

## My Exchange Programme Experience

### -by Arnav Singh

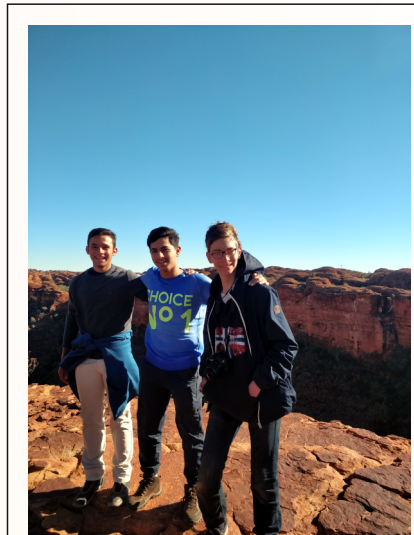
Scared and frightened were my emotions when my mom told me about the exchange programme I had to attend. After all, I had to go 8021 kilometers away from home and that too for seven weeks! Leaving my home just a day after my birthday, I flew more than 30 hours, changed 3 flights to reach my destination- Alice Springs in Australia.

At first the place seemed odd as it was full of the native aboriginal people. I could find these aboriginals drunk on almost every street of the town with their weird and scary gaze and would beg for a dollar or two. After all this, it came as no surprise to me that Alice Springs was known to be the stabbing capital of Australia. Although after thorough research and talking, I concluded that the authentic aboriginal people were really nice and welcoming, however, the lives of the newer generation have been destroyed by drug and alcohol abuse.

As part of the Exchange Programme, I was staying at the boarding house of St. Philips College in Alice Springs. The



school was big and beautiful, and the rooms were spacious and clean. Every single person in the school was so kind and friendly, especially my roommate Phil. I spent most of my time in the common room with other students which was our bonding time. I really liked the freedom that was given to each student that included going out to the town as and when we wish and for as long as we desire. The Australian school system is not as academically oriented as the schools of India and they focus more on the holistic growth of each student with sports and art being an integral part in the school.



The school had many more exchange students from countries like Germany, Switzerland, and Canada and the school enrolled all of us for their adventure camp called 'The Endeavour Camp'. The nine-day camp was not easy at all, in fact, we all realized how lucky we were to have so many facilities at such a young age. It was more like a nightmare camp! At first, we had to walk for more than 12 kilometers a day and that too with 30-kg rucksacks, then clearing our system in the nature with no toilets, sleep on a thin mat under the stars with scorpion around and swim in water with -1-degree temperature.

There is so much to take away from this lovely exchange trip. It is wonderful when I look back and remember how I made so many friends from different regions of the world. I would say I had never worked so much in my entire life as much I had worked there and so I feel more independent and self-sufficient, which is the most important thing I've brought back with me.

