



Last weekend, I did something I had been scared to try; I went for a drive.

New Zealand's miniature version of zipcar is called CityHop. CityHop accepts international licenses, so I registered and reserved a car for a few hours on Saturday.

I was nervous to drive in here for the first time for a few reasons. First, cars drive on the left side of the road in New Zealand. This comes with the obvious complications of remembering to turn into the left lane and not the right lane, remembering that it is legal to make a left turn on red lights, and not instinctually drifting over to the right side of the road on residential streets with no centerline. I was also nervous because most vehicles in New Zealand are manual. I do know how to drive a stick shift, but I haven't had to in four years. I wouldn't have a problem relearning at home, but added to the pressure of staying on the left side of the road, it seemed daunting. Finally, it seems like I have seen a lot of near car crashes here, especially in the city.

Luckily, the car was an automatic. And I picked a route that would take me away from the city for a little while to avoid crazy drivers and traffic.

I was able to focus on staying on the left side of the road, which didn't turn out to be too hard. The bigger challenge was driving from the right side of the car. The perspective shift made it harder to stay in the middle of a lane. It didn't take too long to get adjusted, though. It wasn't nearly as scary as I thought it would be.

Afterward, I visited a famous park in Auckland. One Tree Hill Domain is another of the many volcanoes that make up Auckland. Around the bottom of the volcano are playgrounds, picnic tables, and a mini zip-line to ride down a small hill. Along the path to the peak, there are fences of cows and, of course, sheep. The peak holds a monument to the Moari people and the beautiful land of New Zealand.

From the top of the volcano, three other volcanic peaks are visible in the distance. There are great views of the suburbs surrounding the park. It was very serene to know that I was surrounded by the bustle of city life on all sides, yet still be far enough from it all for sheep to graze and to hear nothing but birds.

One Tree Hill Domain was a great place to relax after the anxiety I had built up over driving. Auckland is full of great little nature reserves, but this one is really incredible.