

My Trip To Seattle, Washington, 21 September – 5 October 2006

Gabby Petheram

Each year the Christchurch-Seattle Sister City committee calls for applications from students of Christchurch high schools to apply to visit Seattle for a two week period.

I put in an application, was interviewed and was lucky enough to be chosen as one of the three!

This was the biggest thing I personally have ever done in my 17 years. I've only once been to Australia, so flying all the way to America was pretty major. The few months before we left were very busy, with organising sponsors and fundraising. Although it was tiring and hard work it was definitely worth it. We left Christchurch on the 19th September 2006 and travelled to Sydney, then San Francisco, then up to Seattle. Overall it was about 25 hours of travelling but we arrived on that same Tuesday in the late afternoon. I think for all three of us it was very confusing but after a very early night at our host family's homes, we eventually recovered.

My host family were the nicest people you could hope for in a situation like this. My host parents, Jim and Casey were wonderful, they taught me a lot about life and what's really important. The children, Kelly 17 and Chris 14 are great teenagers. I got on really well with both of them and enjoyed the times we had together to hang out. I'm so grateful to the Margard family and will never forget their hospitality and welcoming manner.

Over the two weeks we spent in Seattle, we definitely crammed in the activities. Being a tourist I wanted to see everything possible, each day we would have a volunteer take us to different spots in Seattle, some were The Flight Museum, Ride the Ducks and a visit to the University of Washington. My favourites were going to the Experience Music Project, a museum dedicated to music and Jimi Hendrix and visiting an elementary school.

Every day the three of us exchange students, or Kiwis as the American kids liked to call us, would ride in with our host families to the school. We were able to meet many students and make some friendships. It was very strange when they would laugh at our accents or our Kiwi slang. For the first few days I was having debates with some students because they had the accent not me!

I would also like to thank Pat Grant, our organiser and "go to" guy at the school, University Prep. He did an awesome job of making sure we had places to go and sights to see everyday. Thanks Pat!

Overall this was a huge eye opener for me; it's a great opportunity to see a completely different world out there. I will never forget my time in Seattle. Lastly thank you to the Christchurch City Council for making this exchange possible, I hope this opportunity for Christchurch high school students will carry on for many years to come.

Gabby Petheram
2006 Seattle Scholar