp. It was called the Grand Southern and went for 26 days. It took us from LA to New York and we went through 22 States. It was very fun and quite intense if you can imagine 22 states in 26 days! The tour was mainly Australians, so it was cool being around people who understood your lingo a bit more than the Americans did. America is a big, beautiful country and the history is very fascinating.

How was the camp food?

Not as bad as I thought it would be. We ate a lot of fruit and vege's, and of course the typical American foods like sloppy joes!

What was your accommodation like?

My camp was beautiful! It was set in an area of hills and a lot of land. The cabins were big and usually slept around 9 kids. Each cabin had it's own bathroom as well.

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

It didn't rain for 2 months! I think I saw a 2 minute shower but no heavy rain. It was very different to New Zealand weather.

Would you do it again?

Absolutely!

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

It can be very daunting when you land in the States and your first week can be quite overwhelming. The kids are full of energy and very confident. My advice is to go in like a lion and come out like a lamb. The kids need leadership and rules set. If you lay the rules down the first day you won't be walked over, and eventually throughout the week they will have respect for you and it is much more enjoyable.

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

It was brilliant! I had heard from other friends who had been through different agencies that they felt a little lost. IEP is there for you all the way! I had so many questions and they answered all of them no matter how silly they may have been. Going with IEP gave me the reassurance that you aren't alone through the process.

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

The support throughout the whole experience. I had a lot of questions and I never felt like that was a burden on IEP.

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

Yes, I have a lot more confidence in what I do now. It gives me strength in saying "I can do that". You learn a lot about yourself in how far you can be pushed, and learning to deal with it.

What is next for you?

I am going to study next year and I hope to become a Personal Trainer. In 2012 I would love to go back to camp.



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