WYNG Philomathia Essay Contest

Exploration Tour
4-11 July 2017
“What is identity?”

At first glance, it may seem like a simple question that requires minimal effort in answering. Yet, as curious, young minds began delving into the core of the question, many nuanced answers emerged — from the identity crisis arising from political instability to the social identity theory. It was a question that demanded to be answered. And it also opened a door to a journey which I will never forget, the WYNG Philomathia Student Essay Contest winners’ visit to Cambridge and London.
EXPLORATION TOUR 2017

CAMBRIDGE & LONDON
FIRST PART

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

As one of the winners of the essay competition, I was offered the invaluable chance and privilege to visit the University of Cambridge, experiencing the unique life of living in one of the colleges, going through small group learning sessions called “supervisions” and joining the Cambridge Open Days.
When we first arrived in Cambridge after the long flight from Hong Kong to London, we were immediately met with a welcoming atmosphere. For our stay in Cambridge, Trinity Hall became our second home.
Trinity Hall is the fifth oldest college in Cambridge and was originally founded for the purpose of training lawyers and clergymen following the black death. The central site, which we stayed in, is situated in the heart of Cambridge, making it very convenient for us to travel around the city.

On the second day of our visit, fellows of Trinity Hall led us around the site in an orientation tour. During the tour, I was astonished by the beauty and serenity of the living environment offered by the college — there were gardens and lawns which provided spaces for studying or relaxation, and a river terrace which overlooked River Cam. The lawns of Trinity Hall are also opened to students all year round, allowing them to spend their time lying or sitting on the grass.
Day Two - Orientation Tour
Another structure which immediately caught my eyes was the Jerwood Library, which is shaped like a sailing ship. It is one of the newest buildings on the river bank, built in 1999, and houses a large collection of books stretching across many disciplines. Students working inside the library can always enjoy the soothing scenery of the River Cam and the Latham Lawn, which, in my personal opinion, provides great motivation and support when studying.
Walking from the central site for about 10 minutes, we reached a recently renovated accommodation site for Trinity Hall students, the WYNG Gardens. It provides students with contemporary en-suite rooms which contain basic furnitures such as shelves, study desks and beds.
**Student Life**

As for us, we stayed on the central site in Block A. Each of us had our own rooms and some of us even shared a living space together. There were toilets shared among the eight of us as well as a pantry, which allowed us to cook our own breakfast if we wished to.
As the colleges will become students’ home for their stay in Cambridge, catering is also an important aspect that we should look at. During term time, students can buy their three meals at the cafeteria and dine at the dining hall, which is also the place we enjoyed our breakfast for those few days.
ACCOMMODATION

TRINITY HALL

I was very fortunate to be allocated to a spacious single room with large windows overlooking the Cherry Tree Court, also equipped with my own sink, making life at Trinity Hall very cozy and comfortable. Altogether, it was amazing to see the options of accommodation that students can pick from, and it made me realise the well-rounded support that colleges offer to students’ intellectual development as well as general welfare.
As part of the Cambridge living experience, we attended formal dinner, an event crucial to the college life of students at Cambridge. We were joined by the Vice-Master Elect Dr Nick Bampos, Fellows Dr Andrew Murray and Mr Colm McGrath, as well as Dr Rachelle Stretch from the Alumni and Development Office. During dinner, we were able to engage in stimulating discussions on a wide range of subjects, including current affairs, such as the recent updates about Brexit, and information on studying in Cambridge. The experience prompted me to understand the importance of thinking critically about matters in our daily life which we may overlook, and showed me the remarkable environment of Cambridge which promotes intellectual exchange, as students of different backgrounds usually gather in formal halls to do so in a more casual and relaxed manner.
Supervision Sessions
SUPERVISION SESSIONS

In addition to the formal dinner, we attended two supervisions held by fellows of Trinity Hall, which gave us a chance to understand the unique Cambridge learning style. Supervisions are small group learning sessions where 2 to 4 students engage in discussions about their course material with an academic member who is an expert in that field, supplementing the lectures. In our supervisions, we discussed different aspects of “Identity”, such as the philosophical view of personal identity and how the law protects our identity, using our essays as starting points to the discussions.

Although I entered the supervisions being slightly nervous, as I was uncertain of the level of oral debate that would follow, I eventually learnt to be courageous and proactive in my answers. Not only did the guidance of the fellows led me to articulate my thoughts coherently, it also prompted me to consider matters in multiple viewpoints in a critical manner before reaching conclusions. After these two sessions, I was able to understand in depth the level of academic rigour required of the students in Cambridge, which is a challenge I find extremely compelling and am eager to tackle. Ultimately, this opportunity has confirmed my ambition to apply to Cambridge and has proven to me what a rewarding education one may expect from the university.
Another crucial event of our tour has been the Cambridge Open Days, which gave us the opportunity to visit some other colleges, faculties and to attend different talks and sample lectures. Touring the various colleges, I got a better understanding of the collegiate system of Cambridge University and learnt of the characteristics of the different colleges.
In all of the colleges, I could see beautiful architecture and structures, particularly in their libraries and chapels.
All the colleges have their own libraries, paired with faculty and university libraries, providing students with sufficient resources to aid their studies.
As a rising Form 6 student, I have been preparing for university applications throughout Form 5. Being in the Cambridge admission talks gave me a better overview of the entire application process and reminded me of points to note, such as what the university expects of personal statements and how to fill in the COPA forms. Following the general admission talks, I went to the Law Faculty, a stunning glass building in the Sidgwick Site, to join the law course presentation and sample lecture. Sitting in the lecture hall and listening to fellows and lecturers giving their presentations, I was utterly captivated.

