



A Journey of Firsts

© *Ho Hoi Wan, Vanessa*

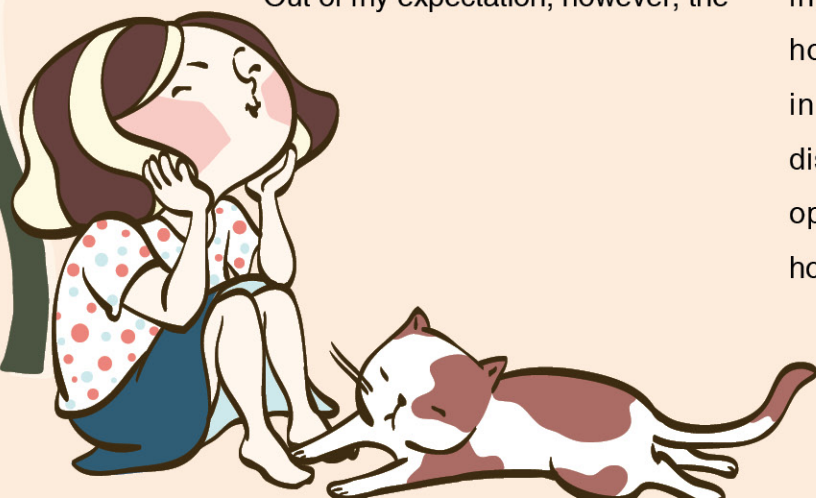
I was one of the 25 students selected to join the “2016 Australian Summer Programme to Enhance English Language Skills” organized by the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau. It was a three-week English language and cultural immersion experience.

As a nature lover, I could not help feeling disappointed when I was given a schedule filled with what I thought would be dull English classes and a limited number of excursions.

Out of my expectation, however, the

English classes turned out to be immensely meaningful and enjoyable. Our language skills were improved through different sorts of activities, notably an impromptu drama game called “Space Jump.” The game definitely forced me out of my comfort zone as it was the first time I had ever had to improvise in front of an audience. We also had two cooking lessons, wherein we made Anzac biscuits and mini Australian meat pies.

My favourite part was the stay with my host family, an Asian household. With the intention of moving abroad, I asked my host parents tons of questions about life in Australia. We had thought-provoking discussions about topics ranging from job opportunities to racism. I even asked my host mum what it was like to be in love. She





could not stop laughing and switched to the storytelling mode.

Being an only child, I found playing with my host family's kids a refreshing experience. Owing to the persistent persuasion of the kids, I went on a trampoline for the first time. Needless to say, I had tremendous fun and I felt like a carefree child again. Now I miss the kids every day.

As a prospective piano student for the Queensland Conservatorium, I asked my host parents to take me to the Conservatorium's Open Day on the first weekend in Australia. I attended various informative talks and

tours. After a piano workshop, I went up to Professor Oleg Stepanov and asked if I could play for him. He listened to me and gave me a one-hour lesson afterwards, in which he suggested effective ways to improve. That was the highlight of the journey. I would not have been able to gain this experience if not for the camp. I am thus very grateful for this opportunity.

This trip has taught me heaps of things, the most important being that love and friendship has no boundaries. I wish to cherish the friendships that I have made in this journey and continue to travel and stay curious.