

My very first foreign

adventure



I had been dreaming to visit England since I was little. I could hardly believe that it would come true someday in my adolescent age. Thanks to the Wan Chai Rotary Club, I got the opportunity to put my footprint on the land of the United Kingdom.

It took 13 hours to fly from Hong Kong to the London Heathrow Airport, so the flight was quite harsh for me, who had never experienced such a long flight. Although we (Alice and I) were supposed to sleep during the journey, we were just too excited to calm ourselves down. Looking at the little monitors in front of our seats, my heart beat faster and faster while the plane was getting closer to my destination. I still remember the wonderful sunrise which dyed the sky into orange-pink. I believed it was a symbol for my following journey, as beautiful as the color-changing sky.



We arrived at London at about 5:00 am. The whole city was sleeping.

A distant paradise was the best description I could think of for Cambridge. Not only because of all the renowned colleges here, but also the scenery which brought peace to your soul. The landscape touched my heart. It was beyond description. It was all about golden farms, running horses, grazing cows, lovely cottages. I felt like living in a fairy tale. Since we arrived at weekend, there were almost no cars on the highway. Jet lag made me feel tired, but rural view made my eyes wide open.



Two hours later, an old England building appeared in front of me. It was the Select English School, which I was going to spend 3 weeks to study in. Then they called a taxi and sent us to our host family separately. At the moment I said goodbye to my Hong Kong friends through the taxi window, I suddenly realized what built independence—fear and helplessness. Sitting inside the taxi, looking at this completely unknown city, all the European faces, western architectures, I was in utter panic. If there were to be an accident, all I could do was call 999.





20minutes later, I was brought to a remote region. No one was on the street. The taxi stopped right in front of a house with a no.14 plate on its door. It didn't sound good in Cantonese. The driver helped me knock the door. A few seconds later, a woman answered the door. She looked very nice and her voice was really gentle. I felt relieved right away. She was my host mother Michelle. My host family also included the father Dan, the two little boys Evan and Dylan. One more, the male cat Claude. They treated me so well that I felt as comfortable as I was at home in Hong Kong. The parents were willing to share their knowledge with me, the kids were so happy to share their toys with me, and what they had come across that day. I could never forget how the two little boys sat on the stairs and said "goodbye" every day with their small hands waving and their eyes glancing at me when I left home for my lessons. They were too adorable that I did not want to leave them.



My England school days began on the second day. After the quick test, I was sent to the "Blackpool" class. There were ten students in my class. I was the only Asian student in my class. The others were from Spain, Italy, Russia, Greece, Germany, Serbia, Hungary, Austria and Switzerland.

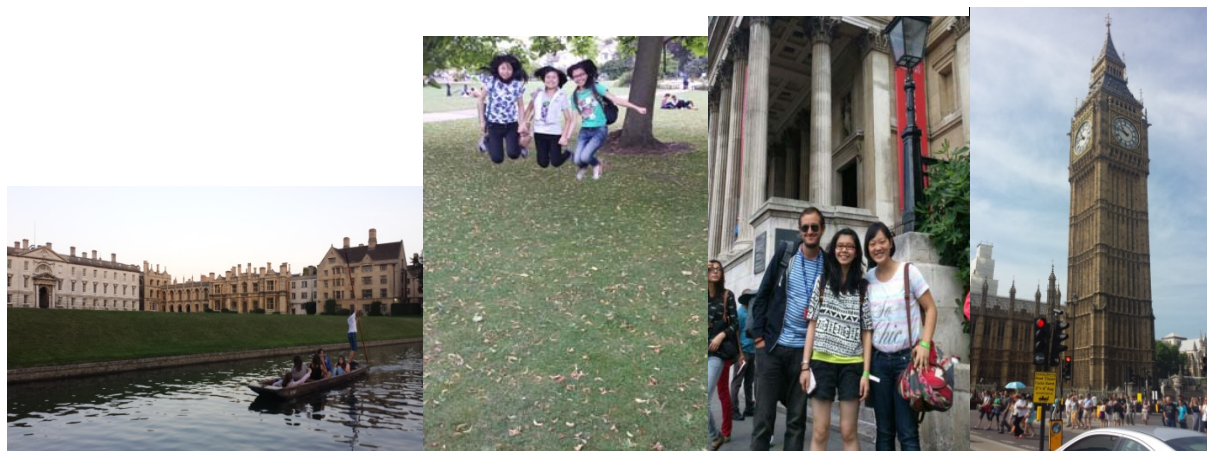
They all appeared to be very curious about Asian culture. One of them said “How can you identify Chinese, Japanese and Korean? Well I mean they all look the same to me.” I was quite shocked at the moment because I had never thought that it would be a problem. I believe it was what people called “cultural shock”.

People always say western education is more relaxing than the Asian one. I got this proved during this trip. Lessons started at 9:30am and ended at 3:15pm. However, the lessons were free and interactive. Everyone could speak freely during the lessons. Everyone had the power to modify the content of lessons. Moreover, I deeply understood the major difference between students from Europe and China. They were really active, always throwing out opinion. Besides, their innovative thinking was very brilliant. For example, once we were told to form a story by looking at the pictures given. I was the only one who started from the first picture, the others might tell it from the last one or from the middle one. I realized that there were always different perspectives.

After lessons, I hurried home for dinner at about 6pm. It might seem a little bit early. It was because we had social activities every day after lessons and after dinner. Social activities could simply be film watching, T-shirt making or some sports in Parker's Piece (a huge piece of grassland



located in the city centre in Cambridge). Some activities were very local. For instance, punting in River Cam, visits to different folk museums or a night in disco. We even had a trip to London every Saturday. All these activities were distinctive and they really gave me a taste of the British culture. Not only did I build a stronger bond with my new friends, but I also learnt the pastimes of the British.



Many people asked me about the most unforgettable experience in Cambridge. Every moment in England means a lot to me. I saw every passenger on the bus say ‘thank you!’ to the driver

when they got off. I got lost on the second day at 11pm. I found myself in complete darkness in a complete unknown location. I could not find my way home. Thinking I was going to die in a western country, I almost cried on the street. I also danced crazily in the disco. I ate fish and chips too much. I used English as much as I could. I learnt tons of different languages. I visited the Big Ben. I woke up every day feeling myself living in a fairy tale.

When we took our plane to London, the air attendant told us 'you will miss home in three days.' Not more than two days I started to miss Chinese rice and soup. When I packed my luggage, getting ready to leave, my host mother said 'when everything gets into routine, it's already time to leave.' She hit the nail on the head. Time really knows how to sneak away. I am not trying to grab it because I believe important memory can withstand the test of time.

Now I still use Facebook to chat with my friends whom I met in Cambridge. Knowing that we are far away from each other, yet feeling them right next to me. I remember one of my Italian friends wrote this in my autography 'You are the first Chinese girl I have ever met...'. Sometimes I wonder about our encounter in this distant city—Cambridge. We are teenagers from everywhere. We went back to our homeland after the trip. However, the three week memories will never fade away.



This chapter is ending but the story has only just begun. I have become a more mature and independent person who feels natural to communicate with native-English speakers. With such precious experience, I have faith in myself to be a high achiever in the coming future.