

Margo Fowler, Columba College, Dunedin, New Zealand

My first impression of Germany was that it was a very different place to home. The buildings, the people, the food and the school are some of the differences I have noticed in my first few weeks. One big difference that I have had to adjust to is the water, I noticed lots/most Germans drink bottled mineralwasser with bubbles whereas at home we drink pure/fresh water from the taps. I also noticed a difference with windows, we have smaller windows and they open a lot different to the windows in Germany, my host sister had to show me how to open them.

The school system in Germany is very different to New Zealand – We have a NCEA system to work with in years 11 (level 1), 12 (level 2) and 13 (level 3).

We have to get a minimum of 80 credits to pass the year. In my school we have the same classes each day, 6 periods every day (6 different classes) and 7 on a Wednesday. Ours classes each go for 45 minutes

I find it different to go to classes for 1 and half hours and have a different amount of classes each day and be able to leave school during the day.

We have to wear a uniform – blazer, tie, white shirt/blouse, kilt, and a pair of black shoes. We have a winter kilt worn with tights and a summer kilt worn with white ankle socks. We are not allowed to wear makeup or wear jewellery.

It's very different for me to go to school in mufti each day and have to think about what to wear each day and to be allowed to wear makeup and jewellery.

I have been lucky enough to go 3 Christmas markets in the 3 weeks I have been here. The Tecklenburg, Münster and Hamburg Christmas markets. In New Zealand we don't have Christmas markets so these have all been extraordinary experiences that I have loved. I have found the Christmas markets are very magical and are memories that I will cherish – Each market I have been to is different but all are amazing and I really loved how all of the markets were lit up, it made it feel very special with all of the amazing lights and so many Christmas trees.