

Washington DC, 2019

Day 1: Taking DC by Storm

Our weary travelers arrived at Leesville early... really early... pre-dawn's first light, to board the buses for the first leg of our journey to DC. While the fatigue was real, it quickly surrendered to the chaperones' coffee and the students' excitement for the impending bus ride. With all of our passengers present and on time, we departed Leesville on schedule.

The ride to DC was thankfully uneventful with the in-flight movies engaging our

sweet Lion Cubs in a way seldom seen outside of a Leesville Elementary Teacher's classroom. Two hours into the drive, we took our first rest stop and stretch, and re-boarded the buses. Traffic flowed, energy and attitudes remained positive and optimistic for a great experience ahead.



Rather than our usual stop and eat at the last rest stop outside of DC, we enjoyed our lunches on the bus, feeling like we were back in Kindergarten, eating before 11:00 am. We made one final pit stop to make sure that we were all comfortably relieved before arriving at our first stop... the Capitol.

For many, whether you have driven to DC or not, it is a well known right of passage to sit in mind-numbing traffic just prior to the city. Today was no different as it slowed our roll and caused us to not arrive at the foot of the capitol until a little after 12:00. Fortunately, the rest of the drive was smooth enough that we made it in time for the scheduled tour.

Some quick photo ops and a quick hike up the steep hill, and we made it through the security check. A hugely enjoyable part of the tour through the Capitol is the way that each tour guide brings their

own personal perspective and personality into the information. From my experience, reinforced by today, that the guides make an already very interesting and informative presentation throughout the massive building even more charming through



humor, puns, and engaging connections with their audience.

Following the tour, we made our way back to the buses, stopping for our first of undoubtedly many group pics... this one in front of the Capitol. I am not sure if you can tell from the photo here, but our Cubs' spirits were riding high and seemed to be fueled by the perfect temperatures and beautiful weather.





We re-boarded the buses and made our way to African-American History and Culture Museum. What a densely packed display with the exhibit starting on the lowest floor with the start of slavery in this country and building up to the more modern and popular African-American culture of today. Rather than trying to see it all, we encouraged the students and chaperones to pick an era and really soak in the content. Trying to do this amazing museum in one day is simply not possible and would leave a visitor feeling unsatisfied and uninformed. Many of the students most enjoyed the connections they were able to build with the top two floors... African-American athletes, who trail-blazed for others in their sport, and the top floor featuring more of the current pop culture.



Now, nothing builds an appetite like a full day of walking around on a beautiful day. From the African-American History and Culture Museum, we walked a bit further through the city to the Reagan Building where the food court had all the choices to spark our intrepid travelers' gastronomic fancy. We spent an hour eating dinner (and indulging in some delicious, sweet treats 😊) before re-boarding the bus and carving through the DC

traffic for a quick viewing and group photo-op of the White House. The real thrill of this moment came when our Cubs enthusiastically waved to the Secret Service Sniper on the roof of the White House and actually got an enthusiastic wave back... I am not sure if the students or the parents were more thrilled and surprised by this unexpected response.

Our final stop before heading to the hotel was the Jefferson Memorial. Whether you have visited or not, I cannot encourage you enough to visit this site at dusk. The sun setting on the Tidal Basin and the Memorial, it is just the most gorgeous time to see it. Our Cubs loved running the steps, trying to determine what Jefferson was looking at, and taking all sorts of selfies and group pictures in front of the DC skyline across the water.



As we rode to the hotel, and as I reflect on this day, I can best summarize our time as a terrific success thus far. Our Cubs have absolutely exhibited full PRIDE at every stop... their interest and curiosity, their pleasure in the experience, and their absolutely positive attitude has only helped us all look forward to tomorrow's adventures.