

Space Camp 2010



After nearly two years of planning and preparation, 20 students and 3 teachers finally headed off to Huntsville, Alabama at the beginning of April. Many didn't know quite what to expect but the whole adventure turned out to be an amazing experience for all.

The week at the actual Space Camp in Alabama was a full on programme where the students were woken at 7am each day and put through astronaut training until 10 o'clock at night. They trained on Shuttle simulators, attended lectures on space exploration and Shuttle systems, built and launched two stage rockets, experienced working in space by scuba diving, and carried out a 6 hour simulated mission as pilots or mission specialists to repair a satellite in space.

They also experienced life at "Camp America" and all that this entails: meeting Americans, listening to those great Southern accents, eating cafeteria food and seeing American culture first hand.

Then it was off to Florida for the second part of the trip, the main purpose of which was to visit the Kennedy Space Centre and see where the rockets are actually launched. We had a whole day tour around the launch facilities, seeing parts of the International Space Station being assembled, a huge Saturn V rocket, and going on the Shuttle launch simulator. The highlight was 'lunch with an astronaut', during which we heard first hand what it is like to live and work in space.

We managed to fit in many other activities while in Orlando which made for an exciting ten days ... three days at Disneyworld (including behind the scenes tours on the Science of roller coasters), a visit to a local High School, an incredible kayaking trip around a mangrove swamp where some got to touch a manatee, and a trip to Gatorland. Added to this was the all-American experience of a play-off basketball game between the Orlando Magic and the Toronto Raptors.

The trip was made especially enjoyable through the good behaviour and positive attitudes of the group members. As one student commented, "we went away not knowing everyone in the group, but returned with a whole new set of friendships." Another comment which sums it up for me, ... "The ultimate school trip!"

David Paterson

