

Hosts: How Organic Are You?

by Philippa Jamieson

Since December 2001 I've been WWOOFing around New Zealand, and have stayed with around 40 hosts, from Riverton in the south to Kerikeri in the north. I've had a wide range of experiences, learnt heaps, and almost without exception my hosts have been great. But while travelling, I've had numerous conversations with hosts and fellow WWOOFers about the culture of WWOOFing, which seems to be changing, becoming diluted and less about organics. I put these questions to you to provoke thought and debate, and welcome your feedback.

1) How organic are the WWOOF hosts?

Being organic is intrinsic to this organisation - indeed WWOOF NZ has for many years it clearly stated it is only for organic farms. At the very least, I think, hosts ought to be committed to learning about organic principles and putting them into practice. But some hosts are openly non-organic, like one whose directory listing states that they aren't organic, but that their products are 'natural without additives'. What does this mean? Do they think round-up or other chemical sprays and fertilisers are 'natural'? Another host I met said she had 'tried to go organic but it was just too hard.' Some hosts appear to have no intention of even moving towards being more organic. Such people generally offer a number of excuses as to why they 'can't' go organic. Is it fair for non-organic farms to be WWOOF hosts? Is it more appropriate for them to join a different volunteer farm scheme, or go in the Cultural Exchange section at the back of the book? How far can WWOOF stray from its origins and still retain O for organic in its name? There seems to be an increasing number of larger stock farms that are using synthetic chemical sprays, fertilisers, drenches etc, but have an organic home vegetable garden. Or maybe not even that. As one host joked to me: "400 hectare conventional sheep and beef farm, one transitional pot of parsley." A non-organic dairy farmer I stayed with said money was a serious barrier to him converting his farm to organics, but he was committed to organics in his home garden and veges. I guess it's a step in the right direction. I've heard mutterings of resentment from some dedicated organic WWOOF hosts that the non-organic hosts are benefiting from a scheme that they should not be part of. And that because non-organic hosts are part of the scheme there are fewer WWOOFers to go around. And that the situation reflects badly on WWOOF, and on organics in New Zealand generally. On the positive side, I hope that joining WWOOF gives hosts greater exposure to organic ideas, and makes them think about their practices, but this may not happen at all, especially if hosts have little or no contact with other hosts or organic farmers in their area.

2) What motivates hosts to join?

Obviously, hosts want a hand with some work, and most also enjoy cultural exchange with WWOOFers from other countries. Lots of them love talking about organics till the cows come home, and are happy to share their knowledge and experience. For me, this has been just as valuable as the hands-on learning. Some hosts say the learning aspect of WWOOF has diminished, especially when you get WWOOFers who are patently not interested in organics at all. Another major recent change is the increase in hosts whose primary business is not land-based, but some sort of accommodation and/or café, which would otherwise normally employ paid staff. What do you think about these hosts? Are they taking advantage of the scheme? Should they go in the Cultural Exchange section as they are not farming or gardening? Or is it OK if they are committed to organic principles (eg use organic ingredients and eco-friendly cleaning products, do recycling etc)?

3) What motivates WWOOFers to join?

Some longer term (10 years plus) hosts think that the type of WWOOFer has changed over the years, with more environmentally conscious, organic types previously, but now there are more backpackers who are just using the scheme to travel around New Zealand cheaply. Many are not interested in organics or even farming necessarily. But are WWOOFers really not so interested in organics? A number of WWOOFers have told me they would think twice about joining a scheme that wasn't stated to be organic, or about going to a non-

organic farm. Several have unwittingly ended up in non-organic situations, and/or at places where their duties consisted mainly or entirely of housework, childcare, house painting etc. They were disappointed not to be doing gardening or farm work. Of course some housework is often expected, and that's fine, but for it to be your whole WWOOF experience is not what the scheme is about. Generally they don't complain to their hosts or to the WWOOF organisers - they just move on and chalk it up to experience. Andrew and Jane are now placing more emphasis on getting feedback from WWOOFers. It doesn't have to be a horrific experience, but something you wouldn't want another WWOOFer to have to go through, because that is what will happen if it goes unreported.

