

Li Xi, 17 years old, is currently in her junior year in Xi'an Middle School, Shaanxi, China. She enrolled in our exchange program to visit New York, Washington, and Los Angeles in summer 2012, and described her joining the program "the best decision i've ever made". Let's see what she has to say:

I`m a junior student in Xi'an Middle School. Last summer, my friend recommended the summer exchange programme to me, along with his excited face and a sentence repeated so many times, "You will never regret it!" I took this advice and enjoyed the summer so much that I think that was the best decision I ever made.

What impressed me most was the cross culture experience. I was born and raised up in Xi`an, never tasted life abroad. I didn`t expect the study exchange tour would benefit me so much compared to my traveling experience in China. Traveling locally is interesting too. I started to travel with my parents and friends since age 10. Traveling abroad, however, can bring so much cultural shock and inspiration. The views you see are exotic, from architecture to dressing habits. The people around you talk in different language, think in different logics, behave in different manners and even eat in different ways! When you soak yourself totally into it, instead of just sightseeing, but also local study and living in host

family, your mind will be opened and changed. Thinking methods, logics will be affected, the two of which I think are the most important elements in life.

The study tour provides interesting and effective teaching program, which stimulated our potentials. Teachers encouraged us to discuss diverse subjects and guide us to think independently, instead of dull paper reading and strict right answer. We were required to think and express, that enabled us to achieve new thinking methods and that also developed our English language skills greatly as a plus benefit.

There is an old Chinese saying, read books and line miles. Despite of the interesting and effective study, the view moved me a lot as well.

When the places I only read on books or knew from movies appeared in front of me, it was difficult to stay calm. Not to mention they were so close, so real and so many! Every day was full of shocks and excitements. The study tour was more like an adventure than a simple journey. Everything was so different. I saw black suited office men rushing in Wall Streets, sincere old ladies with peaceful smiles in Trinity Church,

serious securities in the White House. I stopped to listen to a street stray singer, I talked to students in Harvard and Stanford University, and even had a cup of coffee with a professor of the Massachusetts institute of Technology in their cafe. I was shocked by the magnificent night view of New York, and was deeply touched at the World Trade Center Site.

My personal favorite part, however, was the Lincoln Memorial. Abraham Lincoln is my favorite politician, with great integrity, kindness and fortitude. What`s more, Tom grandpa from my host family started to tell me stories of Lincoln after knowing my reverence to him.

Speaking of this, I must describe the host family I spent time with. Aunt Monica is a senior nurse and uncle John works as a salesman. Their son, Patrick is my study partner. They all live with Tom grandpa. it is a happy family. They support and care for each other. But different from Chinese families, they showed independence and respects to each other as well. Each of them was nice and friendly to me.

Every evening after dinner, there was a chatting time. They considered it important to communicate with me, not just providing accommodations to me. Each of us went to the

living room and occupied a corner of sofa, holding tea or coffee. We shared stories of our lives and opinions about everything. They are so warm hearted people while the atmosphere was so comfortable and open that I felt encouraged to express my thoughts, which was not my habit. I was so inspired by the communication, especially the conversation we had on my future. I started to think what I want to do and what I would be willing to after.

They taught me so much. I will treasure this close fellowship with the whole family forever.

I grew up so fast in that summer. My oral and written English were improved, my vision was broadened and my thinking was changed. With so much communication with peer students and teachers from different culture, I can even say that my personality has been improved since then. The girl used to be shy and nervous about communication disappeared, a confident and curious girl standing here instead. I learnt how to communicate, how to express and how to comfort. Seeing different things make me realize what I have and don` t, also what i can achieve through efforts.

Signing up this exchange program was the best decision I`ve

ever made.

Li Xi



Wall streets.



The White House.



Harvard.