



Washington D.C. Trip

Arborland 8th
Graders

By: Tyler



Washington D.C.

We started our trip on April 10, a Sunday, where we got up early, very early, hopped on a plane, and took off towards our nation's capital.

We had never done something like this as a class before, so I was nervous yet really excited at the same time--it's a week with friends after all.

Coming out of it, I am really glad that I went and wish it could last longer. I was able to learn a ton, better understand our country and its history, and had a lot of fun.

We had the joy of getting to visit the Capitol, White House, Treasury, National Cemetery, Spy Museum, and more, all in just one week, one week that I will never forget.



Day 1: April 10

4:30, my alarm went off. Our flight was at 9:00 and we were supposed to be at school by 5:15 to catch the van to LAX. There wasn't much to talk about for the first half of this day. It was all spent in transit. The plane ride was about as exciting as sitting in a single seat for 6 hours could be. Eventually, when the plane began its descent, we were able to glimpse the Washington Monument out of the window. A few minutes later, we step foot in D.C.

We exited the plane and got our luggage, meeting our tour guide, Tara, at the airport. We hopped on the Metro to our hotel and dropped off our stuff there, after which we made our way out into the streets of our capital.

A lot of it was new, taking the Metro, the monuments most of us had only seen in photos, and so much more.



Day 1: April 10

Once we started touring, we first went to the Treasury Building on our way to the White House. It had a barrier in place around it, but other than that, it looked just like it did in the pictures, only bigger, a lot bigger, and with Secret Service agents on the roof.



After that we got to see the Washington Monument before heading to Hard Rock Cafe for dinner. It was all really amazing to see everything in person.

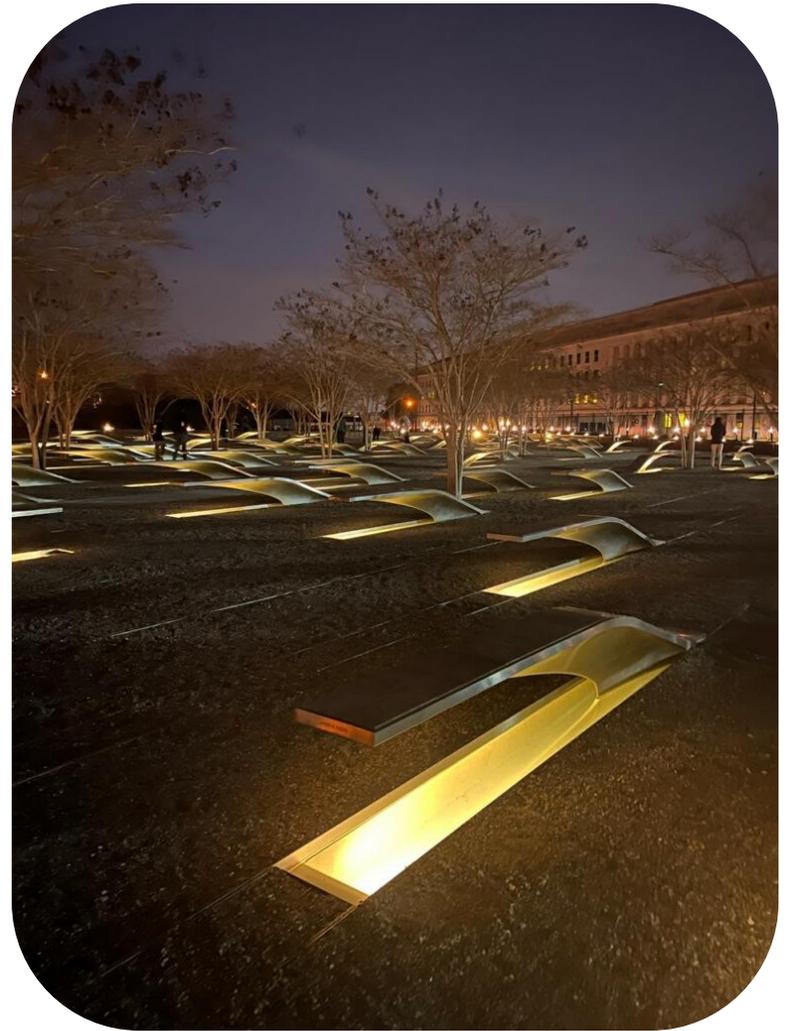
Day 2: April 11

We got breakfast at the hotel (along with some tea so I didn't fall asleep). We got to the metro first and went to the National Zoo. There were a lot of animals and we learned a lot about them all (did you know that black and white ruffed lemurs are known for their loud shrieks that can be heard up to half a mile away?). We got lunch then headed towards the Smithsonian Natural History Museum. My favorite area was the one on gems and minerals where we saw beautiful crystals like the Don Pedro Aquamarine. After that, we went to see National Archives, one of my favorite places there, and got to see our nation's founding documents. There was the Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, and the Constitution. Among those, we saw other important documents and exhibits showcasing our country's history. We learned about historic speeches and people, and about technologies that drove the US forward.



