

Alex Ruut – London UK

30 November 2014 – 18 January 2015

I'm Alex Ruut, a Venturer Scout from Kingston, Tasmania, Australia who participated on the 2014/15 Scouts International Student Exchange Program.



On 30 November 2014 I departed Hobart around 1pm and headed to meet some other Venturers from Victoria at Melbourne Airport. After finding them we went through the international security area and waited for our flight. The seven of us flew together to Singapore and it was here that we caught up with the other 8 Venturers from around Australia and then went on through to London. We were greeted by an English Scout Leader. After that we farewelled our four friends who were going on to Denmark. The rest of us split up and went off with our host families to began our UK stays. We would stay with our host families for the next 6 weeks. For the last week we came back together into central London to have time together as a contingent to enjoy sightseeing around London.

My host 'dad' John met me at Heathrow. I was really lucky as my host family were pretty close to central London. They were in Chislehurst, Kent, only a short train ride into London as I discovered during my stay. John and I travelled on the train to Chislehurst. The rest of my host family (Sue, Charles and Zoe) were at work and school so I had a chance to have a bit of a rest before greeting them later in the day.

There wasn't too much chance to rest. The next morning it was up early and straight to school with Charles. I found school to be pretty similar to Australia. I participated at school for approx 3 of the 6 weeks I was with my host family. For 2 weeks over Christmas they had term holidays which was really good to have a break. During school though i joined in maths, triple science (chemistry, biology & physics), art, PE/football, French, English, geography, sociology and religion (critical thinking).

During my first week I also got stuck right into helping at scout activities. Cubs and Joeys meet on Thursdays, Scouts on Fridays and Explorers (Venturers) meet on Mondays. John is the Scout Leader, Assistant Explorer Leader and also assistant Group Leader. I was able to go and help at cubs first up. We ran games, I showed them the Tasmanian Devil (which I took as a gift for the group), and had a chat about scouts at home (Kingston, Tasmania). I also went to scouts on Friday night, I also had a chat to the scouts about what we do at Kingston and also we made rope making boxes. The following Monday we made mocktails at Explorers and I also got to chat with my own scout age group about the kind of activities we get up to at home. I presented the Explorer unit with a Tasmanian Devil which became not just the unit mascot but also the units new name. I also helped again this week at cubs and scouts. Cubs did some sculptures out of marshmallows and spaghetti with the best bit being able to eat the sculpture at the end. Scouts this week finished off the rope machines and made some ropes. Part way through this activity though Charles and I headed off to the 'Japan camp'. Charles is planning on going to world jamboree this year and they held a get to know you style camp for those explorers from the Great East London District. This was a great weekend.



9 explorers and 2 leaders headed up this camp. While I was on this camp some of the activities I did were an Amazing race, Quiz on Japan, Monopoly, Karaoke, Risk (Board game), Basketball and first aid. The camp was a great experience to learn how scouts camp in London and what the differences are between camps in Australia and London.



The following Monday at Explorers we went ice skating and I was invested into the unit. There wasn't any cubs and scouts for the remainder of this week as then we had term holiday break and had two weeks rest from both school and scouts.

During holidays Explorers had a night to catch up and go to the indoor snow zone. We joined in tobogganing and ice sliding. This was the last activity I participated in with the Explorers and it was a really great night.



During the last week with my host family I only had four days at school. On the Friday I had a chance to fit in some shopping on my own in Bromley and then packing some of my gear before spending the last couple of days with John, Sue, Charles and Zoe. Our last night together was a great one with homemade sushi and then chocolate fondue shared. This week was pretty laid back and I didn't have any scout activities as they were just starting back after term break and I was getting ready to meet up with the other Australian Venturers on the Sunday afternoon.

Some of the other activities I did with my host brother while on holidays were going to M and M world (chocolate m & m's), Harrods, see some of John's Australian friends, Trafalgar square, science museum, going to a London cinema to see Night of the Museum 3, Hamley's toy shop, Chelsea FC stadium and museum tour (Stamford Bridge) and I also bought a lot of Chelsea gear there, Chislehurst caves and visiting Kew Gardens.



Sunday soon came and we went to church together in the morning. We returned home and had some lunch together and had a good chat. I farewelled Sue and Zoe. Charles and John took me into London to the hostel where we met all of the other Venturers and James (UK SISEP leader). James helped us out, stayed with us and looked after us over the next 5 days while we all had the best time running around having a look at London.

One of the best things was the last week with the other Australian scouts and all the activities we did. Some of the activities are Buckingham Palace, Changing Guard, Natural History Museum, Tower of London, Crown Jewels, Imperial war museum, Big Ben at night, Jack the Ripper tour, River Thames tour, Warner Bros Studio (where Harry Potter was made), Wicked the Musical and a local market.



Sadly though all good things usually come to an end. Friday afternoon came where we needed to head to Heathrow and prepare for our flights home. Farewell London, just for now.