

16th/17th of April

An early start Saturday morning had me buzzing with excitement about the journey ahead of me.

Once I was checked in at Darwin airport my mum continued to quiz me about things that I needed packed (many of which she insisted on packing for me). As boarding time arrived I said my goodbyes and boarded the flight, mentally preparing myself for the four-hour flight on sitting silently and completely still trying rather hard not to receive death glares from other passengers (an experience I had on my way to Canberra).

Once in Sydney, I found that no one was at my gate to meet me. So after a half hour of panicked calling and searching for someone, I decided to go pick up my bag before it stopped going round. After I got my luggage I continued to call, finally finding Andrew (who took a little while to realise that I was less than 2 metres away from him). Once he had his bag we were off to find the next to arrive...

It was not long before everyone had arrived and we were making our way to the international airport. The Check in went smoothly and after we had a little time to look in the duty free shop and get something to eat.

We then made our way through security and before we knew it we were settling in for our 9-hour flight to Singapore.

The long flight to Singapore was a new experience for me because I had never travelled out of the country before, except for when my family and I went to New Zealand when I was about 7 and I don't remember much about the flight.

The screens in the back of every seat was pretty cool, I took advantage of them through out the in order to keep myself awake (as we had been advised that in order to avoid jet lag we should not sleep until we get to the Singapore to Istanbul leg of the trip) by watching movies and TV shows as well as failing at Mario and a few other classic Nintendo games.

We arrived in Singapore around midnight. We didn't waste time finding our next gate. While we waited Tanvi, Zoe, Lauren, Chelsea and Andrew had a little Pilate's session in front of the gate lounge.

All too soon we were back on a plane, this time to Istanbul. I managed to get a couple of hours sleep, but woke up to check the flight path only to see we were only half way there. With Zoe fast asleep on the two seats next to me I thought the best way to kill some time was to watch some TV shows and play more Mario...

As Istanbul approached the excitement peaked, Zoe and I found ourselves agonizing over the flight tracker and groaning when it felt like we weren't moving. The last 30 minutes of that flight were the longest I think I have experienced.

Everyone was jumping in their' seats as we touched down in Istanbul ready for our big adventure to begin.

Once inside the airport terminal it really hit me that 'I am in turkey!!' which was soon followed by the thought 'I am going to freeze!' We got in line to get our visas and then went to the passport checking booths where the who group were disappointed when we couldn't get a smile from the workers no matter how hard

we grinned. Then we were off to get our luggage before we went to meet our Turkish tour guide Fred (Ozgur) and our bus driver.

The drive to our hotel from the airport gave us our first glimpse at the city of Istanbul. It was amazing. Once we had got to the hotel and found our rooms we had a short time to get settled in and enjoy the view (which apparently only Tanvi and I had) before heading up to lunch.

After a 'light' lunch (I say 'light' because it was a three course meal) we headed out for a cruise along the Bosphorus, before heading to the military museum and watching a performance by the Janissary Band.

By the time we got back to the hotel everyone was running out of energy, but that didn't stop a lively debate while we ate dinner covering a whole range of political topics. The food was delicious. You would think that after such a big two days of traveling and sightseeing on very little sleep would mean an early night, but that was not the case as we all hung out in Zoe and Laurens room chatting and getting to know each other. After a few hours everyone went back to their rooms and tried to get enough sleep for the big day ahead.

18th of April

My day started with the pre-dawn prayer call (around 5:30 am), it was not what I thought it would be I picked out what sounded like one of the instruments from the army band concert we had seen the day before. This event however did not get me out of bed; nothing was going to get me out of bed 2 hours before our wake up call, so I just relaxed and put my iPod in enjoying my time to relax before what would undoubtedly be a very tiring day. At 6 am Tanvi left for her early morning jog around Istanbul with Stuart and Tanvi; I would of joined them... except I was sure I would get hit by a moving vehicle so I opted for another hour's sleep.

