

WVHS Quest Program San Francisco & the Bay Area 2023



The Quest Program

Quest is a unique opportunity for Walton Verona High School students that allows them to travel to a variety of locations within the country. This year the Quest students traveled to the San Francisco Bay Area in California. The Quest program is offered to WVHS students in December through an application process that screens their GPA, standardized test scores (ACT/MAP), and the results of a survey completed by their teachers and selected mentors. The survey results describe the students' levels of creativity and leadership skills inside and outside the classroom. After these three components are considered by the Quest Advisors, 20 students are chosen in February to study topics related to the destination and the surrounding area. After selection, the students choose topics that speak to their own interests or career goals. This year, topics and destinations included Muir Woods National Monument, a beautiful and well-preserved Redwood forest, Angel Island Immigration Station, Winchester Mystery House, and Alcatraz. The students researched their topics from February through May before giving their presentations to their teachers, peers, and community members in early June. Following the student presentations, our group traveled to the West to see the topics in real life.

2023 Schedule

June 7	Arrive in San Francisco	Muir Woods National Monument, self guided tour through the monument and preserve learning about John Muir for whom the park is named
June 8	Cantor Art Museum	Explored Stanford University Campus and the Cantor Art Museum exhibits
	Lick Observatory	Toured historic reflective telescopes
June 9	Rosicrucian Museum	Viewed and learned Egyptian Mythology and artifacts
	Winchester Mystery House	Learned the history and story of the architecture of the fabled house and the origin of its construction
	Apple Visitor Center	Toured the visitor center and received specialized instruction in Apple products
June 10	Angel Island	Learned the history of the immigration station and how the Chinese Exclusion Acts were enforced
	Bay Model	Toured the model that was constructed to study the fluid dynamics of the San Francisco Bay
June 11	Haight Ashbury	Toured the neighborhood learning the history of the music, architecture and the "Summer of Love"
	Asian Art Museum	Learned about the regional artworks, sculptures and artifacts from China, Japan, Korea, India and other Asian countries
	Audium	Experienced the immersive sound theater
June 12	Oracle Park	Learned about the clean energy endeavors of the MLB park
	Balmy Alley Murals	Toured and learned the history of the Mission District and the Balmy Alley artworks
	Academy of Art University	Visited the campus location and privately toured the interactive Spring art exhibits
June 13	Alcatraz	Toured the famous island prison, learning its history
	Truhlsen-Marmor Eye Museum	Visited the location to learn about the history of optometry and eye disorders
	Cable Car Museum	Explored the museum learning about the development and physics involved in the running of the cable cars
	University of San Francisco	Met with a marine biologist for a questions and answer session about the effects of climate change on marine life
June 14	Return home	
June 15	Round Table Discussion	Quest students discussed the trip and their experiences in detail, reflecting on what they learned.

Highlights

Muir Woods: Muir Woods, the first stop, set the tone for the rest of the trip. The students had the opportunity to experience nature that has been completely preserved. They observed the massive Redwood trees, some of which were as old as 1,500 years old and 250 feet tall. Students also got to experience the surrounding wildlife, including banana slugs along the walking path and persistent chipmunks while eating dinner. Many students claimed this was their favorite location of the trip, giving some a newfound fondness for nature.



Cantor Art Museum: Cantor Art Museum is located on campus at Stanford University. Named after Iris and B. Gerald Cantor, it was founded in 1891 when the university opened. The museum's collection includes artwork from all over the world, all of which spans over 5,000 years. While on Stanford's campus, students got the opportunity to walk around and explore the grounds. Many also added to their wardrobe when visiting the bookstore. When we finally got to Cantor, students were allowed to travel throughout the museum at their own pace, allowing for many photo opportunities. Each of the exhibits had something new to offer, whether that be new information or a new outlook towards art.



Lick Observatory: Lick Observatory sits on Mt. Hamilton, right outside San Jose. It opened in 1888 and has been researching outer space ever since. The windy roads up to the observatory were not for everybody, but the views at the top made the trek well worth it. Led by an eccentric and passionate tour guide named Keith, the students got to explore the observatory. They were able to see multiple telescopes that Lick is home to and learn about why it was built.



Winchester Mystery House: The Winchester Mystery House was certainly the oddest stop on the Quest trip this year. This house is 24,000 sq ft and it was under nonstop construction for 36 years. It features odd architectural features such as windows in the floor, a staircase that leads straight up to the ceiling, and even a door that leads to a several-story drop. The students saw many of the 160 rooms inside the house and learned more about the mastermind behind the mansion, Sarah Winchester. After the tour, the students were able to come to their own conclusions about the mystery of the Winchester Mystery House.



Angel Island: Angel Island is an island off the coast of San Francisco which houses a United States Immigration Station that was active starting in 1910 and ending in 1940. During their visit, the students had a chance to learn about the Immigration Station's purpose of enforcing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. They also had a chance to interact with the child of two immigrants who passed through Angel Island, their tour guide Joe. He took the students throughout the immigration station while he shared stories about his parents and showed us the conditions that an immigrant would have experienced. A highlight of this tour is the poetry carved into the walls of the barracks, which gives an account that can only be discerned from these unique glimpses into first-person perspective of experience. Overall, Angel Island Immigration Station gave a one of a kind glimpse into the history of America's west coast immigration.



Bay Model: The Bay Model was created in the 1960s in a WWII era warehouse as a way to test the John Reber plan and other solutions for the Bay and surrounding delta. It was created in a time before any sort of modern computer calculations and tests so they had to construct the largest model to test it. At the model we were given an informative tour that really put the sheer magnitude and importance of the Bay into perspective for us. In summary, students were able to learn about the bay and gain knowledge on the importance it plays in the area.



