

My Jamboree Experiences

About two years ago I made the decision to embark on a journey that would change my life forever. I decided to sign up to go to the World Scout Jamboree 2019. After completing the application process and selection day, I started to prepare for the jamboree as I joined Unit 18 made up of 18 Suffolk and 18 Norfolk scouts. It was the first meeting that really made the experience real for me, as this was where we started the fundraising process for the next year and a half to raise £4,000 each.

My fundraising experience started very quickly so I started forming ideas of how I was planning to raise the funds and set out an initial plan. By the end of my fundraising and reaching my total I had held and participated in quiz nights, bingo nights, sponsored rowing, car washes, busking, bag packing, craft sales, car boot sales and also receiving donations from the Lowestoft Lions, friends and past scouts, The Mason Trust, local MP's and Councillors.

On the 20 July 2019 all 100 UK units set off from British airports to New York. My experience of New York, even though is very short, was eye opening to visit and see the famous monument and walk around the busy streets of America. We visited the Empire State Building, Times Square and event the Statue of Liberty while on a speed boat tour!

Over the whole Jamboree we had lots of travelling by coach, but this was a nice way to relax, enjoy the scenery, listen to music and chat with friends!

We stayed in two universities (New York and West Virginia) before travelling to the Summit Bechtel Reserve.

My time at the Jamboree was a time I'll never forget, as we arrived and travelled towards our base camp for the next 12 days, I saw the enormity of this Jamboree. Although having to set up tents in the rain, the weather was beautiful and gave us all a happier attitude to get out there and try all the activities available and make my Jamboree experience the best possible! One of the best things about having neighbours from all around the world was that we could share meals and make memories together as we learnt about each other's cultures and way of life.

My favourite night was when we shared a meal with our Mexican neighbours as we had burritos and chilli con carne and I got to interact and make friends with them. I tried some of their sweets and got taught a Mexican dance, it was just a wonderful atmosphere and place to be. Me and a group of friends made a rough plan each night about what we would plan to do the next day, we all really loved doing sports and wanted to make the most out of all the amazing activities available on this world leading site. The activity I enjoyed most was mountain biking as I got to bike around all the trails with my friends going at high speeds and enjoying the thrill of American forest trails. I also really enjoyed the white water rafting because half of the unit all went and we could all work, experience the activity and have laughs together.

Badge trading was a very big thing at the Jamboree this year, with people sitting and trading all day but we didn't want to follow this as we would be wasting our time. One of my funniest moments was on a school bus coming back from an activity, where we decided to ask the whole bus who wanted to trade,

so myself and two others got our badges out and just traded with nearly everyone on the bus, making offers to different people with all sorts of badges, it was brilliant!

Another main part of the Jamboree was the ceremonies that were held at the arena. There was the opening, cultural equality and closing ceremonies. They were all highlights of the Jamboree without a doubt and the main reason is having 40,000 scouts in one area from around the world is insane and just makes you realise what an opportunity I have had being on the trip, they were all special moments. To make them better the Jamboree team put on shows and over all three ceremonies there was a drone display, fireworks, Disney singalong, laser show and so much more!!

The UK contingent had all 100 units stay at Maryland University for the final meeting together. This was a time for me when I really connected with my unit and made the greatest of true friendships. My favourite parts of this stay were sightseeing in Washington DC as we got to see the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Memorial, but I also loved going to the cinema and even a baseball match!

To finish off the Jamboree experience we travelled as a unit to Quebec, Canada where we stayed at a local scout hut and were kindly greeted by our hosts. For me, Canada was where I truly experienced cultural life for Canadians especially because we were in the French speaking province. My experiences there were travelling to a Native American museum where I learnt about past culture of America, swimming and kayaking at the scout hut, trying a traditional dish called la poutine and making Canadian friends for the scout group.

Overall my trip was the best it could have been and thanks to all those who helped me fundraise to get there such as my leaders and unit members; I never could have done it without them! Please don't think my Jamboree experience is over, since being back I have kept on trading badges, I've kept in contact with lots of other scouts, we have a reunion camp coming up for our unit and I have signed up as a young leaders in scouts to help at my local scout group, to share my knowledge and experiences that I have made. This is a memory I will never forget and has made me a better person.

Levi Lawson