After a buffet breakfast of Turkish bread, odd looking spreads, an assortment of what I assume was goat cheese, tea, coffee and cherry juice (which I tried and found out it tastes kind of like apple and raspberry cordial, it was interesting to say the least) we left the hotel for our first stop of the day; the Hippodrome and the Blue mosque. This was our introduction to the Turkish history and culture. The history of the Hippodrome left me in awe as the amount of history that Turkey has sunk in. Ozgur told us of the riot there during the Hippodrome prime that ended in an absolutely devastating way.

The blue mosque was something else entirely. The hippodrome was interesting and intriguing; the blue mosque was breath taking. The size of the mosque on its own was magnificent, but the detail of the tiles and fresco paintings that decorated the huge structure was extraordinary; and unlike the hippodrome it was warm as well. One thing that I noticed while inside was that the 'blue' mosque was more red than blue, maybe there was some Australian humour involved when Australians dubbed the building the 'blue mosque' (like how a red head is sometimes nicknamed 'blue') but who knows.

After our visit to the blue mosque we headed back to the hotel to rug up. As we headed to the bus it began to lightly shower (the rest of the group dubbed it 'rain'. I called it a cold sprinkle).

Once back at the hotel we all rugged up and Andrew got out the ponchos he had been carrying around on the Simpson prize trip for the past 6 years and never got to use. The group dubbed them our 'penguin ponchos'. We were then off to Topkai Palace which is now a museum. While there we learnt more about the Ottoman Empire and its history, with exhibits and artefacts of importance in the ottoman history. While there we had lunch, and of course it was yet again another three course meal. After lunch we continued to look around the palace. Again it started to 'rain' and the rest of the group grabbed out their ponchos while I walked happily in the light shower. After we had finished at Topkai Palace we once again headed back to our hotel where we had a couple of hours down time to have a look at the markets outside the grand bazaar before heading out for lovely dinner to end our first day of sightseeing in Istanbul.

19th April

Another early start for some of the other members of the group as they decided for yet another early morning run, I however once again enjoyed the warmth of me bed until the wake up call at 7:30. Once ready to face the day I headed down for breakfast where I discovered how to make hot chocolate from hot milk, sugar and coco... really not a big achievement but it was early I was so proud of myself. After breakfast we headed out for more sightseeing, we started the day with a visit to Chora Church in the Fatih district but when we got there is was absolutely packed with buses as far as the eye could see so we had a change of plans and technology museum of Rahmi M. Koc. The museum featured a whole array of things from a small exhibit with scuba diving suits and fish with huge teeth to a huge collection of motor vehicles. My favorite section was the history of computers; well more specifically the development of Mac computers. This was my favorite bit because I got a mac computer for my birthday and I love it so much. So to say the least I was jumping on the inside because I though it was so cool. While we were at the museum we came across our first group of Turkish primary school children... and they were so cute.

With our Turkish limited to about 3 words we tried to have a conversation with them; the conversation mainly consisted of 'hello, what is your name?'

After the museum our next stop was Taxim Square, where we had lunch and explored a rather large street of shops and markets.

We then returned to Chora church, it was amazing to see how well preserved the mosaics were.

Our next and final stop of the day was the spice market where we all had a chance to look around and find some great deals of some authentic Turkish delight.

After we were finished there we headed back to the hotel where we once again had about an hour or so to have a quick look at the market and get ready for dinner. Tonight we went out for dinner and like always the food was really nice, at the end of the meal the waiters made each of the girls plus gene a rose out of tissue paper. The whole group was impressed by the waiter's skill of making them. After dinner we went back to our hotel where we once again spent a good part of the rest of the night hanging out in Zoe and Lauren's room, before

heading back to our own rooms and stuffing our stuff into our suitcases for the trip to Gallipoli In the morning.

