

Gabrielle Reese
Dispatch
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On this day of our travels we departed in the early morning West Port. This town was set on the west coast of the South Island. The day prior was spent in West Port. There we were taken on a tour of a mountain-side coal mining operation (Stockton Alliance Open Cast Coal Mine) about 10-20 miles from our hostel. One thing I thought interesting to note is that almost all of the coal mined here is shipped elsewhere, and not used for New Zealand consumption. Another was the sight from the near top of the coal mine. The elevation and location next to the sea made for one of the most beautiful sights I had ever seen. However the rough, stripped landscape that at one point had been beautiful forest, very much contrasted this stellar view. Despite having arrived on the coal mine with a less-than-enthusiastic appreciation for that type of operation, my opinion had lightened slightly by the time I left. One practice I witnessed the company upholding is rehabilitation of the land after it was mined. It was definitely a good experience getting to take a tour of this operation as well as talk to employees there. I had never stepped foot on an open cast coal mining sight before that day.

So after our adventures in West Port we traveled across the South Island towards Christchurch. This was a beautiful drive, remembering the parts that I did not snooze through. The vast open fields, some with grazing sheep and tall mountains in the distance caught my eye. After about a four hour drive we arrived in Christchurch. This city, despite being the second largest city in New Zealand, did not appear as such. It appeared pretty lifeless compared to what it used to be. So much is still in the process of being rebuilt. There is a long way to go before the city is again in comparison with what it once was. I talked briefly with a local I ran into at our hostel about this, and he stated that the time issue has to do with the tight restrictions and regulations due to resource consent.

The rest of the day we spent exploring the city by foot. This included souvenir shopping and grabbing a bite to eat and drink at an English style pub in town. We retired to our hostel and spent the night chatting and such. We would leave in the morning for Picton to catch the ferry back to Wellington.