**Racquel Maronde**

**Location:** North Island and South Island, New Zealand  
**Term:** January Term  
**ESPM Track:** Conservation and Resource Management  
Fulfilled 3 credits Social Systems contract course

**Environmental Issues in New Zealand**

Visiting New Zealand was the most amazing experience of my life. You travel a lot and get to see every possible landscape of New Zealand - rainforests, mountains, caves, beaches, etc. The most we stayed in one place was three days. However, there is one experience in particular that truly sticks out from the rest, the Wildlife Sanctuary Tiritiri Matangi. Tiritiri Matangi is a beautiful island two hours off shore from the city of Auckland. It looks virtually untouched by humans. The island is so exotic and primitive, at one point I thought a T-Rex was going to stroll across the hilltop. My favorite memory on that island was when I was sitting on a very high cliffside, by myself, staring into ocean. It was a view unlike any other. In that moment I clenched the grass and promised that I would save it. Then and there I knew, for sure, what I wanted to do with my life. It sounds like just a bunch of fluff, but it’s true. I think about that moment and that island all the time. When I’m stuck inside working a crappy serving job, when cement and tall buildings surround me, when I’m feeling unmotivated, I go back to that time and remember exactly what I’m fighting for.

Also, New Years in Auckland is crazy! The entire city shuts down in celebration for New Years. It’s like a cultural apocalypse with different languages, skin colors and celebrations! I also have a quick word of advice for students who want to attend this session in the future: Never, ever ask for a napkin! It means tampon and it’s embarrassing and awkward when you do. Also, be friendly and open. New Zealanders are hilarious and have almost no social filters. Have fun with them and get to know them! Also, get to know your classmates on the trip, you all aren’t going to be in the same college, but so what, get to know them. On your days off explore and plan as much as possible. Go zorbing!!! It’s SO worth the money. Take time to yourself too. It’s a lot to absorb, you need to give yourself enough time to truly reflect and appreciate what’s happening. Also, sometimes you’re stuck in a bus for hours. So what? Look outside and enjoy the view!