



The Definition of a City

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Being in Sydney has been wonderful. The city is full of life, energy, and art. The fashion game in Sydney is too strong, and I had to think about my bank account to keep myself from buying a whole new wardrobe (or two). Good food is everywhere. There are a millions things to do. Whether people have business or are just having fun, everyone has somewhere to be and something to be doing. Sydney is a truly vibrant city, and has shed some perspective on my time in New Zealand.

I grew up in an urban environment. The Bay Area is alive with the hustle and bustle of people living their lives. I thought I knew what made a city a city. I thought a city was a dense collection of people in a relatively small geographical area. And of course, to accommodate those people, structures start to form vertically, transportation becomes systematic, and entertainment is everywhere. Now I've learned, while all cities are dense collections of people, not all dense collections of people are really cities.

Auckland is confusing. It is a dense collection of people, and it has the buildings and infrastructure that come with it, but it's missing something. One Million people live in Auckland. Though that may not seem like much, it's one quarter of New Zealand's entire population. When I arrived in Auckland, everything was new and exciting, but everyone I spoke to seemed bored. They insisted that they didn't know what to do, or that Auckland didn't have enough to do. As far as I could tell, however, there were plenty of things to do if you looked.

Everyone in New Zealand is very proud of the "laid back" nature of the people there. The people are extremely kind and helpful, and you feel safe knowing that the people rarely have a malicious thought. But another part of the people being so "laid back," is that they wander through life following the path of least resistance. While I'm all for going with the flow, it seems like many of the people in Auckland lack big dreams and goals to drive them forward. The only times I've felt real passion from Kiwis is when they talk about rugby. As I applied for jobs and housing in Auckland, it took forever to hear back from people or get anything done. I think it's less that there is nothing to do in Auckland and more that people don't want find things to do, or they have no one to do things with.

The difference is in the people. A true city, or at least a good one, is a dense collection of people who care about something. Sydney is full of people who care about something. People were advocating for equal marriage rights. Artists have made their marks all over the city. People dressed with dedication and walked around in hundreds celebrating Oktoberfest. Even

if it is just the dedication with which many of the local shops decorated for Halloween, the people in Sydney do things like they mean it; they walk with a purpose.

I'll have to remember, while I'm in New Zealand, to save the relaxation and enjoy some down time between my own adventures. But I am happy that when I come home, I'll be coming home to a place full of passion and energy.