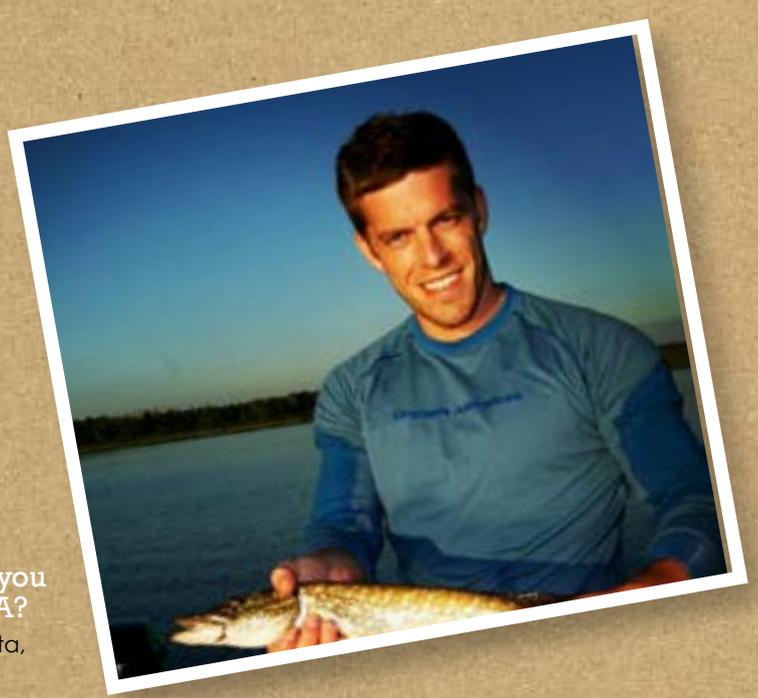


Profile: Adriaan Powell



Tell us in a few hundred words where you lived and what you got up to in the USA?

Most of my time has been spent here in Minnesota, the state with 10,000 lakes. It's mind-numbingly cold in winter and hot and humid in summer; beautiful state though and the people are great. We been skiing and ice-skating, wake-boarding and waterskiing, hiking and fishing, and hunting as well.

I visited Southern California and New York too. New York was amazing – our 'guide' was another friend of mine also on the WorkPlus program with IEP and she took us everywhere. It was four days of taking in as much of the New York vibe as we could.

California is always fun too. I had the opportunity to see the OC, Malibu, LA, and San Diego – all sweet places yet different.

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

There were times early on that I wanted to pinch myself; realizing I was in the USA with a great job and an incredible group of friends. It felt like success; there was always the chance that it may not have worked out as well as it has so for it to go so smoothly was a real blessing.

Seeing the difference between the real USA and what Hollywood and reality shows depict to the 'outside world' was good too. Sometimes it was like walking through a story in the National Geographic magazine; where the contrast between success and failure is shown in the same photo.

The whole experience has taught me to have more appreciation for what we have as a country in New Zealand, and in particular the blessed life I have. In the same thought, experiencing a country as large as the USA definitely widens your expectations for your own success.

What are your 3 favourite memories of living and working in the USA?

There are so many but some that come to mind are hunting in the fall – it required getting up at 5am, long before the sun was up. There were layers and layers of clothing to put on as the temperature outside was well below zero; and then in the dark we would leave the warmth of the log cabin and walk out to tree-stands to sit waiting for the sun to rise and the Whitetail deer to start moving around.

Another was after a heavy snowfall, I took my ute down to a university car-park that had not yet been graded by the snow ploughs. My excuse was I needed to practice the art of driving in snow. It was a nervous moment when the campus police came along with lights flashing; but out stepped an Aussie. We laughed about how random it was, and I returned to 'practicing' my drifting in the snow.

New York has got to be up there too. I flew down to California for a week to catch-up with some Kiwi mates; and then the four of us headed out to New York for a long weekend. We had a great time there – would love to go back and spend a week or two more.

Were there any times that were hard?

There have been times when it would've been easier to be back in NZ, with the comfort of routine and the security of not having 'unknowns'. At times you miss your family; but Skype calls become a great friend. I found accommodation really quickly, and it was reasonably priced. But having no mobility when I first got here was probably the toughest. If I were to do it all again, I would definitely save for a bit longer and bring an additional \$3k-\$5k so I could purchase a car straight away without eating into my spending/expenses money. The way it worked out, I spent \$2k on a 4wd which was a great price but it did mean that the next few months were tight on the budget.

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

The Americans love the Kiwi accent; but they are really bad at knowing anything about NZ or guessing that that is where you are from. One American was amazed at how fluent I was in English after being in America for only 5 months. It never occurred to him that we speak English too.



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Profile: Adriaan Powell

How did you find employment in the USA?

It's hard to compare on a basic comparison of pay checks – in the US wages are lower but then the cost of living is lower too. I found a great job that paid well above the minimum wage which was a blessing. I would have had more to write about in the "times that were hard" section if I had earned less or had a job I didn't love as much as this one. I had a great boss; they were really flexible with my desire to travel. It was my first interview and I was offered the job on the spot which was sweet. It took the heat of having to continually look for employment.

Has working in the USA benefited your career work experience?

Definitely. I have learnt a lot, and it is all applicable to my career going forward.

What is your advice for someone who wants an American adventure?

It's hard to comprehend how big the USA really is until you come. There are so many different places to go, you could spend years travelling around and never get bored here. Definitely do it young, save up well in advance, and either know someone already here in the USA – take a friend who you know you can share a lot of time with – or be prepared to make friends early on. And if you like McChickens – they're on the \$1 menu at McDonalds. Nom Nom Nom!!!

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

What really helped with IEP, was the quick and clear communication. There was nothing in NZ or here in the USA that surprised me; no hidden fees or hoops to jump through. I knew what to expect through every step of the process.

I decided in August that I wanted to go to the USA, and the cut-off date for me was October. When you're under pressure to get everything sorted in a short time frame...the last thing you want is a curve-ball; so it was nice to know that they had a handle on the things I had no clue about.



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