

February Break School Trip To Spain And Italy



Explanations from the tour guide were highly lessonful, helpful and fun. Bus rides were included, thus we were able to move ourselves pretty quickly. Evening walking tours were conducted every night, and teachers would lead us to the best restaurant in the town and let us see the beautiful night view of the city. Hotels were truly beautiful, and all of them were located in the center of the city, meaning that we could walk around the city at night.

Among those places, my favorite place was Barcelona. Frankly speaking, Madrid was beautiful, however, it was slightly dirty and there were not many tourist attractions to see. Toledo, which is located next to Madrid, was incredibly beautiful, though. The view from the mountain was one of the most beautiful view I have ever seen in my life, and the city looked so much like medieval city. Barcelona was full of beautiful monuments and buildings to see, with the beautiful Mediterranean Ocean and beaches with hundreds of cruises on the sea. Sagrada Familia, which has been under construction for over hundred years, was the most amazing building I have ever seen. The city was full of legacies of famous architect, Antoni Gaudi, and Guell Park was one of them. Zaragoza, the city I did not expect to be like any other cities, was spectacular with the main cathedral, which was so magnificent and grand.

Then, we flew to Italy. I have been to Italy last summer, so everything was not really new to me. Rome has always been my favorite place. However, it rained and snowed so much in Rome when we stayed there, thus the city did not look as beautiful as the city I went over the summer. Florence was nice, however, the weather was so freezing and windy. Nevertheless, Italy was Italy. All the monuments from the Roman Empires were conserved pretty well, and it was like traveling through time and walking in medieval cities. If you ever have chances to travel these countries, you should definitely go for them. You will see the most amazing views in the world, and I highly recommend you to see them.

Does your school offer any kind of international education trip programs? If it does, you definitely want to consider being a part of it. My school offers three different trips this year : Mediterranean trip to Spain and Italy during February break, Shakespeare trip to England and Ireland during April Break, and China trip over the summer. Among them, I was able to attend Spain and Italy trip with twenty other students from my school for ten days, from February 15th to February 24th. Let me introduce you how amazing they were.

We flew from New York to Madrid. The expense of the trip was approximately three thousand and four hundred dollars, and lunches were not included. Buses, plane tickets, hotels, hotel breakfast, tour guides and dinners were included. We started traveling from Madrid all the way to Rome, visiting cities on the way like Toledo, Zaragoza, Barcelona, Pisa, and Florence.

Three teachers were with us with the tour guide from the travel company and regional tour guide we met from Toledo, Barcelona, Florence and Rome. Twenty five students attended. The trip was sincerely amazing. The rules were not strict, rather, they were very lenient. We could stay with two other people you would want to use room with. There were so many free times during the lunch.

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My Life in the United States



and I my parents feel very proud. I am very happy that I am passing all of my subjects and I feel way more confident in studying than I used to.

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Another month has gone by, and it was pretty good. I had a lot of projects to finish, so it was fairly stressful, but it was still fun. Firstly my school went to GACS competition, it is a competition against a few other schools, and people who get first place would have to go to the nationals in Bob Jones University. I entered an acrylic painting in the competition, and I had won second place!! I was very surprised that I even got a place haha. But it wasn't enough to join my classmates to the national competition. So while most of my school is gone for 3 days to nationals, I would have to stay at school and do pretty much nothing. This month I also had a sleepover at my friend's house, she is such a nice and sweet girl. I went to her house on Saturday after my golf practice, and spent the night in there. Then we went to her church in Atlanta on Sunday morning. That day we went to the mall, had lunch there and then just shopped around for clothes and other stuff. I have had so much fun that day, because I rarely get to go shopping to a mall or go to Atlanta.

I also started to improve on my golf practices. Every week I feel like I am getting better and better. We already played a couple of holes, and that was a lot of fun. And the best thing about golf is hitting your first shot with a driver. Ah that feels so nice! My grades at school are still As and Bs,

First Tech Challenge



Every school in the United States has various after school clubs. Of course my high school, Pope John Paul II High School, is also one of them. I participated in various school activities since freshman year and this year I got into a new club, Robotics. I was a little bit worried at first because I didn't have much experience related to robots. However, I still wanted to challenge myself and luckily I became the secretary of the Robotics Club. The best part of the club was that even though I'm the secretary, I am still able to participate in part of engineering and programming of the robot.