20th April

An extra early morning for all as the running group faced the streets of Istanbul for the last time until our return after Anzac day. After breakfast we were off; on our way to Gallipoli. With a few comfort stops along the way and a lively debate at the back of the bus, along with some true Aussie music playing through the bus's speakers (land down under by men at work being one of my favorites or the array that was played)

Before long we had arrived at the hotel Kum and we wasted no time as we headed in to lunch. After Lunch we went up to our rooms and had a little time to relax and get settled in. Lauren and I were sharing a room and just next door was Zoe and Chelsea's room. I think we were in our rooms about 7 minutes when Zoe managed to lock herself in the Bathroom. None of us were any help as we couldn't stop laughing, so someone headed off to find Stuart. It took about 5 minutes before Zoe was finally free from the bathroom.

After that little incident we headed off to Beach cemetery for our introduction to the area. While there we listened to Genes soldier research and listened to Andrew and Stuart as they told us more about John Simpson Kirkpatrick while standing around his grave. We were also interviewed by seven news about our trip so far and what we were thinking now that we were in Gallipoli. I just remember saying 'it is really hilly'. After that we headed back to our hotel where we had dinner and learnt how to play backgammon before once again having a hang out session in Zoe's room for yet another late night.

21st April

A change to my usual routine, I decided to join the jogging group for there morning run. I quickly learnt that I am not made to run long distances. I ended up just going for a casual stroll about what I guessed was around a kilometre behind the rest of the group, my only company a stray dog who happily lead my way to the others. It was really quite funny because after every hundred or so metres it would wait for me to catch up (yes I was even overtaken by a stray dog) before continuing along the same path the others had gone. By the time I caught up to them on their return trip I was quite happy to turn around. It was not long before once again I found myself walking by myself behind the rest of the group with the same stray dog leading my way, just this time it was not waiting for me anymore (I guess it thought I was too slow). When I finally caught up with the group who had kindly waited for me the stray that had lead me was saying hello to the rest of the group while another sat on the other side of the road watching. As I got closer the other dog walked up to me , it didn't look like it was aggressive so I just dropped my hand so it could smell it , after I did that it was trying to get me to pat it, so I did and the next thing I know it has its two front paws on my shoulders and is giving me a bear hug. So if that was anything to go by I knew that today would be a very interesting day. After it had finished

'hugging' me it walked over to the others, and he had the silliest walk you could ever imagine. It was something between jumping, running, skipping and just plain flopping around.

After quickly getting changed I headed over to breakfast and got myself some toast and put cream cheese and cucumber on it (it was actually really nice and defiantly on my rather small list of thing I will willingly eat for breakfast) as well as one of the best hot chocolates I have ever had.

After breakfast we were off for a day packed full sightseeing. Our first stop was Pluggie's plateau, as we walked up the steep path I could imagine the struggles the ANZACs would of faced all those years ago. We stoped for a short while at the small cemetery at Pluggie's before heading back down to shrapnel valley cemetery where we had some time to walk around and look at the graves. We had another soldier research presentation and then Stuart pulled out a can of bully beef as well as some hard-tac for us to try. It was not so bad... in small does anyway. Connor pointed out it smelt and looked like cat food... then went back for seconds.

After shrapnel valley we made our way to lone pine where the rest of the group including myself were to give our soldier presentation. I had had something written down about my soldier but of course I couldn't find it when I went looking for it before we had left this morning, but luckily I had quiet a lot of the information in my head so I was planning just to work off what I could remember and the information on the memorial wall. (of course now I think about it I know exactly where my sheet was and I am hitting myself in the head for not remembering).

Service number: 906

Rank: Trooper

Unit: 8th light horse Regiment

Cause of death: Killed in action

Cemetery: Lone pine Memorial, Turkey

War grave register notes:

McANALLY, Trp. Charles Russell, 906, 8th Light horse Regt. Killed in Action 7th of august 1915.

