



MY WORLD SCOUT JAMBOREE EXPERIENCE

My name is Emily Martin – I was a beaver, cub and scout with Great Barton Scout Group, and now I'm an Explorer with the Discovery Unit based at Ixworth. After eighteen months of fundraising, training, team building and other preparations, this is the story of my trip to WSJ 2019 with Unit 18, 'The Iceni'...



On Saturday the 20th of July, my unit left Heathrow airport on an afternoon flight with two other UK scout units, including the Suffolk Unit 19. We all arrived safely at JFK airport, complete with all our bags at almost 5am UK time!



After a short sleep we all boarded yellow school buses to visit New York. We only had about 6 hours before we needed to be on our coach to drive to West Virginia but still got to see lots of tourist attractions; we went up the Empire state building, had lunch in Times Square and took a speedboat ride to see the Statue of Liberty!



We finally reached the campsite, Bechtel Summit Reserve at 2pm the next day, having stayed overnight at the University of West Virginia. Unfortunately, it was raining. However, we still managed to get our tents up and even helped some of the other units, such as our Taiwanese neighbours, who arrived later to set up their tents.



The campsite is HUGE! 50,000 scouts, leaders and support staff – sleeping in 2-person tents, in 36-scout units, each with our own cook tent – surrounded by lakes for water sports, skateboard parks, climbing walls and its own mountain.

On the next day, Tuesday, the official opening ceremony was held in the evening. It was incredible and one of my favourite moments of the Jamboree because all 50,000 Scouts from over 150 countries were sitting on the side of a hill watching the show together. As part of the ceremony, each country that was participating had one scout bring their flag to the front of the stadium where they were displayed for the duration of the Jamboree. It finished with an astounding drone display, with the final image being the Jamboree logo.



For our first Jamboree activity my unit hiked up Mount Jack, which was the highest part of the campsite, and took around one and a half hours. At the top there were lots of activities; I tried shooting black powder muskets, throwing tomahawks and several other activities. Due to the large quantity of people on site many of the most popular activities had long queues, which despite being an excellent place to meet people and trade badges meant that you had to get up really early to be first in the queue or devote your whole day to queuing for one activity. Therefore, me and my friends decided to focus on the smaller activities, most of which were in tents close to the stadium. For example, on Thursday, the day after the hike, we visited the Tech tent where we could use a satellite phone, try and decode messages with 3D-printed enigma machines and even use a robot to look around a museum with an Enigma machine on display!



That Friday was the Jamboree Cultural Day; none of the standard activities were running, instead we got to visit other units' campsites to learn about their culture and teach people a bit about our culture when they came to see us. Most people had food as part of their 'display'; my unit served biscuits and Earl Grey teabags as the cooking facilities and the space in our luggage put constraints on our options. I got to try a sort of hard toffee from Korea, gooey Brazilian Chocolate, Japanese noodles, Swiss chocolate, a Chicago hotdog, Italian pasta with a spicy tomato sauce, brie on gingerbread which was a surprising tasty combination from Sweden and Taiwanese milk bubble tea – the tea was delicious but the 'bubbles' were weird and despite apparently being edible, I only ate one.



I also dressed in Korean traditional clothes, made an origami crane, tried to play Pictionary in Italian (they made it easier for us by just doing foods but we still only managed to guess two out of five), was shown how to write my name in Chinese and played a Norwegian game where the players hold hands in a circle around a stack of buckets, whoever knocks over the buckets loses and is removed from the circle until one person is the winner – it was slightly chaotic but lots of fun!



During the week I also got the opportunity to try several new activities including Scuba diving, which was awesome although the mouthpiece made my mouth ache and spinning in a gyroscope – it felt like a mini rollercoaster except that because your stomach stayed at your centre of gravity, you didn't feel sick!



Overall, I was really impressed at the amount of effort and the level of some of the activities given we were on a campsite. For example, on the second Tuesday I got to try the GLOBE Leadership experience. The point was to see what kind of leader you were, first by doing a series of questionnaires and then by being observed completing an escape room. They had nine 'rooms' of three different types, all with a functioning screen for hints and the timer, cameras, flashing lights etc. and they were all set up in this massive tent! I ended up doing all three types of escape room because after my

group of ten had finished the first room it started to rain heavily and there was a lightening alert so we decided to go shelter in the leadership tents and queue for the other escape rooms whilst we waited for the rain to stop.

