




Space Camp in United States a once in lifetime experience

 Published August 22, 2017 |  By admin

To The POINT with CINDY HANCOCK

FOR A while now I've been interested in becoming an astronaut.

My recent experience at Space School in Houston and Huntsville in the United States has furthered my interest in this and given me great insight into what it takes to become an astronaut.

I was part of a contingent of 90 schoolgirls from NSW that travelled to the USA to spend two weeks at Space Camp – a fascinating trip organised by Actura Australia.

The program is designed to give high school students hands-on experience with science, maths and space and is dedicated to fostering STEM careers particularly for females.

For a 12 year old from Denistone East this was a once in a lifetime experience and I was lucky enough to participate with 12 other Marist Sisters Woolwich students.

* * *

DURING OUR first week in Houston I had the opportunity to become a scientist and have hands on experience in a DNA cell lab.

I also became an expert in criminology and forensics when we had a CSI investigation.

I had the opportunity to dissect a shark and look at its brain, heart and stomach.

Whilst in Houston I explored the Johnson Space Centre (JSC).

I learnt all about aviation history, what we are currently doing and what is in store for the future.

Exciting times ahead! I saw all the model rockets, Skylab, lunar landing modules and so much more.

The JSC really is the heart of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA.)

During the tour of the centre I saw the old mission control room where they launched Apollo 11.

* * *

ANOTHER GREAT experience I had in Houston was touring Rice University where President John F. Kennedy gave his famous speech challenging NASA to do the seemingly impossible task of sending man to the Moon by the end of the 1960s.

We listened to an inspiring presentation by Dr Leroy Chiao, an ex NASA astronaut.

He talked to us about what it takes to be an astronaut including what he did, and challenged us to do the best we can in everything we choose to do.

The best cultural experience I had was watching the Yankees play the Houston Astros in a thrilling Major League Baseball game.

Go the Yankees!



In our second week I travelled to Huntsville, Alabama's one and only United States Space and Rocket Centre (USSRC).

We stayed on campus in 'habitats'.

This second week can only be described as an intense astronaut training session.

We experienced the Multi Axis Trainer (MAT) which disoriented us as if we were reentering Earth's atmosphere.

We also took part in the 1/6th gravity chair providing us with the feeling that we were in microgravity.

I got to climb a simulator of Mount Olympus Mons, our solar system's largest volcano which is located on Mars.

* * *

AS WELL as these awesome training experiences we constructed and launched a rocket.

It was really cool! On our last day in Huntsville I became a pilot of a space shuttle simulator and experienced lift off from Earth, docking at the International Space Station and landing somewhat bumpily back on Earth.

This type of mission is what I hope to be a part of in the future.

Overall, this expedition was a once in a lifetime opportunity and I had an amazing time.

It really opened my mind to career possibilities.

My dream is to be the first female Australian astronaut and with the inspiring trip, I think that there is a great possibility I might be.

CINDY HANCOCK is a Year 7 student at Marist Sisters Woolwich