4) Organic Food

I would like to look at how much organic food hosts serve, but this may have to be the topic of a separate article.

5) Is it time to get tougher? OR: How can organics be encouraged? To police hosts in terms of how organic they are would not only be impractical but is also anathema to the philosophy of trust on which WWOOF is based. The Cultural Exchange section in the WWOOF Book was originally set up to separate out those hosts who were not really committed to organic farming. However, in November last year Andrew and Jane negotiated an agreement with FHiNZ (Farm Helpers in NZ, a WWOOF-style listing of non-organic properties) so they can pass hosts on to an appropriate organisation. They are reducing the Cultural Exchange section in size with the ultimate aim of removing it. Another tool Andrew and Jane have recently started using is the 'New Hosts Referee's Report' that new hosts are required to have completed on their behalf. This form (<http://www.wwoof.co.nz/hostinfo.php>) gives the organisers a second opinion as to a potential host's suitability. While not a 100% guarantee, it does emphasise the requirements published under Obligations of WWOOF Hosts. The organisers do not hesitate to remove hosts who prove unsuitable. For the most part though, hosts are welcoming, caring, and into organics. "We have great pride in what WWOOF hosts do; opening their home to many travellers and giving heaps of their time providing them with a home and knowledge," says Andrew. How else can we encourage organics within WWOOF? Perhaps the organisers could send each new host a welcoming kit including a copy of Organic NZ magazine and other relevant literature. I know most hosts are flat out already, but maybe existing hosts could welcome new hosts in their area with a phone call, and invite them to any organic field day or other relevant event coming up. What other ideas do you have? It is pertinent to remember that none of us is perfect - we can all make improvements in our organic practices and in the way we live on this fragile planet. WWOOF is a powerful organisation within the organics movement, and as such plays a positive part in the growth of organics. It's up to all of us to make the most of it.

Hosts' Organic Principles at a Glance

As follows is a breakdown of the hosts' self-declared organic principles (from the October 2003 WWOOF book). Where people put more than one category I put them in the one they listed first. There is a big jump of around 100 new hosts since 2002 (from 650 to 754).

CERTIFIED (76)

43	Bio-Gro certified
8	Demeter certified
15	OFNZ certified (or regional scheme)
5	Agriquality certified
5	Certified organic (certifier not stated)

UNCERTIFIED (678)

36	In Transition/conversion*
348	Organic
72	Mainly organic/moving towards organics
28	Permaculture
31	Biodynamics
40	Organic veges/fruit only (on larger apparently conventional farm)

38 No Chemical sprays/fertilisers used
27 Not stated (WHY NOT?)
58 Other

754 TOTAL

*It is not clear whether some of these are in transition towards certification, or whether they are converting to organics generally.□

From the Coordinator's Desk

Bouquets for Hosts

The following feedback has been received from Wwoofers:

"I had a great time Wwoofing in NZ meet some very nice hosts. In particular Louia and Scrubbs at Waipare Homestead Anaura Bay, Gisborne. Had a great time I recommend it to anyone".-Martin

"Peter Lamb in Gisborne was a wonderful host, very fair, straight forward and let us get really involved in the bee farm. I just wanted to spread the word about how good he is as a host".-Leigh

Thanks Martin and Leigh for your comments, we appreciate you taking time to write about your experiences. Each host above will be sent a \$50 gift voucher from the Eco Store on your behalf.

Farewell to a Golden Bay Host



Gavin Cederman died tragically on the 13th of April 2004 while climbing with friends on Mt Aspiring. Gavin had been a committed grower of organic food for over 22 years. The hospitality, knowledge and time he gave to Wwoofers over the years is greatly appreciated and he will be sadly missed.

Wwoof Register

There was good support from hosts about using a register that each Wwoofer signs into when they arrive. The register has been designed to be used as both a register and a visitors' book. Some hosts like to include a photo which could be squeezed in or put in a separate scrap-book or such like. Copies of the register will be sent to hosts in September along with their copy of the new Wwoof Book.

