

New Zealand Multi-Activity Expedition 2018

Twelve days before Christmas, twenty-four Westminster students and staff abseiled, splashed, zip-lined, climbed, swam and slid down Queenstown Canyon. It was our first full day in Queenstown since landing in the outdoor-lover's mecca five days earlier; and we already loved it!

Westminster's biannual multi-activity New Zealand expedition began with a four-day hike through Mount Aspiring National Park, climbing mountains, scrambling over roots, swimming under waterfalls, slithering down snowy slopes, and swatting sandflies – all amongst some of New Zealand's most spectacular scenery.

Day One of the Young-Wilkin trail gently eased us into what was to be an interesting few days, as we followed—and drank from—the refreshing, clear Young River, before the grassy flats turned into a much steeper climb. After being properly introduced to nature's mossy rooted staircases in the challenging ascent, we were rewarded with an inspiring view of how far we had already come.

The next day featured an 800 metre hike straight up onto Gillespie Pass, overshadowed by the grim south face of Mt Horrible. However, any trace of New Zealand's Maori namesake; the 'long white clouds,' vanished from the sky mere hours before our trail climbed above the tree line, sun-roasting any sunscreen-free skin. Still, with perfect weather and a stunning alpine backdrop, this was one of our most rewarding days – in both the challenging ascent, and when descending the snowy slopes like a slippery-dip! We learned that shorts aren't very protective snow-sliding material, when we gained burns of a different kind - along with massive grins and more than a few laughs!

A day hike to Lake Crucible—a glacier lake—the following morning resulted in our iciest swim yet, several river crossings, one sliced and one broken finger. To top off a highly memorable day, our third campsite, Siberia Hut, came complete with built-in natural showers...a waterfall!

Over much too quickly, our hike ended with a jet-boat ride out of the National Park, surrounded on all sides by green mountains studded with waterfalls. We drove back to Queenstown, ready for our canyoning experience in the Queenstown Canyon the following morning.

The next few days were spent exploring Queenstown and its wealth of opportunities for adrenalin-filled adventures; like racing down the lugging tracks, giant swinging and downhill mountain-biking, to paragliding, skydiving, bungee jumping or taking a dip in the swimming pool.

Downtime was most often filled with frisbee, cards and Hackey sack games (the official sport of Outdoor Ed), and also FergBurger eating contests and finding \$900 possum-fur pullovers!

Returning to Wanaka, we spent two days white-water kayaking with Paddle Wanaka on the grade 1-2 rapids of Hawea River. We capsized often, but saw a massive improvement in our skills and confidence on the water by the end of the two days. We can thank our training and our instructors for saving us when we capsized, and encouraging us to get out of our comfort zone.

The following day consisted of rock-climbing at Base Camp, before spending the evening at the camp playground playing giant-pillow Hackey, inventing monkey-bar challenges, which was a great opportunity to have fun and enjoy being together as a whole group for the last night.

We would like to thank Mr Begg, Mr McLean ('99) and Will Beinke for organising and running the 2018 New Zealand trip, it was an incredible adventure with fantastic people in one beautiful country.