

Ben Spink's Seattle Trip

Even after meeting at Christchurch airport at 4:30am, and travelling for about 26 hours, we were buzzing with excitement when we finally arrived in Seattle. Fortunately, Seattle is the birthplace of the latte, so there was no way jetlag could hold us back! For me, the excitement and novelty of actually being in Seattle never wore off. The following two weeks were unforgettable.

My host family, the Dawsons, were fantastic, and I hope I will have the opportunity to visit them again, or they will visit me here in New Zealand. They all went out of their way to make sure I felt like a member of the family, and to help me make the most of my time in Seattle. At one point I mentioned that Kurt Cobain had lived in Seattle, so Christina took me to see his house. On my last weekend, Mark took me to a store called Guitar Centre, and I was able to buy a beautiful American-made guitar to bring back with me. Alex, who is my age, is a sports fanatic, so he made it his goal to teach me the intricacies of American football, which I had never watched in my life. I was soon hooked, and the host families arranged for us to go to a Huskies college football game. This was another of the highlights for me, watching the game in a *college* stadium that seats 76,000 people!



Most week days we were scheduled to go sight-seeing. Each day another wonderful volunteer would take us to a certain Seattle attraction. As a music fan, my favourite was the Experience Music Project, an amazing museum dedicated to Jimi Hendrix and other Seattle musicians, and shaped like several pieces of melted guitars. The EMP was donated by Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft, which is based in the Seattle region. I had my eyes opened by the sheer amount of wealth that was evident in the city, and at the high school, University Prep, which we visited. One student drove a Hummer to school every day!

I met a lot of great people at U-Prep, and have a number of email addresses to keep in touch with. Everyone was fascinated by the real live 'kiwis,' and our weird language: "that's *lovely*"..."I had *heaps* of fun." Several of the students and I formed the exclusive "level 3" club, after being stuck in an elevator on level 3 for two hours. We also visited Wedgwood Elementary school, and spent the day educating little children about



New Zealand, who asked questions like "If you guys are from New Zealand, how come you didn't know each other before the trip?" and "If you're from New Zealand, how come you look like us?!"



The Seattle sister city exchange is an incredible opportunity, and this is only a very short summary of my experiences. The city itself is stunning, but it was the people I met in those two weeks that made the trip so unforgettable. I can only hope that I will be able to go back soon!

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2006 Seattle Scholar