New Hosts Recommendation Form

All farms applying to become Wwoof Hosts are required to have this form completed on their behalf. The aim is to ensure all people who register are able to fulfil their obligations as Wwoof Hosts. The form includes questions to be completed by the nominated referee that focus on 3 key obligations Wwoof Hosts have:

1. To what extent does the applicant farm their property using organic/biological methods?
2. Would the applicant be able to provide clean, comfortable accommodation for Wwoofers?
3. In your opinion, would the applicant be able to provide a friendly and safe environment for Wwoofers?

The form can be viewed at www.woof.co.nz/refereeform.php. Some practical examples of what is expected from hosts would include; hosts to be actively growing/producing organic food and hosts not to use

Wwoofers in a commercial situation rather than employ Kiwis. If all Wwoof Hosts work to a sound set of ethics then they are in a better position to expect the same from their guests.

Making Bookings

Travelling to another country can become something of a random adventure. You come across opportunities while moving around and meeting different people. This is one reason why Wwoofers must be cautious about making bookings with hosts too far in advance. Often dates and destinations change. If you do agree with a host that you will go to their place on a certain date say that you will phone 1 week prior to confirm that you are still coming. Hosts could also write down the Wwoofers phone/email address so they can keep in touch prior to the visit. Another issue hosts face is being contacted by travel agents, tourist operators and the like wanting to place "Wwoofers" on their properties. Hosts generally dislike this because: The "Wwoofer" often does not understand the concept of Wwoofing, hosts prefer to have direct contact with the Wwoofer in order to get to know them, the agents are often selling Wwoof as a farmstay package for significant fees. Hosts should make it clear when agents phone that they do not accept bookings that way.

Visas and ACC

The Immigration Department has said that Working Holiday Visas are ideally suited to Wwoofers as it allows them to do part-time work while in NZ. This is a positive position the department has taken toward Wwoofers compared to past years. Wwoofers are still however not officially supposed to Wwoof while on a Visitors' Visa despite our explanation that Wwoofing is more about learning than earning!

Hosts and Wwoofers often ask about accidents, insurance, safety etc. while on the farm: For hosts it is important to make sure their farm is a safe place for anyone to be on. This means giving clear instructions, using safety equipment, making sure people have the appropriate experience and skills to do a certain task. Wwoofers from overseas are covered by ACC for accidents so don't need specific insurance other than their general travel insurance.

Host Renewals for 2004/2005

Hosts will receive a notice at the beginning of July asking for membership renewals for the forthcoming season. Hosts will be able to send in any changes for their listings at this time. The deadline for renewals will be 20th July, 3 weeks earlier than previous years in order to get the new book ready for those Wwoofers who join in early springtime for the coming summer.

Wwoof Grants

Stu Davidson in Westland has received a \$500 Grant to complete a conservation project on his property. Stu has built and fenced off settling ponds with Wwoofer's help.



Stu's Wwoofers working on the fence.

Further plantings of natives aim to provide sheltered habitat and food for birds.



Pond No.3 showing flax and cabbage trees planted.

The ponds are designed to catch run-off from the pasture and provide aesthetic value to the area.

If you have an idea for a project such as the one above then contact Wwoof Headquarters for an application form.

If you have any feedback on the above topics it would be good to hear from you. If you would like to contribute to the next newsletter you are welcome to, suggestions, stories, etc. are all welcome.

