



Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge 2016 Visit Parin Vyas



When you think university, you think of cramped, expensive student accommodation in the middle of a hectic city with crowds of people trying to get around the traffic and endless numbers of students rushing to and from lectures. This was exactly my thought process when I got on the minibus to travel four hours to Cambridge. Like several other universities, the University of Cambridge is one of the top elite universities in the UK, known as the Russell Group for their outstanding contribution to research. Not only this, but the University is world renowned.



Upon arrival to the city we were welcomed by large, magnificent structures such as the Trinity College and Kings College buildings, which looked more like large chapels rather than a series of dormitories and recreational areas. And all of this was even before we had got to Sidney Sussex College, where we were going to stay. Sidney Sussex has a magnificent history and buildings to match and is situated in the centre of Cambridge. Amongst its many illustrious alumni was Oliver Cromwell, whose head is buried in a biscuit tin under one of the flagstones in the Antechapel (the exact location is a secret) of the College's Chapel.



Compared with other universities, the accommodation at Sidney Sussex (and Cambridge in general) is a lot better and the living costs much cheaper than at most other places making it one of its attractions. The dorms boasted huge interiors with my en suite room holding all 13 of us to play cards in the evening – and that’s including the mini fridge and desk. Over the course of our stay at Sidney Sussex we were able to see the College’s prestigious halls, courts and gardens, including the Dining Hall, which as well as for meals each day is used for the College’s formal events and functions, hence the layout and the fine portraits on the walls.



After exploring our rooms and comparing one with another we were given a special treat – punting along the ‘Backs’. Now in theory this may sound incredibly boring: sitting in a small boat whilst someone punts you along the River Cam, but in practice the experience was truly spectacular, with the awe-inspiring views of the various colleges and the tour of Cambridge’s most majestic places such as the Mathematical Bridge and the Bridge of Sighs as well as the views over the lawns of the backs of various colleges. It was the best experience from any a tour of any university and it has made a lasting impression.

The most important series of events were the academic sessions, which consisted of a valuable insight from Dr Kirsten Dickers, the Admissions Director, into the history, studies and application procedure at Sidney Sussex and the other colleges as well as sample lectures from Jenifer Varzaly about the causes of the recent worldwide economic crisis and one about the study of Law from Ali Lyons in the Faculty of Law. In addition, we were able to visit the Whipple Museum of the History of Science. I personally found these events to be of extreme interest as they also allowed us to experience different subjects to what we hope to study, whilst still experiencing the style of studying at Cambridge.



Overall, I found my visit to Cambridge University to be extremely awe-inspiring as it showed me the educational opportunities that a coveted place of study at Cambridge gives, which I (like many) aspire to gain. It was a completely different experience to any other university I have visited with West Hill School and it has completely changed my opinion of the University and inspired me to study harder and to get a place at Cambridge.