Charles was born and enlisted in Colerain, Victoria. From what I have found he had four brothers. All but the youngest enlisted in the Australian army during the War. He was apart of the 8th light horse regiment that made up the first two waves of men in the charge of Nek. He was one of 154 fatality's that the regiment suffered from the charge.

One of his brothers were Sargent George Francis McAnally, he embarked from Melbourne on the 27-5-1915. He was 24 when he enlisted. He too was killed in action but in Belgium on the 5-10-17, less than two months after being promoted to Sargent.

One of his other brothers was killed while serving with the New Zealand forces. The third returned home to Australia in 1917 but died two years later in 1919.

After we had finished at lone pine we visited some old ANZAC trenches, while we were there a couple of the group talked to nine news about the trip and the experience. Once that was over with we then headed back to the hotel for lunch,

where I discovered they still had the hot chocolate machine out. So I had my third cup for the day as I ate my lunch and listened to the dining customs I have come use to since starting the trip. After lunch we headed back to lone pine and walked along the front line until we got to the Nek. The view that met us was astounding; the ocean a glittering sliver where the sun reflected off it, the blue sky so pristine and the Greek islands in the distance completed a truly marvellous view. We then visited several other small cemeteries before heading back to the hotel for dinner and some quality bonding time in the café. Overall the day was just amazing and moving.

22nd of April

I had learnt my lesson from yesterday, so my day started not with a run but my new favourite breakfast; cucumber and cream cheese on toast with hot chocolate on the side. Today we were going on a trip across the Dardanelles and over to the Asian side of turkey where we would visit the ancient city of Troy.

On the ferry over the group bravely faced the freezing sea breeze as we sat outside. The trip across the Dardanelles did not take long and before long we on the other side and on our way to Troy.

The ancient city was interesting and Ozgur our guide was so knowledgeable about the city. The time there just flew and before we knew it we were back on the bus heading back to Canakkale where we would have lunch (and have the best cheese pastries of the trip might I add yum) before visiting the Canakkale Naval Museum where we got to explore a replica of a Turkish ship called the Nusrat which was used to plant mines along the Dardanelles to defend the area. We then visited an old defence fort, which is now a museum.

With the majority of our list of this to do and see we headed back across the Dardanelles back to the European side of the country, this time the majority of the group opted to stay in the bus, as it was drastically warmer.

Before long we were chomping down on dinner which involved eating my second whole fish of the day this one having noticeable more bones. After dinner we watched as Connor attempt to beat the record for most 'honey balls' eaten. He managed to beat the record by one honey ball by managing to stomach 13 of the sickly sweet treats.

We then migrated over to the café where multiple games of backgammon were played and I beat the bus driver in 8-ball twice out of three games (Aussie pride woo!). I was so proud of myself. I then went back to my room to find we had no power, not that it was such a big dilemma for me because I just went next door to join the 'journal writing' session in Zoe's room before returning to my room for some rest.

23rd April

The day again started with toast and hot chocolate before heading off to cape Helles area where we visited British, French and Turkish memorials and cemeteries. Out of all the memorials we visited through out the day the French one astounded me the most, with crosses that covered the entire area and the four

mass graves containing 3000 each, it really put into perspective how devastating the Gallipoli campaign was for all involved. With close to a quarter of a million Turks that died defending their country, it is amazing we are not taught more about their battle with their loss almost 30 times greater than our own.

After we had finished our sightseeing for the day we headed back to the hotel for lunch before we made our way back to lone pine for the ANZAC day ceremony rehearsal, once that was finished we made a mad rush to the port to go on a cruise around the ANZAC area. The cruise was pleasant and the sun was nice enough to stay out, not that that made any difference to the temperature. The water was so beautifully clear and the view from the roof of the boat was magnificent. There was a small incident which involved a pom-pom coming off Connor beanie but that was fixed shortly after we returned to the hotel by Lauren who also stitched the number 13 into the beanie as a reminder of his record breaking eating skills.