Kind Regards,
Andrew and Jane.□

Jo's Introduction to Hosting Wwoofers

By Jo Hainsworth

When I joined WWOOF NZ as a host a little over 5 months ago, I had no idea how much fun it would be. I've had over 20 Wwoofers stay in my home in the last 4 months, and in that time there's been so much laughter, fun and learning, and many new friendships formed. I try to make sure that each Wwoofer experiences what they want to while staying in my home. There's such a range of new memories and skills that people have been able to take home with them:

- Tamás (Hungary – where they have no coastline) greatly enjoyed swimming, body boarding and kayaking in the ocean
- Dae-Gun (Korea – arrived speaking very little English) improved his English so much he was able to speak English for 15 minutes on the phone the night before flying back home
- Michelle and Kirk (UK) will be taking home lots of new knowledge and skills to help them set up their own organic property
- Kanako (Japan) & Marcus (UK) experienced a moonlight climb to the summit of Mt Taranaki, from where they saw the sunrise (we didn't realise that Kanako didn't know what the word summit meant until they got nearly to the top!!!!)
- Mary Ann & Carly (USA) headed off for their trip around the south complete with a traveling herb garden (they'd really been missing veges while on the road, so I planted them a little garden to take with them!)
- Rebecca (USA) learnt so much, from how to cook and how to milk a cow, to spinning wool and knitting her own hat
- Diana (Germany) was able to spend a very enjoyable week picking my brains on teaching Reiki (a method of natural healing), as she is just starting out as a Reiki teacher
- Cecillie (Denmark) enjoyed tramping on Mt Taranaki
- Kakuo (Japn) was surprised to find his first meal in a NZ home was sushi!
- Brian & Marc (USA) enjoyed a Hurricanes Rugby game with my brother-in-law and nephew, and got to have their own big bonfire on which they toasted marshmallows and melted chocolate!
- Harold (USA) who arrived wanting to sell his car, was able to sell it to Jocelynn (Canada) who arrived really wanting to buy a car
- Sven & Susan (Germany) were able to fulfill a long time dream of learning Reiki
- Keiko (Japan) learnt to hand milk a cow and spin wool, and got to teach people from several countries how to make sushi
- Jel (Kiwi!) was able to spend plenty of time hanging out in New Plymouth confirming that she wants to move here

We've also done a huge amount of work on my property, and been able to help out a local Wwoof Host with a commercial organic vegetable garden. We've cut down and cut up firewood trees, put up a windbreak fence for the new area in the orchard, and turned a messy area that I've been

meaning to get to for over 4 years into a wonderful potager garden that we look out onto from the kitchen window. We've chopped materials for compost, collected cow shit for compost (that job made at least one a little green!), made compost, turned compost and eaten compost cake (my flatmate knows what a compost fan I am and made an amazing birthday cake for me resembling a compost heap!). We've sown seed, prepared new gardens, planted veges, and harvested fruit and veges. We've made some gardens for the chooks and thrown the ball for Jessie the dog millions of times.

And there's been a lot of learning, it's just been wonderful to be able to share what I know and learn from others. I've heard from several of the Wwoofers that it's very inspiring to stay on a property that is set up to provide fruit and vegetables for one family, and that they are leaving inspired to one day grow some of their own food.

And aside from all the work that's been done on my property, I've gained so much more from being a wwoof host. My recipe book is filling up with recipes from all over the world (last night 6 wwoofers, 2 guests and I enjoyed a wonderful family style sushi party!) and I've been entertained by a Wwoofer playing beautiful Spanish guitar. I've learnt so much about why I do things from answering questions, and I've got to teach so much (Organics, English, Reiki), and teaching is a real passion in my life. My family has had a great time sharing Christmas dinner with "The Wwoofers", and my nieces and nephews have had a great time going kayaking, walking along the beach and coming for sushi. My home is filled with laughter and learning and I've made so many new friends, my email inbox is rarely empty these days as I've been able to keep in contact with so many of the Wwoofers who've been here.

If anyone out there reading this article is thinking about becoming a Wwoof Host or traveling around NZ Wwoof style, I whole-heartedly recommend it. It's a fantastic way to learn so much, have heaps of fun and make new friends. It's also a great way to improve your English if you are learning to speak English, as staying in an English speaking home is definitely the fastest way to learn.□

WWOOFING In New Zealand – A Woofers Perspective

By Kirk Goodman

Whilst planning a year out from the rat race my wife and I were flicking through the Rough Guide to NZ when we noticed an entry about WWOOF. A cheap way of seeing NZ we thought at the time but it became so much more than that. We sent off for our membership and when the book listing all the places involved arrived we spent a couple of hours reading through it with great anticipation. Some of the places seemed to be ideal for what we wanted to learn, which was how to run a smallholding (or lifestyle block as the Kiwi's call them) according to organic principles.

