

Washington DC, 2019

Day 2: Continuing the Charge

Slowly but surely, our brave and curious explorers emerged from their quarters. Their eyes showed a combination of sleepy disbelief that it was actually morning already and excited energy at the adventures that lay before us. Breakfast seemed to please our hungry Lion Cubs with a small buffet of sweet and savory selections. For our fearless chaperones, the coffee was all that was needed... lots of coffee, and it flowed. It was clear that the hotel totally understood how to accommodate the groups inhabiting their establishment. Caffeine, sugar, and protein... what more could our expedition require?

In any event, whether the positive attitude and optimism stemmed from the hard-fought, double overtime Canes victory in Wednesday night's game or the actual eager anticipation for the sights and scenes on today's itinerary, spirits were high and we all boarded the buses looking forward to a great day.

The bus ride to the first stop was definitely a bit quieter, but as we approached the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, interests peaked and the students seemed to recharge and recall that there are still many new adventures to be had. This is always a crowd pleaser and this year remained consistent. At the MLK Memorial, we received a brief lesson about the Memorial before entering the area of this awesome representation. Upon entrance to the area, one of our groups had an interesting experience. A fun and exuberant party of veterans visiting DC from New York City excitedly encouraged/invited our LES Cubs to join them for a large group picture in front of the larger than life statue of Dr. King. Our Cubs, perhaps a bit shy and weary of stranger danger, were conflicted as many of them thought it would be fun. Once they got the nod of approval from the adults on the trip, the students happily and enthusiastically joined the picture, spoke with the Veterans a bit, and build a connection the way that only our LES Cubs can. It was a nice reminder for us all that these monuments and memorials are designed to teach, and also to bring us all together, for all walks, beliefs, and backgrounds.



From the MLK Memorial, we took a stroll around the Tidal Basin to the FDR Memorial... a unique representation for our only US President elected to four terms in office. The Memorial, which presents the feel of moving room to room, was well received by our groups, who accepted the opportunity to read and discuss all the famous quotes and take pictures with the greatly detailed statue depictions of this highly regarded and respected President.

From these consistent favorites of the 5th Grade DC Tour, we reboarded the buses and made our way to the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial, and the Korean War Memorial. The two war memorials were received by our Cubs with a great deal of interest, intrigue, curiosity, and certainly respect. The students took time together to look for the symbolism and meaning in both of these displays, and marveled at the attention to detail in their very intentional design. As always, there was sincere fascination by the statues of the Korean War Memorial...



searching and with delight, finding which of the soldiers was staring at us at any given moment.

The sheer magnitude and magnificence of the Lincoln Memorial gave the students an opportunity to independently explore the area and locate all of the symbolism surrounding our 16th President and Commander in Chief through the Civil War.



We changed up the plan a bit further and made our way to the World War 2 Memorial. A few of our students have a real interest in the details surrounding this war and embraced the opportunity to throw out some little known facts that impressed us all. The WW2 Memorial is yet another very thoughtful and deliberate design and the students really enjoyed looking for the pillar representing North Carolina and also the symbolism pointed out to them by our guide. I have just been floored by the genuine curiosity and engagement displayed by our Cubs.



Lunch was a welcome next stop... all of us needed a little refueling before the visit to the Arlington Cemetery. Arlington is the largest military cemetery in this country with 624 acres. This is an amazing site as you stare down row and rows of headstones, standing in perfect formation, further than the eye can see. The walk through the cemetery was peppered with interesting pieces of information and about the servicemen and servicewomen who qualified to be buried there. Along the way, we also took the opportunity to marvel at JFK's Eternal Flame... a fitting tribute to a true visionary and his historical contributions. The next attraction at Arlington was to bare witness

to the Changing of the Guard ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Our Cubs could not help but be mesmerized by the perfect formality and ritual of the ceremony.

Our final stop before Dinner at the Pentagon Mall was a visit to the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial. This tribute to those who lost their lives on that horrific day was again, thoughtful, deliberate, and tremendously respectfully laid out. Our Cubs walked through this site, taking time to read the names and collect any information about the tragedy provided to them. The students were so mindful and respectful to the significance of the display and meaning... we were all very proud of them.

Dinner at the mall, the ride back to the hotel, and we were done with the day... a great day. I am so pleased to say that our Cubs have been nothing short of outstanding through the entire experience. The preparation assigned to our 5th Graders by our outstanding 5th Grade Teachers allowed the relevance of this adventure to really motivate and inspire terrific engagement. For me, as the Principal of Leesville Elementary School, it never grows tiresome to listen to the adults on the tour and even those just in earshot talk about how intelligent, how thoughtful and respectful, and how curious our students are at each stop. This has been a sincere pleasure this year and I am so excited for what tomorrow has in store for our final day here in the nation's capital.