The day wound down with games of backgammon and a trivia game set up by Geraldine and presented by Andrew. It was yet another amazing day in Gallipoli

24th of April

ANZAC eve. The day started as most had since arriving in Gallipoli. Today instead of driving all over the peninsular we drove to Chanuk Bair in order to walk down Rhododendron Ridge. The idea of the walk was to tire us out in preparation for ANZAC day tomorrow, but it actually did the opposite. For the first time all trip the weather was mildly nice with no ice-cold sea breeze. The walk was really enjoyable and I found it over all to quick. After our walk we then headed back to our hotel the long way because of security around the landing area. On the way back we stopped at a small village where we saw a house Ataturk (a respected Turkish general during the Gallipoli campaign and the first president of the republic of turkey). When we got back to the hotel a few of the group opted for going for a swim. I happily played the part of photographer as the water was too cold and I had forgotten my bathers. We were all excited for Anzac day and all of the students decided that we would stay up until we left for the dawn service in less than 12 hours.

25th of April

Finally ANZAC day has come and with it the main highlight of the trip. We received a wake up call at midnight; something many of the students didn't need as we decided that it was better to stay up and sleep while we waited for the dawn. By 1.00 am we were on the bus we were sharing with another tour group and on our way to ANZAC cove. We got off the bus about 500 meters away from where the service was going to be held. We quickly made our way through security and before long we were climbing out the stands making our way to our seats.

The spectacle of the thousands of people, in their colourful sleeping bags as they covered much of the grass and stands was amazing. Cameras flashed constantly lighting the dark for just a second before being overtaken by another flash elsewhere on the site. The huge television screens – the main focus for those who

were awake – played short extracts of documentaries and interviews as well as the band as they played in the night. The lightshow that lit the ‘Sphinx’ and the water on the beach engulfed our attention while it lasted before the group began to settle in for the cold wait ahead.

It wasn’t too cold when we first arrived, but maybe that had something to do with the 4 pairs of pants and tops I was wearing. Our seats left us sitting next to a large collection of speakers, so it is easily guessed that sleep wasn’t going to be an easy thing to acquire as we waited for the dawn. At various points in the night different people in the group would get up and go for a walk to the stalls that sold hot drinks, chicken kebabs, rugs and roasted nuts; mainly to warm up I think rather than the event that they were generally in need of a tea and a kebab.

Zoe made this event slightly difficult when she figured that the easiest way to sleep was on the floor of the stand, I really wished I had thought of that first, it looked much more comfortable than the cold seats the rest of us were sitting on. At 2:11am ABC Darwin called and interviewed me about the entire experience of being here in Gallipoli and waiting for the dawn service. I made a point about how cold it was and they just laughed. They asked about the prize and what was still install for us on the trip, that was when it really occurred to me that the 2 weeks were almost over and in a few days we would be leaving turkey on our journey back to Australia.

With all the commotion caused by the moving around of people and the very loud speakers I don’t think many if any (with the most definite exclusion of Zoe) got any sleep as we waited for the service. Through the night it got colder as is to be expected, but it was not freezing until the sun began coming out behind the ridges of the ‘Sphinx’; which to me make no logical sense at all.

Everyone was snuggled up in their sleeping bags trying hard to stay warm as the Dawn service commenced. The service was not as long as I thought it would be, but it didn’t need to be any longer. The service was amazing. Sitting in the cold as you wait for the sun to rise, where 96 years ago our ancestors would of done the same but under a different circumstance really gives you a slight insight as to how they would of felt as they landed at Gallipoli to be met with the slight of the ‘Sphinx’ and the welcome of gun fire. It brings the Legend and Tales of our ANZACs’ to life and makes that connection that those tales are not fiction they happened and the devastation, bravery and loss told to us in those stories are were real the pain they suffered and the environment that was deadly with gunfire and disease.