Places that really interested us were earmarked amid exclamations of "that sounds fun" and "we must go there". However, once we arrived in NZ we found out that a lot of Woofers also thought the same and we found it difficult to find room at the inn. We found out that some hosts will accept bookings months in advance whilst others will only take bookings one or two weeks in advance. This makes finding a WWOOF place a lottery when you are traveling freely around NZ with no fixed route in mind. So you are never too sure where you'll end up staying!

When phoning a host to arrange a stay always take what they say about the place with a pinch of salt as some will underplay what they have and others will make bold statements that they cannot quite live up to. Our first host had said to us that we would get a variety of work and learn heaps about organic farming. The reality was we learnt very little as we only tended to see the host in the morning when he assigned tasks for the day ahead. The only variety of work we got was weeding a different area of the garden everyday! Despite this poor start we persevered with WWOOF and things started to get better.

It wasn't until our third placement that we found a way of making the stay an excellent one rather than an OK one. What you do, apart from the work the host has asked you to do, is to do something extra. Our third host had an area near a shed that was overgrown with weeds, tools were entangled in the undergrowth and the door to the shed could not be fully opened. So one afternoon we set about the area, cleared all the weeds, took out a couple of tree stumps, tidied up the tools and dug out the area near the door so that it could be opened fully. The reaction from our host was one of delight, not only because the work had been done but that we had used our initiative. We got the benefit of putting a smile on someone's face.

So, if you see something that needs doing that the host seems to have missed then do it and if you're not sure then ask the host if they

would like to have that job done. Chances are the host will be very appreciative.

One of the unexpected bonuses of being a woofers has been the social aspect. Not only have we made friends with other woofers and hosts but also we have made friends with the host's family. Our address book has a lot of new entries in it. Woofing has allowed us a unique insight to Kiwi life and we have met more Kiwis this way than we would have just by traveling through.

Over the festive season we stayed with a host in New Plymouth whose family kindly invited us to dinner on Christmas day and to a New Years party. The same host organized a trip to see the Christmas lights for her young nephew & nieces and us. We decided not to go as we were tired from working all day, which disappointed the children who decided that they would rather meet us than go see the lights. So the host brought them round to meet us instead.

In Wellington our host got us an invite to a reception for the new ambassador at the Indonesian embassy as she plays in a Gamelan band that were performing there that night. The generosity and friendliness of the people we have met during our time in NZ has helped restore our faith in humans.

We will leave NZ with an abundance of new skills & knowledge and not just about organic gardening. Our host in Kaikoura taught us how to make paua jewellery, in Hamilton we learnt how to look after a variety of animals and in New Plymouth our host taught us the natural healing of reiki (level 1). The reiki has been so useful to us that we returned to learn the second stage. All of this knowledge will help us when we realise our goal of having our own smallholding and becoming WWOOF hosts ourselves.

Overall our WWOOF experience has been an awesome one, we have gained many friends, learnt new skills but most importantly learnt a lot about ourselves. WWOOF is an excellent organization that provides Woofers with a unique look at Kiwi life that no tour operator or travel agent could ever hope to match. If you are thinking of joining WWOOF, either as a host of woofers, then we would wholeheartedly recommend it. You won't regret it. □



Hens roaming around the Downard's kiwifruit farm. The hens are more than happy to eat insect pests that would otherwise be attacking the kiwifruit as well as help the mower keep weeds at bay.

Help make your region GE-Free!

Write to your local District Council and Regional Council and ask to be formally involved in the consultation process for the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) and then push for a precautionary approach to GMOs, a Sustainable Development Policy (and other sound environmental outcomes). Submissions are needed NOW to your District Council and Regional Council Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) So HAVE YOUR SAY if you want a GE FREE community and sound environmental/economic/cultural outcomes.

