

GDAY USA 2016

On 2nd January 2016, 18 very excited Sale College students and 3 Catholic College students left Sale College, Macalister Campus at 3am with Miss Kara Martin and Loretta Bates to begin a 20 day tour in the United States. At Tullamarine we met up with 3 staff and 17 students from East Gippsland and Numurkah. The 43 of us became the Ivory Group and began our tour. G'Day USA, run by Educational World Travel, is a cultural exchange program aimed at providing students with a greater understanding of school and family life in the United States. After the 14 hour flight, we spent an action packed 4 days in Los Angeles where we visited Snoopy's home, Knott's Berry Farm, most of us enjoying the thrilling rides and roller coasters. We took a walking tour up Sunset Boulevard, posing on the Academy Award's red carpet, locating the sidewalk stars of our favourites, being photographed with wax likenesses of the stars at Madame Tussaud's and finishing the day at Santa Monica Pier. Our day at Disneyland was unfortunately a wet one, but the rain cleared in time for the amazing night parade featuring Mickey and the other Disney stars, and a fabulous fireworks display. We finished our time in LA visiting Universal studios where we visited real movie and television sets and enjoyed the exciting theme park rides.

We boarded the bus at Universal Studios and headed straight to LAX to fly to the very exciting city of San Francisco. Here we explored Fisherman's Wharf, travelled on a cable car, investigated the CBD, walked across the renowned Golden Gate Bridge, dined at the famous Hard Rock cafe and spent an amazing few hours walking through and learning about the notorious island prison, Alcatraz. A highlight of the visit to San Francisco was a night tour of the city and sights in Hummer Limousine's.

Next stop – West Hills High School, San Diego. Here, at 10:30pm, very tired and nervous students met the families they would be living with for the next 9 days. During our home stay in San Diego we visited USS Midway, Coronado, San Diego Zoo, San Diego Sea World, La Jolla Cove and we saw the Mexican border from the San Ysidro outlet shopping mall. The highlight of the home stay was a day attending an American school with host students, sitting in classes and learning how the school system works in the United States. During the weekends, students and their US families spent time together, getting to know each other, attending extra-curricular activities, shopping, exploring San Diego, from the beach to the snow, and seeing what an American family is like.

As we left San Diego there were many tears as students and their new friends and temporary family's farewell each other. Many of the students have developed ongoing, strong relationships with their host families and will continue the relationships for years to come.

After spending the day visiting the beaches of LA, including the very alternative Venice Beach then boarding a plane for the trip home, a very tired but extremely happy group of world travellers arrived back into the arms of parents and carers at Tullamarine Airport on Thursday 21st January.

The students were excellent ambassadors for our country while visiting the United States and Loretta and Miss Martin had a wonderful trip, feeling very proud to travel with such an amazing, inclusive, thoughtful and patient group of young people.