At this point, I will briefly explain about our robotics team, K-9. The team name K-9 came from the Drama 'Doctor Who.' We have nine students on the team and this club was established during the 2016 - 2017 school year. Our robot's name is Astro, named after the last year member's dog so our mascot also portrayed a dog. We have six different roles; Engineers, Marketing/Publicity, Programmers, Designers, Drivers, and Secretaries. One thing



that I really tried hard this year was to surpass last year achievement by getting well-organized. We planned on attending our First Tech Challenge, which is designed for students in grades 7-12 to compete head to head by using a sports model. Teams are responsible for designing, building, and programming their robots in a 10-week build period to compete in an alliance format against other teams. Our main goal for this year was to attend the FTC competition and attempt to achieve a better rank.

First, we planned the monthly goals. In September, we sketched the design of our robot, went over FTC Mission Form and decided what part of the scoring list we were going to focus on. In October, we pur-



chased materials for the robot and began programming based on how we designed the robot. From November through January, we continued building the robot and programming it. Finally in February, we went over the FTC Checklist and made sure that the robot met every criteria.

On February 10, our team headed to Emmaus High School to attend the Lehigh Valley Qualifying Tournament. As I mentioned earlier, FTC assigned different topics for us each

year and depending on the topic we design our robots. This year, we had to pick up blocks called cryptos and put them into the crypto-boxes. Crypto-boxes are made into 3 columns and 4 rows. Luckily, our team came in 6th place out of more than 50 teams. We were glad that we had 6th place even though we weren't able to make the final three. We had a huge challenge during the competition which was the arm fell off the robot. Due to our amazing teamwork, we were able to put the arm back on the robot and we were back into the competition.



It was a mind blowing experience for me since I didn't have any experience like that before. I recommend joining a club that you never experienced before. Of course it's important to participate in the club that looks good on your resume, but I think it's also important to find the thing that you can enjoy and have fun.

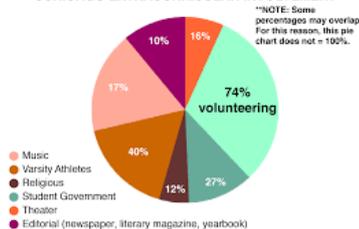
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Junior Year, Time To Think Of College And Make Plan



It is already two months left until the summer vacation. Unlike many other Asian countries, most of the colleges in the United States accept college applications around December and January. For those students who are aiming for early decision or early action, the deadline for their applications is usually the first day of November. What does this mean? It means that if you are Junior, you are going to be applying to colleges in less than eight months.

UCHICAGO EXTRACURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT



My school has just officially started meetings with students and their parents regarding the issue of college admission. Guidance counselors required students to answer ten questions from the famous college admission website called Naviance to gather information for their recommendation letters. Counselors also required them to write college list with five reach colleges, five possible colleges and five safety colleges. Ever since then, my friends and I have been talking about colleges for a month. I have seen some students who have become hopeless and are about to give up, because they think that their grades are not top one percent. I am

not an expert. However, I did incredible amount of researches and had so many talks with various consultants and students from top colleges. And, I can guarantee you, that grades do not matter. What does this mean? Grades matter. Yes, it does. However, if your grade exceeds a certain point where is considered to be A, or good student, the difference in the numbers do not mean anything, really. Colleges consider student who has 1500 on SAT and 1600 on SAT same. Then, what are the real factors that decide the fate of millions of applicants?

The major factors - that can distinctly separate students into two categories : students like nerds who only managed to keep their grades high and students who are really passionate into particular areas and have shown contribution and impacts to the community - are EC (Extracurricular activities), essays and recommendation letters. Top colleges do not want to have students who are just smart, or who managed to have their grades incredibly high rather than participating in something they are interested in to make their resume look

interests and have made and demonstrated their impacts and leadership throughout activities, regardless of what those have been. They want to have students who can change the society, or even the world. They do not want well-rounded students who participated dozens of clubs at school for their application. They want to have experts who have shown dedications into their interests. Those activities and highly valuable experiences from them are clearly shown in the recommendation letters and essays, and that is what colleges want to see.

You do not have to have perfect grades. It is just a number. Colleges desire to have passionate students rather than smart students. It is not too late. You still have time to change your application in a good way. You just need to decide what you want to do in the future, what your interests are and what colleges you want to apply. Life is full of surprises. You never know, you may be able to get into one of Ivy Leagues. Find out what you truly enjoy. Be an expert in those areas. Change the society. You never know what you are capable of accomplishing!