For more information and a SAMPLE SUBMISSION FORM suitable for your area contact:

GE FREE NORTHLAND in Food & Environment ring 09 4322155 or email Zelka: arboreus@ihug.co.nz or Karen Summerhays at Environment Bay of Plenty Regional Council, email: ksummerhays@xtra.co.nz or ring: 0 800 ENV BOP (during business hours). For more info visit: The Whangarei District Council's bold press release 22 March 2004, Whangarei District Council Press release "Councils Can Set Own Standards for

GMOs"

<http://www.wdc.govt.nz/resources/7043/CouncilsCanSetOwnStandardsforGMOs.pdf>

Wwoofers are Amazing

By David Baillie

Skilled artisans they travel the country offering to put their experiences into creations that last. A lot can really change on a place without a lot of time and money. With a little belief, that we are being looked after, that we receive exactly what we need, we can even put out invitations for the skills we need.

I needed a signwriter and she took a while, but then she did come all the way from Bath, England. She didn't think of herself as a signwriter but I did when I found out she had a fine arts degree. She was a little worried about Wwoofing so late in her travels, she was so tired so sitting down was exactly what she was ready to do. Together we developed a system of green for garden names, turquoise for place names, and yellow for trail names that is still in place today. She explored shapes for our wooden signs and talked of rounded corners. Mulling this over it came to me that rocks have rounded edges already. We call them sign-stones and they bear testimony to the ability of stone to sit unobtrusive until looked for. They create atmosphere that speaks of eons seen, of steadfast service, little moved.

I ask our woofers to share ideas they have. One walked up our bush track and said he could make it drier without buying anything, just with stones. In two days we made several water bars in which stones with flat edges are overlapped so that water travelling on and in the ground is deflected at about a 45 degree angle off to the side. If that Wwoofer returned we would just shift rocks together to rediscover a friendship built on entrusting arms and legs to the careful placement of each other's crowbar. He may have been psychic but I always remember too the woofers who looked at the wooden floor in our tent's kitchen and said we could use that in making a solid building, which we did not have. I told him that I had just been awake half the night thinking the same thing, after putting the few boards I had into the floor just yesterday.

Trees were a quick foundation, he said, so we went out and asked the trees. When a group said "We can do it", I said let's do it. This Wwoofer had the experience to hold the image in his head, and with initial planks at all angles built a level framework. This initiated a trust of trees, because others have come and said the trees will not be strong enough. But these trees tell me that they are getting ready, strengthening in places they need to, which will be to no avail if I don't trust them to it. The cabin that I build there will be for me to sleep in so I can rest my trust in the arms of those trees.

Thought is so creative. Last year six woofers spent three days hauling clay and gravel up to our clearing. It was so much work I gave up on building a home with earth for a while, but I have built a road up since then, and thought that a cob oven would be a great and much smaller idea. Recently two Wwoofers came, again from England, to hold a cob (earth) oven workshop. The workshop didn't happen, but they woofed the oven into shape anyway. We had wanted it and we were gifted it, thanks to those two woofers. I left them to it, just helping out where I could, and getting materials together. It was a joy to see how well they worked with stones in the lines of the dry joints they created. They sculpted the oven's plaster finish in the form of a being with fiery hair, a flaming door for a mouth, and flaming suns as the source of it all. After they left I had both the stone and cob earth bug in my veins. I hauled stone to give my cob dry feet and in an upcoming cob earth wall workshop we will build in seats to support the stones on the inside and to buttress the walls. Walls that will be kept dry by a sod roof that will in turn keep our cob oven dry.