Each UK patrol was also assigned an American buddy unit, however, most of them were camping on opposite ends of the site. We were camping in subcamp A and our buddy unit was in D – over an hour's walk away! This meant our two groups didn't see each other much, a few of them came over to help us set up and our leaders met up a few times, although they did manage to organise a joint dinner; half of my unit, including me, walked over to our buddies campsite whilst half of their unit went to ours but both units cooked the same meal so no half was left out.

That wasn't the only interesting dinner I had at the Jamboree; during the first week we were invited to eat dinner with the Mexican unit next to us along with a few other units because we helped provide them with food the previous night (we weren't allowed to keep food in our camping areas because of bears and they missed the time slot to collect food for dinner – luckily, we had plenty of leftover food we hadn't touched due to miscalculating the amount of food we needed) and a few days later, my sub-camp held a street party where we dragged all of our tables into the space between tents and you could try any of the food being served by the 10 or 12 units involved. You were also supposed to sit next to people who weren't from your country, so I had a nice conversation with some Americans, some Australians and a Taiwanese girl who persuaded me to try the Taiwanese Winter Melon tea - it was delicious! I think it was an excellent idea to draw us together because people also stayed up chatting and playing card games with new friends for several hours after the food was finished.





An activity I really enjoyed was going white water rafting on the second to last day of the Jamboree. Each unit had been given 20 places and a time slot so that half of each unit was guaranteed a go (18 scouts and 2 leaders), because we had more scouts wanting to go than we had spaces some of the others from my unit went with our American buddy unit as they had spaces that weren't being used. I was lucky enough to go with my unit which meant I was on a boat with 8 of my closest friends. The river was a

short bus journey up through the mountains and by the time we got to the onto the boats it was raining. In my opinion that made it even better since we spent just as much time swimming, splashing and messing about in the river as we did rafting down it! – There were a few sections of rapids but there was also plenty of calm stretches.

Sadly, it was soon time for the closing ceremony. However, the Jamboree part of the trip went out with a bang: an incredible lasers and fireworks display!



To wind down from the camp, the whole UK contingent went to Washington DC – we toured the main sites (that's the White House in the background below) and visited the space museum. We also went to a baseball game together– all 4,000 scouts – in Baltimore and adopted our own fielder so enthusiastically it even made a story in the *Washington Post*!



After Washington, we stayed with some French-speaking Canadian Scouts near Montreal for the Home Hospitality segment of our trip. In return for putting my unit up in their Scout hut (see picture below), we brought them our tents from the Jamboree. Whilst we were there we had two campfires,



the first one was mainly my unit and we roasted marshmallows for smores, however the second had to be moved under shelter as there was a thunderstorm. Instead of having a real fire we had some glowsticks, a phone with a video of a fire and the ashes from the last big campfire they had (apparently it was a tradition to save some of the ashes of important campfires for the next one). Unlike UK Scouts they didn't have a lot of campfire songs, rather they played games such as who

can sing the best Disney song and my personal favourite, a four person game where two people speak gibberish and the other two act as translators – it led to a lot of funny nonsense, especially when one translator was speaking French so the other had no idea what they were responding to!

As part of our Canadian experience we tried poutine (chips, cheese curds and gravy) at the restaurant that claimed to have created the original recipe. Personally, I found it a strange combination but if you normally like gravy on your chips then this could be right up your alley!



We also spent some time in Montreal, where we hiked to the top of Mount Royal (the mountain from which Montreal gained its name) and visited the 1976 Olympic stadium where we got to take the funicular railway to the top of the learning tower for an excellent view of the city! This is my unit plus our



Canadian hosts at the top of Mount Royal with the view over Montreal in the background. ↑

And then the long journey home!

My Jamboree experience has shown me the meaning of the phrase 'Worldwide family of Scouts' because despite coming from all over the world and speaking many different languages we were all connected through scouting and most importantly we were all able to become friends with each other. I would strongly recommend going to a Jamboree for everyone in Scouts whether as a youth participant, unit leader or member of the International Service Team; it truly is a once in a lifetime experience!

Thank you to everyone who made this possible for me with all your generous donations and help,

Emily Martin