After the service had come to a close everyone began to leaving the site on their way to the different locations where services would be held. Lead by Andrew we slipped out of the site via the path set for the officials and dignitaries, his reason so we could ‘walk along the red carpet’. The walk up to lone pine was a very steep and strenuous one, mainly I think because we were all very tired and cold. By the time we made it to shell green cemetery (just under half way up to lone pine) we were ready for a short stop to de-layer ready for the rest of the up hill walk. When we reached Lone Pine we went through another security checkpoint before heading for the stands where we would wait until the service at 10am got closer. Again there was some pre-service entertainment and even a shout of for people from every state and territory. When the announcers asked who was from the NT I think I was one on the only ones who raised my hand, I felt like a

bit of a minority compared to the cheers coming from the people from NSW and Victoria.

At about 9:20 am the group headed down to get ready for the service where we would be wreath bearers. As a group we decided on wearing just our polo shirts instead of our jackets only because it looked better, the decision had nothing to do with the weather which was still very cold. During some back and forth dashes from the stands to the changing area I realised I had misplaced my phone, but at that point in time I didn't have time to worry about it so I put it to the back of my mind and headed towards where we would be standing during the service. During my multiple back and forth dashes to and from the stands I left my Simpson prize jacket with my bag but thankfully Gene was nice enough to lend me his jacket so I would not freeze while we waited for our part in the service. Soon enough Tanvi was up doing her reading of *Scots of the Riverina* by Henry Lawson which was the cue for the rest of us to get ready to go and before long it was over and we were making our way back down the track we had hiked up earlier that morning. When the group stopped to change out of our black shoes I started poking at my sleeping bag and figured out where my phone had got to; it had been rolled up with my sleeping bag. So with that dilemma sorted I could now happily go back to the hotel and not worry about anything other than making sure my bag is packed.

On the bus ride back many of the group was struggling to stay awake which was more than understandable as most of us at that point had had 6 hours of sleep in the past 48 hours due to the late night on Saturday night. Once back at the hotel we had lunch and then almost everyone headed for their rooms to get in some shut eye. At about 7:15pm the teachers and Stuart came around knocking on doors to get everyone to come to dinner. When Stuart knocked on my door and said dinner was in 15 minutes I realised that I was pretty disorientated, as I couldn't remember why we were having dinner after waking up.

After dinner we headed to the café and multiple games of backgammon were played as well as some other games before going to bed early (well early in comparison to other nights on this trip). Overall today was amazing and lots of fun, defiantly one if not the ultimate highlight of the trip here in Turkey.

Reflecting on Anzac Day

After getting some sleep and looking back on the main reason why we came to Turkey and the experience I know will effect me for the rest of my life. I can still see the sea of people; I can still hear the band playing in the night as clear as it was when I was there.

This experience has given me this connection that I never had before to the dawn service and to the landing at Gallipoli all those years ago.

Words just cannot describe what it was like in a way that would give the experience justice.

The whole experience was breath taking, Amazing, Awe-inspiring, chill educing, astounding, overwhelming ... the list could go on and on.

27th of April

After arriving in Istanbul yesterday afternoon and finding I was very bus sick, I spent most of the night sleeping in my room while the others saw the wonders of Istanbul at night.

By this morning I was ready to take on the grand bazaar, but before I could make up for the missed time from yesterday we had a few final sights yet to see.

Such as Hagia Sophia, the fourth biggest church in the world, and the Basilica Cistern, the biggest of the underground water storages in the city. Both were absolutely stunning the atmosphere down in the Basilica Cistern was amazing. Ozgur informed us about the origins of them and the stories of the wishing pillar as well as the tale behind the medusa heads that hold up three pillars. Hagia Sophia was something different entirely. The old church that was used as a mosque by the ottomans is now a museum. The sheer size of the building was a masterpiece in itself, but as you want inside the grand detail of the place blows your mind.