The particular topic of the sample lecture was on “adverse possession”, which is within the branch of land law. As I listened to the lecture, I caught a glimpse of the intricate workings of the legal system in protecting and balancing rights of different individuals, and this has since confirmed my interest to pursue a degree in Law.
As part of the open day programme for King’s College, there was a service at the chapel which allowed us to listen to the famous Choir of King’s College and St. John’s College. The hymns sung reverberated off the walls of the chapel as the setting sun shone through stained glass windows. It was a beautiful experience and I am certain that the memory of this service will stay with me for long.
Apart from the Open Days, we also explored different spots in Cambridge, including the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Botanic Garden.
The Fitzwilliam Museum contains exhibits and artefacts stretching across different civilisations and time periods, including ancient Greek statues and Christian illuminated manuscripts.
In acknowledgement & appreciation of the skill and dedication of the Garden Staff & Student Gardeners both past and present.
AMORPHOPHALLUS TITANUM

TITAN ARUM
On the other hand, the Botanic Garden houses many flowers and trees. It was an amazing coincident that the corpse flower, titan arum, blooming once in 11 years, bloomed just a few days before we arrived. Sadly, by the time we visited, the flower had mostly withered. Still, it was wonderful for us to see it in real life, but not only on newspapers or televisions.
One of the most characteristic Cambridge events is punting. Punting in the River Cam allows visitors to view the many bridges of Cambridge and different colleges along the river. It was an interesting experience, especially when matched with the many Cambridge legends told by the punt guide — bizarre as they sounded, they certainly provided a good laugh.
Cambridge city life is also very vibrant, as we learnt from our walks and meals in town. A particular meal worth mentioning was that in Fitzbillies, where we tried the famous chelsea buns and cakes. It certainly lived up to its reputation, and I am eager to try it again if I am to visit the store.
Altogether, our days in Cambridge gave us the ultimate experience of being a student there — from supervisions and lectures, to formal dinners, museum visits and great meals in town, all of these had been most memorable and eye-opening. At the same time, we were given advice and information on applying to Cambridge, giving us the chance to make informed decisions about our university choices. After these few days, I have become more determined to apply to Cambridge in this coming fall, and am encouraged to continue my strive for excellence in school and in my subject of interest — Law.
SECOND PART

LONDON

The second part of the trip unfolds as we return to London, the enchanting capital of the United Kingdom.
We visited many different parts of London, the most captivating being the trip to Sky Garden, an indoor garden with an observation deck overlooking most of London. The scenery is absolutely stunning, with a beautiful weather on the day we visited.
Another noteworthy stop of our trip was the Royal Courts of Justice, where we witnessed protesters gathering for Charlie Gard. This was particularly intriguing to me, remembering a conversation I shared with a Trinity Hall Law fellow regarding the case, and the difficulties when considering medical decisions and ethical decisions, or when balancing the parents’ rights and the child’s.
In the Saatchi Gallery, we saw an exhibition named “From Selfie to Self-Expression”, bringing us back to the essay competition and its theme “Identity”.
ROBOTS
THE 500-YEAR QUEST TO
MAKE MACHINES HUMAN

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While in the Science Museum, we saw a robot show which displayed different types of artificial intelligence or robots.
Following the museum trips were two different shows. The first one being a modernised version of Twelfth Night at the Globe Theatre, which took the opportunity to celebrate LGBT pride in its ending scene.
THRILLER
LIVE
And the second being the Thriller Show, which is a musical featuring Michael Jackson’s greatest hits and dances.
C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group

Ms Anna Beech

Throughout the trip, we also came to meet many different people, including Ms Anna Beech of C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, whom we discussed the growing challenges in climate control with.
Imperial College London

Dr Lawrence Tse

Dr Lawrence Tse, who brought us on a tour of Imperial College and introduced us to his research projects.
Pik Shan Pang
Senior Reporter-Apple Daily

And Ms Pang Pik Shan, the winner of the Rhodes Scholarship, an experienced reporter who discussed with us her career and post-graduate education experience.
In short, our trip to London had shed light on the rich and distinct culture of London and England in general.
The trip had been amazing, experiencing it with the good friends I have made along the way. I am certain that it will become a lasting memory of mine.
THE WYNG PHILOMATHIA STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST 2016/17

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THANK YOU

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Yanyan and Ms. Ho for taking care of us on this trip, Trinity Hall and the kind fellows for being such welcoming hosts and showing to us the life of a Cambridge student. And lastly, WYNG foundation and Philomathia Foundation for organising this competition and trip, which has been most rewarding and insightful.
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