

# Language Assistant Programme

by Marie Testud, French LA 2015



## Bonjour ! Je m'appelle Marie. J'ai 30 ans, je suis assistante de français à Auckland, en Nouvelle-Zélande !

Travelling is an addiction: when you start, you can't stop. I had travelled a lot - to the USA, South Korea, around Europe - and lived one year in Québec, Canada, but I needed a new challenge: to find a job which reflected my way of life and my addiction to travel. So I decided to become a French teacher! I went back to University and did a Master's Degree in Français Langue Etrangère, and came to New Zealand!



Why New Zealand? Challenging; English-speaking country; Māori culture; amazing landscapes; the furthest country from France I could go! I was really lucky to get this position here. I'm really thankful to ILEP and CIEP to let me be part of their programme.

I was excited about coming to New Zealand. I started to read information about schools, and I couldn't wait to experience it myself. For me, one of the best ways to understand a culture and its values, is to be immersed in the working and educational world. I arrived in New Zealand in April 2013. My first week at school was observation: to become familiar with the school system, and get to know the students, of course. Language was also part of the challenge for me. I struggled for two or three days with the kiwi accent, but I picked it up very quickly.

Among my experiences last year and this year, I came to work in different schools and suburbs of Auckland. The differences I found meant that I had to adapt not only my way of teaching, but also the way I behaved.

In primary school, I worked with Year 1 to Year 6 (5 to 10 years old). I loved this experience. These kids are amazed by everything; their eyes sparkle when it comes time to learn! With them, I made lessons a game. We had a French day for Bastille Day, and we did a play about the French Revolution. We also started a lovely project with the Year 6 classes: an exchange with a French school. I kept in touch with a teacher of my home town in France (Langogne). It wasn't easy, because of the time difference and the school year (September to June in France), but at least we managed to send a couple of letters, and some pictures and videos! When we received the first letters, the kids were so excited. Rich from this experience, the French teacher and I tried to find a school in New Caledonia, and this year the primary school is starting an exchange with a New Caledonian school!

In secondary school (Years 9-13) I work with small groups, playing games, or doing little conversations in French. I create resources for teachers and, from time to time, I share cultural stuff with the whole class through PowerPoints. I really like the relationship I have with the students. Through learning, we get to know each other, and they become more and more confident in speaking.

The Visual Learning Network is one of my challenges this year: teaching French via the Internet to students who are living in remote places of New Zealand. I was so excited when I got this position. It's so amazing to offer this opportunity to kids to learn not only a language, but also a lot of different subjects, even if they are living far away from everything! I make PowerPoints, and we talk on the phone. They are so clever and motivated. I am looking forward to again doing a big tour of New Zealand at the end of the year, and to meet all of them.

My experience as a French assistant in New Zealand was, and is still, one of the most amazing experiences I have had in my life. As New Zealand is far from France, you have to be strong and independent. I grew up by ten years in only one year of staying here. This experience brought a lot: knowledge about the New Zealand school system, New Zealand culture, but also about Māori and Pacific Island cultures. Personally, this experience brought me confidence, good teaching experience and turned me into a French teacher!

I travelled all around New Zealand, and discovered wonderful places and wonderful people. I went to remote Great Barrier Island, and fell in love with this island! There are still so many places I want to see in New Zealand!