Afterward we stopped by the spice markets for one last visit. I am kicking myself for not buying anymore Turkish delight the last lot I bought from there was so yummy. Once we were done there we headed back to our hotel where we quickly got freshened up before heading out to the grand bazaar.

The grand bazaar is just that, it was amazing and huge. I had so much fun. The time flew away so quickly and before it seemed I had even started it was time to return to our hotel to get changed for our last dinner in Turkey.

Everyone spent dinner reminiscing over the amazing rip we had had as well as the now usual discussions that involved politics.

After dinner we went back to the hotel where we spent our last night hanging out in Zoe's room once again (this time she was sharing with the other 3 girls and I was the one with my own room). At 2am one of the receptionist came in and told us we were being a bit too loud, so I decided that I better go back to my room before we got into too much trouble from the hotel staff. I got back to my room and realized what a big job I had ahead of me tomorrow morning when it came time for me to pack my suitcase.

28th /29th April

Our trip had come to an end and we were on our way home. I woke up early to practice my creative packing by trying to fit everything into my suitcase. At 7 am I decided I better head down and get my last breakfast here in turkey. I only ended up having a hot chocolate (which had nothing on the hot chocolate at the Kum). Carol asked if I would help her find some thing in the grand bazaar before we left and I agreed eager to get my last taste of the amazing market place.

When I returned back to the hotel I had a new pair of converses in my hand. I ran up stairs to finish my packing before we had to leave for the airport.

Once we got through the security at the airport we headed through the passport booths; this time nearly everyone managed to get the workers to smile.

While we waited outside our gate I headed off in search of something unhealthy. I ended up settling for pizza, which was absolutely delicious.

On the flight to Singapore I watched 'The green hornet' and had the person in front of me lean their seat ALL the way back for the entire 10-hour flight. By the time I got off the plane I was not impressed.

We only had a short cross over in Singapore, most of the time I spent sitting with the bags because everyone had walked off with out me. So I spent my time

twiddling my time and stocking up on caffeine for the next leg of the journey home.

The flight to Singapore was much better than the previous but it was sadder as it was our last few hours as a group. When we got to Sydney JP would leave us and then sooner rather than later the group would go their separate ways.

So we spent the flight chatting, exchanging contact information and blocking the aisles as we talked to each other at the other end of the plane. We had been so busy chatting and drawing funny pictures of each other nearly any of our actually opened our headphones.

Once firmly on the group in Sydney we headed off to pick up our luggage and go through customs; which took very little time at all.

Before any of us were ready we were saying goodbye to JP as the rest of us headed off to the domestic terminal to catch our connecting flights home.

Needless to say there were many tears and "I will miss you" shared as we all went our separate ways.

On the flight home I just slept, waking up about an hour before the plane was going to land to find the hostess collecting the food trays. I put on my headphones and willed the flight to end so I could be back home.

Finally the plane arrived and I had collected my bags with my parents smiling faces beaming that I had returned home safe and sound. On the way home I convinced my parents to take me past Maccas as I had eaten barely anything on the flights from Istanbul.

When I got home I showed my photos to my parents, before going to bed.

I should mention that I got in at 12 am and by the time my parents finished looking at the photos it was after 2 am. I congratulate them on being able to stand my babbling about the trip so late at night. s

Reflection on the trip

The trip to turkey was the most amazing thing I have ever experienced. I was so fortunate not only to be over there but also to be traveling with so many amazing people. All the little stories of the trip will always make me smile.

I never expected Turkey to be how it is; it was one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. The history of the country is so amazingly long; with so many twists and turns. I thank all the wonderful guides and the rest of the Simpson prize group for making the trip such a memorable. My next goal is to help someone else in my school to be able to go on this trip of the lifetime.

I wish I could be back in Turkey (just in warmer weather). I come home to my beautiful Darwin and all I can think of is the next time I can go to that wonderful country. The trip has defiantly changed my life.

