

California Dreamin' Camporee

by Gemma Lumsdon

Meeting at Heathrow on Saturday 28th July I was a bit apprehensive about this trip as I knew I was going to love it but I didn't know what I was going to. On the 28th it was one of our leaders birthday so she was given a free breakfast by Prêt a Manger and then on the plane the pilot came down and spoke to us before setting us a challenge to work out the number of tonnes of fuel the plane used, using the following clues:

1. Take off uses 20 tonnes / hour
2. Cruising uses 10 tonnes / hour
3. The journey is 10 hours

After some working out Jess and I came to the answer of 105 tonnes, we were then told we had the closest answer and that at the end of the flight we could go up to the flight deck and meet the pilots! It was amazing, there's no way I could fly a plane.



We arrived into San Francisco airport where we were greeted by the camp organisers as we were spending an extra day on the campsite before the camp. We then arrived at camp and attempted to put up our tents, we found that following instructions tends to help so eventually we got all the tents up correctly. By this point we were shattered as Pleasanton (the place where the camp was held) is 8 hours behind England so by the time it was time to go to bed there we had been up for around 28 hours!



The following day was the official arrival day for the camp and in the evening we met our host patrol, throughout the course of the week we spent lots of time with them and we all made really good friends finding each other's accents fantastic! By the end of the week they had a list of how we say things compared to how they say it such as trainers and sneakers.

By Monday everyone had recovered from the tiredness of Saturday and Sunday (for everyone else on camp) so the camp was officially opened with the Opening Ceremony. This included two members of every patrol on camp walking their banner across the stage and then the American Girl Scouts made their pledge to the American flag and they also made their promise. This was interesting as it is very similar to our promise but longer. After the ceremony we went back to our camp and put out our display on Buckinghamshire where we split in half, half the group walking round looking at other groups display and the rest staying to talk to people. Half way through the afternoon we swapped, at the same time as looking around we were swapping with people so I now have lots of Californian badges, I also have a Japanese one!

On Wednesday the entire camp went to a baseball



game which was very good fun, one very exciting aspect was that we got to travel on the typical American bright yellow school buses! At the baseball game I was surprised by how casual it was, people simply walked out to go and get food rather than going at a designated interval. However the game was amazing once I got hang of the rules!

Then on Friday another whole camp off site visit, this time to Santa Cruz Boardwalk, an amusement park on the coast. We started in the haunted house which thankfully wasn't scary and then moved onto the giant dipper which as it sounds is giant. It starts with a twisty tunnel in the darkness then it comes into daylight as you climb up a massive hill where without a pause you proceed to wizz down the giant dip on the other side, this goes on throughout the ride but adding in some twists and turns. It was so fast that Katie even lost her hat!

Saturday brought activities such as making bracelets, water slides, bouncy castles and other crafts such as pillow decorating. These were really enjoyable and I now have a pillowcase with the camp logo on it. In the evening we had the closing ceremony, the camp choir performed and there were quotes from Juliette Lowe the founder of Girl Scouts in America.



On Sunday we said a sad farewell to our new Californian friends making promises to stay in touch because camp was over and we were heading for San Francisco.

Having dropped our bags in the hostel we headed straight out into the depths of San Francisco: Macy's! We had lunch and then I think we all bought some chocolate! After having a quick look around we

headed out onto Union Square because there was a surprise, we were going on the duck tour of the city. The tour is partly done on water which is why it's a duck tour.

Another surprise on the water, we teenagers were allowed to drive the boat so some of us had a go, including me. It was brilliant, unlike anything I've ever done before; fortunately as well none of us crashed the bus!

The following day we cycled the Golden gate bridge which had some amazing views and was amazing, people everywhere though! Our route took us into Sausalito where we had lunch and headed for the sweet





shop. Again most of us bought some sweets or chocolate.

On Tuesday we headed for Alcatraz the prison for the very dangerous criminals between 1930s and 60s, where we had an audio tour telling us all about life on the island for the prisoners. We also saw the cells which were 6ft by 9ft so not very big considering the convicts were only allowed out at meal times, for 1-2 hours of exercise and for

work if they worked. Alcatraz was an interesting and eye-opening day as the convicts had the basic facilities and anything else had to be earned such as the right to request a book.

Once we had finished on Alcatraz we went back to the mainland and hit the shops on Pier 39 and the areas around it. Again all I bought was some chocolate; I managed to get a chocolate frog like the ones in Harry Potter!

On Wednesday, before we went to the airport we went to the cheesecake factory in Macy's where we all had a slice of cheesecake however not many of us finished as the slices were so big and rich. There was no way I could finish mine! I didn't want to see cheesecake again but on the plane... desert was cheesecake!

Overall, the trip was absolutely amazing and I made friends with not only people from around the world but I also made very good friends with girls in my county whom before this International experience I had never met.

