

## **My Experience at Space Camp Turkey**

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I had the wonderful opportunity of traveling to a beautiful country as part of a NASA program this summer: Turkey. Turkey is a Eurasian country; this means that it is part of Southeastern Europe and Southwestern Asia. This gives it a unique twist of Eastern and Western traditions. This is a country full of love and passion. As I looked out the airplane window I could not wait to land and learn about this new blend of cultures. I was ready to breathe its air. I could not wait to walk on its rich soil. I have to say that I was very fortunate for this life time opportunity. Even though I have seen this country in books and in television, experiencing it in person was a dream come true.

Turkey is the first country that I have visited beside my motherland, the Dominican Republic..... Ms. Johnson, our teacher, was the leader of the group during our trip. Our group was about twelve students, all from different parts of the United States. Even though the trip was long, I enjoyed sharing and learning from other people's experiences. I was so enthusiastic about the trip that I could not sleep for almost eleven hours.

The day we arrived, we were divided in different groups to start working on what they called a "mission". A mission is when they give you different positions for space shuttle experiments.... In the evening we went to a nice restaurant to share and to get familiar with all the other students of my group. It was very kind of Mr. Tolga, one of our instructors, to explain to us about the historical landmarks. I also enjoyed learning about Turkey's culture through their food.

I could not wait to wake up the next morning to continue my journey in Turkey and to meet new people. After I had breakfast I went to meet my new counselor. He name was Ashley. The first activity was a type of game to learn everybody's name....Secondly, we were

given our mission positions and our responsibilities. My position was Payload Specialist #2. As a Payload Specialist I was supposed to do an experiment inside the shuttle. I was responsible for the operation and management of the experiments or other payload elements that are assigned to them and have knowledge in experiment design and operation..... It was very helpful to learn some strategies as a team when one is in danger. The most important part of learning how to face difficult moments was to learn caring for each other. I will never have enough words to appreciate this

The third day was when Ms. Johnson took us for a ride on the Space Camp bus. The main purpose was to finally meet our pen pals who were the Turkish friends we only knew electronically and shared our experiences. My pen pal (the one I met online) was going to stay with us in Space Camp. I was very happy that after sharing with him online, I finally had the chance to meet him in person during this trip.... I was glad and thankful to my pen pal's family because they were exceptionally generous to me as well as the whole group. They took me to the mall, to an elegant restaurant, bowling, and to the park.

I will never have enough words to appreciate this great life time opportunity of going to a new country to learn about an important subject as NASA. In addition, it was also very valuable to meet people from different cultures and learning together about the traditions, beliefs, and historical background of Turkey. I also want to thank the counselors who were patient, caring and loving with our team and who also were very supportive and committed to teach us as much as they could . I hope that this type of abroad program could continue existing ...Lastly, I have to say that this trip exceeded my expectations and gave me a great unique learning experience that I am sure I will never forget.