

WORKING HOLIDAY OPPORTUNITIES

WORKING HOLIDAYS ARE THE PERFECT WAY TO FUND OVERSEAS TRAVEL; NOT ONLY DO THEY PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH SOME GREAT FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE – AND INCOME – BUT THEY ALSO HELP PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING. NICOLA HANCOX FINDS OUT MORE.

Traditional holidays can be expensive," notes Martin Squires, Marketing and Presentations Coordinator at Camp Counselors USA (CCUSA). "Working holidays give participants the chance to immerse themselves within the culture, gaining a truly unique experience that a traditional holiday would not be able to offer."

As an international company, CCUSA organises working holiday opportunities for university-age students who are keen to work during their summer vacation time. Indeed, several of the agencies canvassed noted that working holiday programmes were a popular venture among tertiary-aged students. Maria Fernanda Neves, Marketing Coordinator from World Study in Brazil, explains that they can be extremely advantageous for applicants. "Working holiday experiences are extremely popular in our agency. Since university years are a time to try different life experiences,

students understand that this opportunity is very important not only for their CVs but for their lives." She also relates that the USA is the preferred destination choice for clientele – perhaps owing to an established working holiday agreement between the two countries. "Our work and travel programme in the USA is a sustainable programme where students can work, earn money and also travel during 30 days," she says.

The kinds of opportunities available to potential working holiday makers are now more varied than ever. "There are a huge range of opportunities for students to get involved in while abroad [and] there are numerous programmes that can be tailored to an individual's needs," Squires asserts.

CCUSA's Work & Play Canada programme – where students can spend six months working in a ski resort – and Work Experience USA – where internationals are encouraged to "work and live the real everyday USA" are particularly popular with the company's international clientele and he notes that they have students working all over the USA in a variety of different environments. "We have people in offices in downtown New York, at baseball stadiums in Boston, bars in California, resorts in Florida and on the beaches of Hawaii."

However, a sector that is never lacking in working holiday opportunities is the hospitality and tourism industry and Nigel Williams, Vice President of international recruitment company DHI llc in the USA, says this is their main area of expertise. "DHI focuses on the hospitality industry and has available jobs at leading hotels and resorts across the USA." He also relates that these types of programme are perfect for students looking to kickstart a career in hospitality after their adventures abroad. "Through DHI's programme [participants] will get the chance to gain valuable work experience in the hospitality industry, learn new skills, experience American business culture first-hand, work alongside people from all over the world and most importantly do something to make their CV/resume stand out."

Of course, such opportunities require a working holiday scheme with another country and Caroline Lane, Managing Director of Equipeople – a recruitment agency specialising in agricultural work in Ireland – says that they have working holiday agreements with Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Japan but she admits that their work programme has a strong European following. "We welcome young people from



PHOTOGRAPH: DHI, LLC

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all over Europe who want to live with an Irish family and help wherever needed," she says. She adds that living as part of a family may appeal to first-time travellers. "Our programme is very much based on living as part of a family as for many young people this offers a security net during what is often their first time away from home."

New Zealand is another destination traditionally linked with seasonal and agricultural work and, according to Merelyn Corry from Leisure Learn English in New Zealand, the country is immensely popular for people in need of a pecuniary resource while travelling. "Due to seasonal and general staff shortages there are a lot of employment opportunities here. This is particularly true for native speakers as well as people for whom English is a second language," she says.

Perhaps because of an economic decline that threatens to make travelling on a budget more difficult – the number of students opting to become working holidaymakers is growing. "Our numbers have increased year after year," enthuses Lane and she adds that in 2009 they expect 600 trainees to enrol on their programme in Ireland.

Other agents report similar findings and Christopher Smyth from Spanish agency Open Frontiers says a large chunk of their clientele are interested in work and travel opportunities. "Sixty per cent of our applicants choose a working programme. Lots of students are interested in working during the summer period to improve their language skills, pay for their stay and earn some money," he relates.

WHERE DO SCHEMES EXIST?

Many countries have reciprocal agreements in place that encourage cross-cultural exchange. Canada, for example, has an arrangement with Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the UK, Ireland, South Korea, Belgium and France and new reciprocal agreements are being signed all the time. It tends to be developed countries that have to date subscribed to such exchange agreements, and more countries in Latin America are now coming on board.

One of the most recent agreements is between Brazil and New Zealand. The two nations are finalising a partnership that will allow up to 300 New Zealanders aged between 18 and 30, to live, study and work in Brazil for up to a year. In turn, New Zealand will welcome 300 Brazilian students to study and work there.

Phil Goff, New Zealand's Trade Minister, said similar schemes in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay had been "fully utilised" and that the working holiday agreement between Argentina and New Zealand was particularly popular. "Argentina now has 1,000 working holiday visas each year and they are all snapped up within three months," he says.

"Working holiday schemes have proven really valuable to New Zealand. Tourists only come to New Zealand for a matter of days while those on working holiday visas are here, working, paying taxes, and spending their earnings for up to a year," he added.

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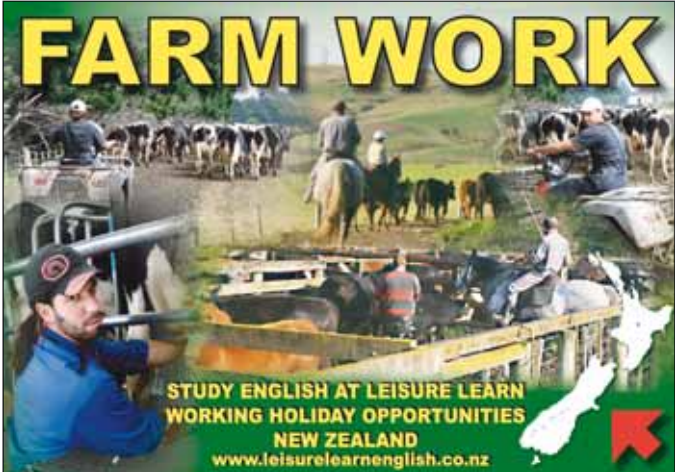
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