

Application Essay Example (Common App): Trips

The plane glides down the runway, and the hum of the engine grows louder and louder. The déjà vu of the twenty-plus trips I had already taken in my life starts to kick in. At that moment I realized how lucky I had been to travel to so many places in my short life. These special getaways have allowed me to gain an appreciation for the diversity of American culture and discover a love for the beauty our country has to offer. However, there were two trips that produced unique inner journeys as well.

The first was the summer before I entered high school while traveling with a student group. I will never forget my best friend clutching my hand in fear as she prepared for the takeoff of her first flight. By this time, I was a seasoned “pro” when it came to flying. We were visiting New York City and the hustle and bustle of the big city were immediately obvious as people weaved through one another, seemingly oblivious to those around them. Staring at the commotion, I was reminded of my own life. My activities - sports, community service, clubs, and work - keep my life busy. When I first entered high school, my commitments were somewhat overwhelming, but every year my time management skills improve, allowing me to enjoy every group and event despite the “Big Apple” busyness of my life.

The second was this past summer, which included many stops around the country, but two legs of the trip were thought-provoking. We spent some quality time in Fort Myers, Florida, where we stayed at my grandma’s house located in a retirement village. Daily, I would see older folks walking dogs, participating in aerobics workouts, or playing tennis with a beautiful view of the Gulf of Mexico in the background. This part of the trip taught me to appreciate the little things in my own community back home as well as enjoy time with my family and friends. For

example, I do not necessarily like running, but I am part of the cross country team because I want to spend extra time with my friends. I know our hard work pays off in the long run, so I am valuing it more now than I had in previous years.

As we worked our way back home on this trip, our last major stop was Chattanooga, Tennessee, a city that showcases beautiful outdoor areas, southern hospitality, and a big city life with “small town charm.” Like Chattanooga, I strive to be well-rounded by participating in numerous activities so I can grow through those experiences. Basketball teaches me the importance of teamwork and trusting others. My job at Walgreens has shown me the value of treating others with respect. My community service work has exposed me to others' struggles, making me more sensitive to helping where I can while also being thankful for the life my family has provided me thanks to my parents' hard work.

For many, a vacation is an escape from their busy lives, but these two trips turned out to be lessons of self-discovery: one preparing me for entry into high school and the other for my senior year. Traveling outside your hometown can help change perspectives, providing a fresh outlook on what lies ahead. It seems like just yesterday I started high school and now my senior year is already flying by. My high school years have changed me for the better as this part of my life is coming to an end. These two trips were journeys of their own, but each led me to self-discoveries that better prepared me for high school, especially my senior year, and beyond. Now, I am looking forward to learning what my next trip teaches me about myself as I head into a new chapter in my life - college.