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good. They want to accept students who are highly passionate for their

My Life in United States



March has been a very interesting month. We had many things to do at school, many projects to finish. It was a little stressful because teachers tried to fit everything into the schedule because spring break was coming. So everyone had to study extra hard this month. This month my friend had a birthday party, and she invited me and another one of her friends. On Saturday evening she picked us up and we all went bowling. It was so much fun, we played bowling, ate pizza and played some arcade games. After bowling we went to her house and ate the best ice cream cake ever, with some party snacks. Then she opened her presents and we decided to play a few matches of fortnite. And at around midnight we all went to bed. The next morning we went to church, and after church we went to get lunch. That was an awesome birthday party. I am also very excited and looking forward to the summer break, since I will be able to finally see my beloved parents. I love America, but I also miss my family and friends a lot. And everyone has been very supportive to me, and very understanding. This month I did not feel very well because I have had a lot of school work. But spring break is right around the corner, so I can finally rest well. I am planning to take more care of myself during spring break. I am going to jog everyday, eat healthier and try to finish all of my unfinished work.

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Nor'easter



I am sure that most of the people who live along the east coast are done with winter. Last Tuesday through Wednesday, March 20th~21st, Philadelphia got another Nor'easter. For the people who are not sure what a Nor'easter actually is, Nor'easter is a typical feature caused by the wind from the northeast off the Atlantic Ocean and the strong Nor'easter frequently happens September through April. These storms are most often associated with North-east winter storms, but snow is not a requirement. Instead of snow, it may bring heavy rain, strong winds, coastal flooding and rough seas to the affected areas.



This Nor'easter was the fourth one in the last three weeks and we were out of school for two days because of this. I'm a snow-lover but this year was too much even for me. I remember that I complained about not having much snow last year and I started to wonder why we are having (or had) so many snow days this year compared to last year. Here are the reasons why we had lots of snow days this year.

According to a director of the National Weather Service, Uccellini, Nor'easter is related to the change in the nearer ocean. Similar to El Niño (one of the various stable states of the Pacific Ocean), Atlantic Ocean has a term called the North Atlantic Oscillation, or NAO, which compares the air pressure in south of the Arctic with the air pressure

in the north of the tropics. NAO is represented as positive and negative: if the NAO is positive, there's a powerful low-pressure system over Iceland, which draws in storms and helps them cross the northern Atlantic, and if the NAO is negative, the Icelandic low-pressure system is weak, making it harder for storms to cross the sea. Uccellini said Nor'easters happen a lot because the NAO was positive until the end of February, and since then it got changed to negative. Big winter snowstorms are formed by the combination of high-altitude layer of cold air and low-altitude layer of warm air. Since the East Coast always has warm air, it all matters how the negative NAO traps the cold air and delivers it into the East Coast states from southeastern Canada. Uccellini also said that nor'easter can still form even if the NAO is in a positive phase but that is the exception and negative NAO helps storms develop more slowly with the strength.

Okay, I will stop the science lesson. Since we got a huge Nor'easter, it was a great unexpected break for me. I ran out in the snow with my puppy, and after that I just lied down on the couch and had fun time with my host family. Even though I got "2" make up days, I hope everyone enjoyed their snow days in their own way. A little bit of snow that might cause a 2 hour delay will still be welcomed; however, no more days off that would cause make up days!!

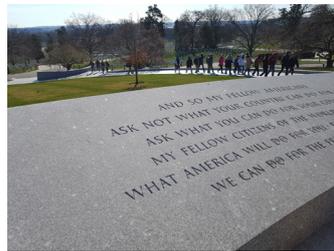
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D.C. Trip



Once a year, our school has a class trip. Last year, we went to Atlanta. It was fun and unforgettable trip. This year, we went to Washington D.C. for the class trip. We left school at 5 am and arrived at D.C. at 11 am. It took about six hours to get there, but it was good to talk with other friends and have fun with them in the bus.



