

Profile: Sarah Lee Ryan



Tell us about where you lived and what you got up to in Canada?

I lived in Russell, Manitoba. The ski hill Asessippi is just that-a hill. Manitoba is super flat, as far as the eye can see. And the temperatures are like nothing I have ever experienced in my life, during mid winter temperatures would drop to minus 40!!!! A wee bit of a climate change to New Zealand winters. But Russell offers things that other places around Canada couldn't. I snowboarded almost every day, if it was quite at work my boss let me go out for an hour or so and snowboard. I went ice fishing and ate the most amazing fish I have ever had in my life-while getting drunk in a little temporary shack on the middle of a frozen lake. I also went snow mobiling and rode in a yellow school bus to work every day and night.

Type of job?

Bartender

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

The experiences that made the biggest impact on me were the smallest things that I didn't realise at the time were having such a huge impact. The friendships I made with the Russell locals had the biggest impact. Russell is a small town, everyone knows everyone and it's hard to make friendships that last a lifetime. Unlike the larger resorts where you hang out with hundreds of people everyday and most of them are Kiwis or Aussies, in Russell there is only about 45 of you and the rest are Canadians. Christmas, New Years and Valentines Day-the days that were the hardest to be away from home the locals all came together to make us feel welcome, and always had a spare hug or two.

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

They dont have reduced cream to make onion soup dip!! The hardest thing to get used to in Russell was the temperature, you literally could not go outside with out being bundled up or you would get frost bite. It made going to the supermarket so hard! There were days that the windchill would be -50 and the ski hill couldn't open.

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

My biggest piece of advice that I learned was, go to Canada with no expectations, open your mind to knew experiences, and leave old life at home, don't skype every two minutes, go out meet a local and have some fun! The reason you travel is to soak everything up. I left early because I had a boyfriend at home. Now I wish I never had and someone had told me at the time that this was going to be one of those life changing experiences that you cant back and re-do especially now because me and the boy have broken up and you can only apply for one working visa. Which totally sucks.

Did you have a good experience going on Work Canada Job Fair with IEP and did you feel supported by them?

I did have a good experience, they were very supportive and helped out alot. We were the first group to go to Russell, so there was more than a few hiccups along the way. But IEP was very understanding and has worked together with Asessippi to make it the real "canadian" experience for travellers.

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

The support when you arrive in Vancouver, that first day is scary, but IEP sets everything up for you!