It is windy and rainy as I write and for this I am thankful because I have wanted to put fingers to keyboard for so many a day; but my tents will be flapping, and I am keen for a solid wall to stand it all. There is nothing more solid than living breathing earth and sod. It will be my first cabin space to sleep well at night, knowing that the wind will definitely not blow the roof from o'er my head, and the sun will warm my hearth by day, and the oven by night. □

Wwoofing

By Alex Banks-Watson

Between the ages of six and thirteen, I lived with my family on a communal farm, a 280 acres slice of rain forest valley in North-Eastern New South Wales. We and the five or so other households living there ran a small dairy herd, chooks and a large vegetable garden. To help with the workload, we hosted Wwoofers. These Willing Workers On Organic Farms (WWOOF - still one of the coolest acronyms I know of!) would join Wwoof Australia and receive a directory of host farms whom they could then contact about coming to stay. Our Wwoofers hailed from all corners of the globe, countries such as England, Japan, Ecuador, France, New Zealand, Israel, Canada, and of course Australian as well. They would work an average of 4 hours per day in exchange for a place to sleep and food. This was a win-win situation: they received housing, organic home-cooked food and interaction with Real people (instead of the tourism industry) all for only half a days gardening or building, and we enjoyed the company and assistance of fascinating world travelers with stories to tell. As my three siblings and I were educated at home, this time with Wwoofers gave us a great awareness of the world at large and the different people and cultures in it. Having experienced this from the age of six, it was some time before I realized just how wonderful an opportunity this really was. However, in my eighteenth year, I finally joined Wwoof myself due to a burning desire to see something of New Zealand.

I bought a ticket for Dunedin in the bottom of the South Island and set forth on 6 of the most memorable weeks of my life to date. I figured I'd take a circuit of the South Island and save the North Island for another trip. After a day in Dunedin savouring the cities architecture and art galleries and phoning a bunch of hosts for a place to stay, I caught a bus to Timaru, and stayed for 5 days with Ian, picking carrots, trimming hedges and mowing his tennis court. We got on very well and after three days work, he offered me his car to take a 400km drive up to Mt. Cook and back. It was and remains one of the most amazing days of my life, just me, in awe of the lakes, the mountains, and the generosity of a stranger. Having determined that my next stop would be Christchurch where I have some friends, I made my way there and spent two weeks helping Jack and Sally-Ann to build their house by the beach. I put in the insulation, and helped lay the floor and line the ceiling, and went swimming every day in the surf til my feet got itchy and I headed north again. This time it was to Kiakoura where I spent a few days with a potter,

gardening around her beautiful house and walking along the rocky coastline gazing one moment at the sea the next at the snow capped peaks behind the town. When I told her my next destination was in the Motueka area, she lined me up with a friend who was traveling in the same direction and I even took the opportunity to go and hear a Tibetan Lama speak about the inner journey, with my impromptu driver. I stayed with a wonderful couple who run a bed and breakfast enjoying a very peaceful few days preparing their gardens for spring planting, watching the river roll by and running up the steep walls of the valley. Having reached the top of the Island I headed down the spectacular western coastline to Hokitika where I spent a couple days with a Scottish sculptor and his German wife nailing together the framing for the roof of their new house. Their Wwoofer accommodation was the best I'd ever seen, a little cabin with a huge window looking out over the river to the southern alps... You could pay \$150 a night for that view I'd be willing to bet! A bus carried me over the mountains to Wanaka where I stayed for a night and then on to Dunedin again where I stayed with an interesting couple caring for their animals and mowing for the few remaining days of my NZ trip.

So there it was, 6 weeks, a bunch of new friends, and memories in my mind of a great deal of the south island all for less than 800 Australian dollars including the airfare!!! I like the way Wwoofing feels purposeful, the way you're helping your hosts to live their chosen lifestyle, and they're enabling you to travel immensely cheaply. The hours are completely flexible and negotiable between Wwoofer and host. Often Wwoofers will work several full days in return for a few days off to see more of the local area. And you can stay as long or as short a time as you and your host are comfortable with, from a couple of days up to many months. Wwoofing is possible in most western European countries, North and Central America, the U.K., and as I've said, Australia and New Zealand. It's the best way I know to see the world. Try it! ◦