The first place where we went in Washington D.C. was African American Museum. I could see and learn African American history. I could see how did they suffer in the past and how did they live with discriminations. Then, we went to the Holocaust Museum where I really wanted to go. Recently, I read a novel Night. It was about the Holocaust. It showed how much people suffer in the concentration camp. This book made me to want to go to the Holocaust Museum to see and learn more specific things about the Holocaust. I could see what they wore, where they slept, and how they died in the concentration camp. It was impressive to see. After the Holocaust Museum, we went to do scavenger hunt. There was a list of places that we have to take a picture with, and we have to use subway to get there. It was really interesting to see how the subways work in D.C. I could see lots of monuments during this scavenger hunt. After the scavenger hunt, we went to hotel and slept. I shared room with my friends Ben, Seth, and Blake. It was really fun to share room with them.

In the second day, we went to lots of memorials such as

World War II memorial, Korean War memorial, and Vietnam War memorial. We also went to the national cemetery in D.C. I could see thousands of graves in the cemetery. We prayed in there and thanked to those people who sacrificed for this world. We went to lots of museum as well. We went to National Gallery, National Air and Space Museum, and American history Museum. We had a free time for 3 hours which allowed us to tour around those Museum. I could see White House as well. It was so fun to walking around in D.C. At night, we went to the Pentagon Mall to have a dinner and shop. It was a pretty big mall. After that we went to see Lincoln Memorial and Thomas Jefferson Memorial. They were gigantic and impressive. In last day in Washington D.C, we visited Capitol. We could visit Senate and the House. In side of the Capitol was so pretty. They are lots of painting that have meaning in it. It was great to see how the court goes in Capitol. After the tour in the Capitol, we headed back to our school. It was a really great class trip. I will not forget this valuable memory.

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MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others", said Mahatma Gandhi. How many of you guys regularly serve in your local community? Probably not many. Today, I want to share my story of how I have begun to serve as a volunteer in my local food pantry and what it has brought to my life.

Attending to the catholic high school in Rhode Island, I have taken religion classes as mandatory course since freshman year and one of the main assignments is to serve in local community for at least 6 hours each quarter- school year consists of four quarters, two making a semester each. By end of the school year, each students would have done at least 24 hours of service work and I believe it is an amazing opportunity to be part of the community since we often are occupied with busy schedule keeping up with school work, sports, and jobs. Even though my first encounter to service was under mandatory assignment, it has allowed me to truly enjoy being a volunteer and explore how to love one another.



To be honest, I first hated the fact that I had to squeeze in service into my busy schedule and that extra 6 hours is taken away from my free time. The things, however, started to change when I received two words "thank you" with big bright smile from people when I was only doing this to get good grades. I regretted how selfish person I was being when there are so many people desperate for help. Thinking back, I was always complaining, never pleased, and denied to accept how lucky I was especially being able to study abroad in such a young age. From that moment, I

wanted to become a different me, and that is how I have brought service as part of my life.

I have done lots of different services past years such as tutoring kids in elementary school, helping out in soup kitchen, cleaning up local parks... but none of them are offered in regular basis so I could not keep up to my promise, serving in community as much as possible. I have to say it was a sign when I was reading through the school portal page and found "volunteers needed, every other Mondays, visit St. Patrick's food pantry." I was so excited of the fact that I found a regular service opportunity that perfectly fits my schedule and was grateful to start my serving.

The most interesting part of the service is making connection with others. However, we have to remember that they are not our "normal friends" that you would go for a ride or such. It is always important to be aware of your safety and privacy determining who is your "friend" and who is not.

Work in the food pantry is simple and fun. You arrive about half an hour before people come in for food so that you can get foods ready to go. There is not really a hard part of preparation except the lots of foods are frozen in the freezer and they numb your hands while taking them out. After placing/organizing all sorts of foods, we review per servings based on the family members. Usually family of three members get to have 3 choices of canned meat, 1 box of cereal, 3 containers of snacks, 2 loaves of bread, 2 bottles of drink and more. Food pantry is running through people's donation/ Mr. and Mrs. Rousseau's generosity. It is opened every other Mondays for 2 hours and for people who are economically disadvantaged. I have been going to the place for 2 months and people call me "little JJ" as my nickname.

I feel most satisfied when I see their smiling face saying "have a good rest of your day little JJ". I recently donated several jars of peanut butters to the place and I am planning to donate more food. I feel sorry that they are "restricted" on the amount of food and will do my best to give them equal opportunity as I can being a student. I am planning to continue this service work as far as my schedule remains the same and try to do the same in Korea :) Quick shoutout to my high school allowing me to discover the amazing field of service, and sharing is caring everyone !

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VOLUNTEER

