

## **The New Zealand 'OE': the Oxymoron of the Working Holiday**

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Is the working holiday a form of tourism? One of the longest standing examples of the working holiday phenomenon is the movement overseas, primarily to Britain and Europe, by young New Zealanders and Australians. In New Zealand the acronym 'OE' (overseas experience) is used to describe such a journey. A phenomenon such as the OE questions many traditional conceptions of migration, tourism and leisure. OEs, while not involving permanent migration, normally entail extended residence overseas, certainly of longer duration than most definitions of tourism can accommodate. Additionally, for most, a significant portion of OE time is spent working, thus challenging definitions of tourism at a more fundamental level. Tourism is usually linked to leisure, the antithesis of work. Research has shown that most OE participants, despite working, do regard, and describe, the OE as a travel experience; the main reason for going is 'to travel and see the world'. Whilst departures overseas on such journeys have become part of the accepted social norm in New Zealand, the temporary migration of young people around the world on working holidays is a phenomenon increasing in scale both numerically and geographically. The complexity of the tourism experience cannot be fully understood without developing knowledge of tourism at the margins such as temporary migration.