

On the first day of the September school holidays a group of Year 9, 10 and 11 Loreto College Ballarat students and a few intrepid teachers embarked on the journey of a lifetime. It wasn't quite interstellar travel but for twenty-eight of our Loreto girls it was almost as spectacular, as we embarked on the inaugural Loreto College Space Camp.

Our journey began with a week-long immersive program at the Huntsville Space Academy. We climbed walls, SCUBA dived, learnt about the history of space exploration, we rode scientifically relevant rides, including the multi axis trainer, the one sixth gravity chair and the G Force as well as having engaged in simulation missions that took us to Earth orbit and even Mars. We had girls in Mission Control, Flight Deck, the International Space Station and Phobos. We were able to experience what it was like to be involved in the space program. The week was informative, exciting and awe-inspiring for the two groups.

*"The memories made will last a lifetime!" – Ella van der Voort*

The next stop for the mission was the beautiful Washington DC. Here we explored the wonders of the Smithsonian Air and Space, as well as the Natural History Museum, immersing ourselves in the past as well as the future. We also explored the rich history found in the Capitol Building, seeing where American history was made and learning about the people who helped shape the nation. Jeanette Rankin and Alexander Hamilton were amongst the favourite figures to be discovered. We also were fortunate enough to go on a night bus tour of the great city, seeing the White House, Washington Monument, Abraham Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial and the Iwo Jima Memorial, just to name a few. The atmosphere and excitement on the bus that night is one of the most memorable moments from the trip.

*"The people I met made the whole trip so much better" – India Baker*

Our final destination was Orlando, Florida. Here, despite humidity and thunderstorms we tried our hand at indoor sky diving, explored the river system on a guided air boat tour, visited the renowned Kennedy Space Centre, dined with an astronaut and spent the day at Universal Studios. All of these experiences were unbelievable, and we are incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to see such things. The Kennedy Space Centre was beyond compare, with interactive exhibits allowing us to not only learn about space flight and the work involved, but in some ways also experience it. Our lunch with Bruce Melnick was exciting and



incredible, he shared his insights into his time in space as well as where the space program may go in the future.

*“It was such a unique experience and I don’t think I could have done it anywhere else!” – Emmi Gale*

Our final days were bitter-sweet, as homesickness had begun to set in yet we wanted to see so much more! Never the less, it was time to return home to Ballarat. This experience isn’t one we will forget any time soon and I’m sure the stories we have will continue to be told for many years to come.

Ailish Murphy McKay and Remie McMaster

