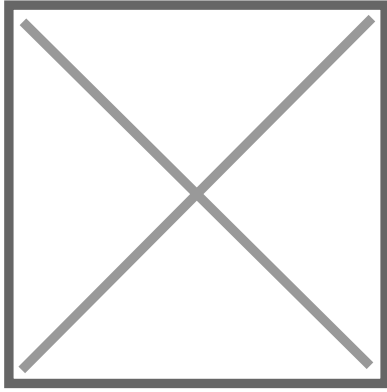




What Are You Afraid of?

Description

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Iâ??ve been traveling for a month around a small part of the North Island, and I got to meet all kinds of people already. Many backpackers, but also locals, among which many Maoris, since the East Coast is one of the regions where you can find the most. And among them Kiwi Maoris, many that I met had never been to the South Island.

I must admit I was a bit puzzled in the beginning even though I tried not to show it; although I do realize New Zealand isnâ??t that common a place for people to visit when youâ??re from Europe, youâ??re telling me youâ??ve never been further than 300km away from your house? How big is the gap the lies between us!

I managed every time to try and understand why they hadnâ??t done so yet: *â??do you not want to see what is just a few towns away? Do you feel you donâ??t need to go explore?â??* I asked away. Many times, they said they were really happy with where they were and did not really see any reason why they should change it. Many of the people I talked to in the beginning were *â??fullâ??* Maoris, and their relationships with other family members is of utmost importance. For a christening, for example, theyâ??d gather around the new-born, then surrounded by three generations up him. That would give him a great number of cousins, aunts, and uncles, let alone the fact that most Maori parents raise a lot of kids *â?? oh I have 12 siblings, so no, weâ??re not that many!â??*. Obviously, raising these babies is quite time- and money-consuming, which discourages parents to go explore their country, let alone the world.

When I met these people, they often had two questions or similar ones: they asked what I was most afraid of, and what I missed the most from my country. Before they asked, I donâ??t think Iâ??d ever really thought of missing things *â??* as opposed to people *â??* albeit that from traveling around a bit already, I knew that what I would not find in Ukrainian, English or Belgian supermarkets, I would not find in New Zealand either (I guess itâ??s just a matter of adapting to where you find yourself).

As for fear, well, there are part of the attire of the traveler: losing your passport and/or credit card. A smartphone is very handy too, but easily replaceable if you really feel the need for it. Then if I think a bit further, then I would say I am afraid of terrorist attacks, murderers, car accidents or any kind of accident that would cause physical pain; I'm also afraid of running out of money, forgetting important papers or items somewhere! But these things are universal.

In other words, wherever you find yourself *you*, a human being living in our modern world -, these are things you are aware of; they are things you know could happen anywhere, anytime. When traveling, you must simply be aware of the areas where more care is required - dangerous roads, dodgy areas (or expensive places). And I have come to realize that the more you know about a place, the less scary it seems to be.

Given the mindsets that these people who questioned me were in, I could not really give them this answer - they'd probably have looked at me with big eyes, wondering what the hell I was talking about. So I gave it a bit of thought and ended up with one answer.

To me, nature seems scary. While driving along the North Coast, it's impossible not to think about how small you are, and somewhat (if not completely) meaningless; in fact, should there be any kind of fire or tsunami and/or earthquake taking over this side of the Earth, the powerful nature would be pitiless, and History holds way too many examples to back my words.

However, to the people I'd give this answer to, the wilderness would probably not be scary; big cities might. Gigantic amounts of cars, planes, high buildings, that would scare them, or at least impress them. Elevators, maybe. Things they are not used to seeing on a day to day basis. But they can ride bareback from a very young age and walk barefoot on the grass without wondering if ants might be preparing a human body invasion.

All in all, there is, indeed, one *place* that's scary for everyone. When we get out of there, we become nervous, excited and stressed at the same time, often clueless and sometimes even lost - we call that place *comfort zone*. My comfort zone is the city; Maori is nature, and us weird creatures that we are, humans, are afraid of leaving it.

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The abandoned

railroads in Gisborne, where I stayed after doing work exchange in Maori families.

Category

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Tags

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