Haight-Ashbury: The streets of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood were the center of the 1960s counterculture movement. Hippies flocked from all over the world to experience the Summer of Love in the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park to listen to music and share flowers. On the Haight-Ashbury tour, the students walked in the footsteps of revolutionary musicians such as the Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, and Jimi Hendrix, and viewed notorious Victorian homes, one of which previously housed the infamous Charles Manson. All in all, the Quest students and advisors experienced a first-hand tour unlike any other.



Asian Art Museum: As one of the largest collections of Asian Art in the United States, the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco is full of intricate cultural relics. The Quest students explored three floors of heavily detailed Hindu sculptures, delicately carved jade figurines, and hundreds of art pieces from a wide variety of Asian cultures. Students learned about the historical and cultural backgrounds behind each work of art and even explored the art forms by recreating some of the art styles in an interactive section of the museum.



Audium of Sound-Sculpted Space: The Audium of Sound-Sculpted Space is an immersive experience that features surround-sound used to evoke strong emotions within the audience. The various sounds played on the 35-minute experience included city sounds, wind chimes, fire crackling, rain, and many others. This topic created a wide range of emotions, and none of the students or advisors had the same experience as one another. While our group had mixed reactions, everyone could agree that it is unforgettable.



Balmy Alley: In the Mission District, there is a long alley with a collection of beautiful murals. The murals in Balmy Alley were a way to express the artist's outrage of the political abuses and human right violations in Central America. Eventually, the community there decided to unite together to form the PLACA, which made the rest of the world notice Balmy Alley and raised awareness of the inequality that was happening in Central America. The tour was sort of a bittersweet experience. We got to see the bright color and the beauty of each mural; however, we also understood the dark side of the murals' inspiration. Balmy Alley will forever be a special and continuous community with a wonderful future ahead!



Academy of Art University: The prestigious Academy of Art University in San Francisco hosts a spring art show which flaunts their students' impressive artwork done in diverse mediums, such as photography, video game design, sound design, and fashion design. Quest students, including those not interested in art, were impressed

and even inspired by the creative modern artwork done by students near their own age.



Alcatraz: Out on a rock island in the middle of the bay, the students visited the infamous Alcatraz Penitentiary. While there, students took an audio tour around the entire prison. Students were able to take a personal look at the holes in the walls that were used by Frank Morris and the Anglin brothers in their mysterious escape that has turned into an over half century manhunt. Other than the manhunt, students learned of the “comfortable” life the prisoners were able to live in. Overall, Alcatraz is one of a kind and gave us a small glimpse of what prison life would be like in the 1930s-1960s



The Guides of the Trip

Getting to see all of these amazing places would not have been the same without our amazing tour guides that taught us along the way. All of the students are so thankful for the passion they showed us, so here is a brief introduction to some of our favorites!

Joe Chan: Joe was our wonderful tour guide at Angel Island. His storytelling throughout the tour was heartwarming, and it was especially meaningful since his own parents had been through the immigration station on the island. Joe's personal ties and calming presence allowed us to truly appreciate the history of Angel Island.



Patricia Rose: Patricia was our tour guide at Balmy Alley, and she was incredible! She was very passionate and proud of her role in the Mission District as a mural artist and advocate. When we were on the tour, she was so energetic and could go on and on about the murals and the community in Balmy Alley!

Honey: Honey was our guide at the Audium theater. She was very insightful, since she herself repairs the speakers at the theater, and she has even worked on compositions in Audium's studio as she is also a musician. After we listened to the performance, she sat with us and we had a discussion about our experiences. She was lovely to talk to, and is amazing at what she does.

Keith: This Astronomy Enthusiast guided us around the Lick Observatory and gave us some very neat insight on the telescopes and his ambiguous role at the observatory. He walked us through what scientists could accomplish with the telescopes and how they got around to doing their research. He was well known after the tour in our group because his answers to certain questions were so vague that we still don't know what his actual job is.



Takeaway

Quest is an amazing program for students and a great educational opportunity. Following the trip to San Francisco and the Bay Area, students experienced a truly unique culture, much different than what can be found around Northern Kentucky. Students were impressed by “how freeing the schedule felt” with all the events and sites that were visited and still having some freedom to explore destinations and gift shops by themselves, and with their new found friends. Students had to deeply research their topic and give a presentation about their destinations, so when they were taken on the trip, they were extremely excited to visit these sites. Some students, like Lincoln M., said that upon visiting their destinations, it was gratifying to learn how accurate the information was that they collected through their research.

Another benefit and take away from Quest is the personal connections that students make with each other. These trips allow for students to make friendships that they might never expect to have with their peers. Students on the trip such as Annie K. even went as far as saying that it felt as if everyone “became a big family”. Furthermore, the students end up having a great time, leaving them wanting to stay and spend more time together. In a general consensus, it was decided that the students would “want to go back and re-experience” the trip.

Overall, Quest allows students to reflect on the cultural differences between where they visit and where they are from. This allows students to better understand and incorporate more open-mindedness within their community. With a more accepting community, it would allow for growth of not only the people in the WV community but also of the culture in general. The big takeaway from Quest is that there are many things to learn and also to still have fun. Along with this Quest can help students gain friendship and experience different cultures from across the United States. Thus, allowing for the students to come back with experiences that help them spread cultural acceptance across our country.

