

## Air Force Camp Experience

The air force flight camp was a camp that encourages young women from an early age to join the air force.

During the camp I have learnt a lot of things like how important teamwork is and how networking with other people makes the job and life much easier.

The night we arrived at the camp everyone was really awkward with each other. We don't know each other yet so that made everything awkward. On our first night at the camp, our Squadron Leader and Supervisor gathered us to the mess hall to get to know each other and have a little discussion about what we're all about to do for the next few days. Before the night ends and before going back to the barracks we did a little self-reflection about who we were before we came to the camp and who we think we're going to be after the camp.

On our first day the interactions were still a bit awkward but the more we all talked the better it gets. The first thing we did in the morning was the medical check-up. It was to see if we are all healthy and are able to fly in the PC-9 which is one of the air force fast jet. The second thing we did was the Physical Training. We got to try the basic air force training that the air force women do. The training did not really challenged me physically however it was more of a mental challenge. I learnt that whenever people are doing hard work physically and suddenly stopping it is not because of their body giving up the work. It is their brain telling "this is too hard you should stop" and choosing to stop even though you can still work on it usually give people a great disadvantage because you're not really working to the best of your ability. Our last activity of the day was to fly a fast jet using a simulator. We all marched from our mess hall to the Flight School. On our way we met lots of cadet officers and we all greeted each other the officer's way. When we entered the flight school, we saw how everything was organised and felt how serious the environment is inside the building. The pilot instructors that took care of use while using the simulators were all really detailed when explaining how to fly the plane.

On the second day the camp focused more on aviation more than anything else. We attended pilot briefings and lessons in the morning and one of the air force pilot commanders did a short lecture about his life and being a pilot in the Royal Australian Air Force. In the afternoon we got to take a closer look of one of the Air Force fast jet still being used by the RAAF. To be honest, I was never interested in planes at all but after learning how amazing it was being a pilot in the Royal Australian Air Force it inspired me more to join the defence force. During our day activity a group

of people from the media came and took a coverage of our activity. It was an uncomfortable but fun experience. It was a bit uncomfortable because we have to be cautious on how we act in front of the camera because it will be broadcasted on the news. Before the day ends our last activity was with the air force combat weapons. We were able to look and hold the weapons that they usually use in combat and security works. We also got to take a look at the military working dogs. We weren't able to hold them for safety reasons, but we were told about how the dogs were trained and how they end up with an officer. Our night ended with a self-reflection and discussion about women being part of the air force.

On our third day we got to check out the buildings located on the runway. We checked out the helicopter building where the rescue helicopters are placed, and we got check it out. Next, we went to the fire station next to it. Before we could even take a closer look of the fire trucks, we got to see them in real action because there was an incident where a Singaporean air force plane had an emergency landing. We learnt a lot while we were watching the incident. Both the RAAF ambulance and RAAF fire fighters were in action. After the incident we all got to check out the fire trucks and operate it for a while. In the afternoon of our schedule we were supposed to fly in one of the air mobility planes together but ended up being cancelled due to the elections. Everyone was kind of disappointed. Our disappointment went further when our Squadron Leader told the four of the girls including me that we couldn't fly in the fast jet because we couldn't meet some of the requirements. For me it was my weight I wasn't heavy enough to be able to sit in the ejection seat in case something bad happens while flying and needed to ditch the plane.

On that day was our last night. Everyone couldn't stop talking that it was already our last night. It was mixed emotions. Everyone was already really close to each other even though we just met days ago. It was sad to think that tomorrow we all have to say good bye and go back to our houses. During dinner there was a lot of giggling and laughing everyone was really happy and smiling. After dinner we all walked back to our dorm and during that time our giggling didn't stop. While walking we could hear girls saying, "I'm going to miss everyone" "We should hang out after camp" "We should meet up" and so on. Some girls are also playing on our way to the barracks. The officers who were taking care of us were really pleased with our behaviours throughout the four days of our camp. Before we went to bed, everyone hanged out in the common room for a while to enjoy each other's company before our last day.

On our very last day, in the morning, it was quiet. Unlike the other mornings we had. The atmosphere was unlike any other days. No need to guess why. It was because it was our last day. The last two activities we had was checking out the Air Traffic Control Tower and meeting with the young men and women trainee pilot in the Air Force Flight School. After our meeting with the trainee pilots we went back to our dorm and finally packed our stuff and the Air Force officers told

us to get changed to our own clothes and get ready for lunch. After lunch we were all rewarded with a certificate of participation in the air force flight camp.

To sum it all up, the very first reason why I wanted to join the camp was to know what I really want. I was always interested in the defence force, but I don't know if it's the place for me. Being given a place and being able to participate in the flight camp was a really amazing experience for me. I learnt a lot from it, and I can say that for me, it helped me decide what I really want for my future. Just like the other year 12's I was also confused and didn't know what I want to become. I had a lot of thoughts of what I want to be or what career I want to do but I always end up not being sure if that's what I really want.

But the most important thing I learnt from the camp and from the people I met that really had a big impact on me was that I don't need to stick to only one career for my future. I can have as many careers as I want. I just need to work hard to reach my goals. And I just need to remember that no one not even myself or other people can force me to work on something that I don't like.