

Disney's Cultural Exchange Programme

Charlotte Leslie, *Geography*

This summer I took part in Disney's Cultural Exchange Programme and it was truly the best experience of my life so far. The programme places people in a variety of different roles across any of the parks or resorts within their property in Orlando, Florida. Some of the roles include: Merchandise, Quick Service Food and Beverage and Lifeguarding- just to name a few. I was placed as a Quick Service Food and Beverage Cast Member at Sunset Ranch Market within Disney's Hollywood Studios Park. I have included a picture of me and some colleagues in our costumes.

During my training I visited Disney's University and learnt about the company's values and traditions. It was such a



wonderful and insightful experience to see how Disney are so successful and the values they hold that make their business so magical and why the brand is so important to so many people.



Being on the programme involves a lot of guest interaction which means that you benefit from speaking to many people from all over the world who may not even speak English so I learnt to deal with language barriers very well. My overall communication skills have improved as a result of this programme. Additionally, they employ other Cast Members on the same programme from all over the world so I now have people in Thailand, Hong Kong, Canada, America and New Zealand who are definitely friends for life. This means that my overall cultural awareness has grown significantly thanks to this programme as I got to live and work with so many different people. My confidence has definitely grown thanks to the programme as you really are thrown in the deep end with the work and a lot is expected of you at all times so you learn to deal with working under pressure and as part of a team very quickly. All of these skills that I have



learnt have certainly helped with my career development, I have been a small part of one of the largest and most successful businesses in the world. I will take confidence from this experience knowing I can succeed in a large business.

The everyday work at Disney is very challenging at times but I feel that I gained a lot of resilience and really 'toughened up' over the summer as I learnt to push myself in a work environment and do things outside of my comfort zone. As a result, I am a noticeably more confident person in everyday situations. Outside of work I experienced some amazing things such as previewing the brand new unopened Star Wars land in Hollywood Studios a month before it opened and getting to test the new ride during my lunch hour!

Working at Disney is truly a unique experience. At the end of the programme you graduate with a degree in 'making magic' which is one of the most precious things I could ever achieve!

In order to apply for the programme you must apply to Yummy Jobs the year before you wish to complete the programme (in July) their website is <https://www.yummyjobs.com/> they don't have a public email but their phone number is +44 (0) 3330 062 962