Day 2: April 11

We went for pizza afterwards and then saw the 911 memorial at the Pentagon. The Pentagon itself is the headquarters of the Department of Defense, and was a very impressive building. Its huge. The 911 memorials showed the 186 people who died when American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon. The image to the right is the memorial that was made, with one of each structure dedicated to one person who died in the attacks. If they face the Pentagon, the person died in the building. If it faces away, it is someone who died in the airplane. It was very moving because it was able to put a physical testament to each person in the crash, which otherwise would have just been numbers, and really helps to understand what happened that day.



Day 3: April 12

This day, we went to Arlington National Cemetery, our nation's most prestigious burial grounds. We were led on our tour by Mike, who was very knowledgeable and taught us a ton about what we were seeing. We visited John F. Kennedy's burial site and its eternal flame, symbolizing perpetual gratitude towards those fallen in service. We also visited those of many other heroic people such as the Unknown Soldier and watched the changing of the guard that takes place there. It is in remembrance of every soldier who was lost and whose identity was not uncovered. We also learned the story of how the cemetery was created and its backstory.



Day 3: April 12

After was the Library of Congress, where we saw an original Gutenberg Bible, one of the first books to have ever been printed, and saw the library from a viewing balcony, though we could sadly not go inside without a library card.



Day 4: April 13

Mt. Vernon, George Washington's estate, was our first stop this day. It was beautiful. We saw the slave quarters that he had and the mansion itself. It looked like stone, but was actually wood, and had very vibrant interiors. The green on some of the walls was chosen because it was the slowest to fade. We went to a few museums after that. They were the Smithsonian Museum of History and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.



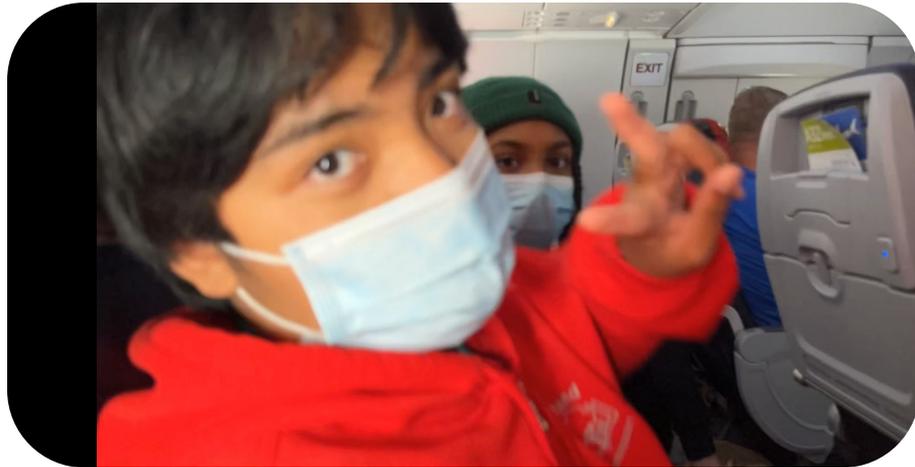
Day 5: April 14

We started this day with the International Spy Museum where we learned the role of espionage in our country's history. It was really fun. They also had interactive portions that were entertaining. After that, we went on a tour of our Capitol building, where we saw a star marking the center of the building and of D.C. There were also many statues at the Capitol like a replica of the Statue of Freedom that sits on top of the Capitol and others of historic figures like King Kamehameha I (the first king of all of Hawaii) or of Helen Keller. We saw the Holocaust museum. It was very solemn and really put into perspective the horrors that were inflicted during that time. We took a tour of the Jefferson Memorial after that, where Mike, once again, taught us a lot about its history and the person it was dedicated too. We had a fancy dinner this night at an Irish restaurant, and then told ghost stories to one another. I gave mine with Nathan on the Octagon House which, contrary to its name, has six sides. It was built for John Tayloe II and housed well-known figures such as James and Dolley Madison, French consulates, and many others. Among these, Taylor, his wife, and two of his daughters died here, as guests report hearing screams and feeling cold spots.



Day 6: April 15

The last day was just the flight back. We got to the airport early and waited for our flights. Once the flight began, it was just a few hours of waiting until we landed back in California. Overall, the trip was really fun. I am really glad that I was able to take part in it, and I wish I could go again. I learned a lot about this country that we call home, and came out more knowledgeable than I came in. Everything was very impressive and memorable, from the towering Washington Monument that we could see pretty much everywhere we went, to the White House where our president lives.



Reflection

Overall, I was completely taken away by our capital. It was amazing how it was able to put everything that we've learned in history into perspective by being at the places and seeing things with your own eyes. I would completely recommend this trip to anyone, particularly other students, because I think it is an excellent way to learn about our country and its history, along with have an amazing time having fun with friends or family.