



CAS Trip 2023 Lisbon, Portugal

Learning to Last a Lifetime

SHAPING MINDS BY BROADENING PERSPECTIVE

On October 17th, 24 students set off on a learning opportunity taking them over 3600 kms from home. Over the course of 7 days, each student would come to the realization that while distance divides, the human experience is universal, regardless of geography.

Immersing themselves in the landscape and life of Lisbon, they did not have to be taught the guiding principles of CAS, as each became evident through what was being required of them: the demands of both long travel and work days, overcoming communication barriers, collaborating with people they had just met, and meeting the demands of the daily activities scheduled.

WHAT IS THE IB CORE AND CAS?

CAS is one of three core components of the IB Programme. While IB is known to many for its academic rigour, it has as its central focus the development of the whole student through three avenues: Theory of Knowledge, Extended Essay and CAS.

In Theory of Knowledge, students are required to question how they come to possess knowledge and recognize how knowledge manifests itself in the world around them. Using experiences and topics from both their classroom discussions as well as experiences outside the classroom, they critically assess and become critically aware of how they learn impacts how and what they know.

The Extended Essay is an independent research task that spans their two years as IB students. The result is a 4 000 word research paper, the quality of which is highly academic.

CAS is an acronym for Creativity Activity and Service and is the core component that pushes the students outside of their respective comfort zones. At the outset of their IB journeys, students develop their own CAS plans which see them participate in experiences that may include (but are not limited to) choir, knitting club, soccer, volleyball, Unicef Club and Interact Club. All of these extra-curriculars are available within the school and more often than not, these groups are led and operated by IB students.



DAY 1: HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE AND CHANGE



We arrived just after noon on Wednesday, October 18th, after an overnight flight via Pearson International Airport.

The lessons began with transport: the challenges we face with reliability of transportation here in Canada are common in Lisbon as well. They have a notorious public transit system and before our departure, we were informed that schedules in Lisbon are often determined by these. Students were informed of this and demonstrated great respect for both our group leaders and transport drivers as we navigated the first lesson of the week: history, architecture and change.



OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS THROUGH ART

A walking tour through their neighbourhood to see the once-thriving markets which are now being lost to larger international corporations, the grannies explained how such developments impact their lives and increase isolation.

By connecting with the youth through the 60+ Creative Hub, they are able to share both skills and experiences from their past in the hopes that it may help shape the future.

DAY 2: GRANNY CAME TO WORK

The success of this initiative can be measured in many ways: it socializes a population of individuals, the grannies, who otherwise would be largely forgotten.



In having the grannies and students joining together for lessons in history and art, it bridges numerous gaps: students were challenged with the task of creating their own piece of art under the guidance of a granny (who spoke only Portuguese), students collaborated with each other and the grannies and finally, through our discussions realized that this issue of maintaining crucial connections between the generations is a global issue that needs to be addressed.



DAY 3: LEARNING THE CULTURE THROUGH FOOD

We started the day on a sweet note, arriving at the Lisbon Cooking Academy bright and early. The instructors introduced us to the Portuguese custard tart Pasteis de Nata.

The students made the puff pastry, the custard filling, prepped the baking pans and packaged the sweet treats upon completion.

The dessert has spiritual origins, as they were made by monks in a Lisbon monastery after the Liberal Revolution of 1820. An attempt to generate revenue to keep their monasteries open, when they failed to meet their financial obligations, the recipe was sold. These treats can be found all over Lisbon...and Robert found numerous...on a daily basis!



DAY 3: MIGRANTOUR

The neighbourhood of Mouraria consists primarily of migrant inhabitants that have settled in Lisbon in search of opportunity, enriching the landscape of which they have become a part. During this activity, the students were guided by Monesha, a young woman who arrived from Bangladesh in pursuit of education. Guiding us through the winding city streets and through bustling marketplaces, she stressed the importance of being international-minded and accepting of all people.

When the walking tour was complete, the students participated in a reflection session. The city of Lisbon is one of 8 cities compiling a collection of letters entitled *Encyclopaedia of Migrants*. Each letter is written by a migrant who now calls Lisbon home, and it details struggles associated with trying to find a sense of belonging in a new place. The students were each given a letter and were tasked with writing a response to it. The session was emotionally

charged, as students (and teachers) communicated in an open-minded and caring manner.



Students at the end of the migrant tour through Mouraria.



DAY 4: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN CHALLENGE

The neighbourhood of Alfama is one of the oldest in Europe, and it currently sits at a developmental crossroads. Boasting beautiful waterfrontage and intricate, winding roads, the area has been inhabited since the 8th century and has borne witness to and persevered through war, shifting powers and natural disasters. Today, the region is faced with an economic crisis that threatens to end a way of life for the local people.



One of our guides translating for the students.



When the students completed their interviews with the locals, they prepared a presentation that they made to their peers

On a busy Saturday morning, the group ventured to the tops of the hills where hundreds of vendors had set up for the weekly market.

They listened to the concerns of those whose lives are threatened by the emergence of digital nomads who, since the Covid pandemic, have sought work abroad, buying the local real estate in the area. They also listened to the concerns of those who are watching their local neighbourhood markets disappear as larger corporations take up residence. This could potentially spell disaster for an aging population with limited mobility and access to adequate transportation, and were some of the issues the students were tasked with finding solutions to.



DAY 5: SINTRA

One of the oldest municipalities in Lisbon, Sintra boasts numerous castles dating back to Moorish settlement 5000 BCE. The Sintra Castle, the subject of our tour, was a haven for artists post-industrial revolution during the Romantic Era.

The landscape and architecture continue to inspire today and the castle itself, which was sold by its sole owner in the 1990s, provides a captivating window into how others live.



“The smallest of actions create large ripples in the water.”

DAY 6: BEACH CLEAN UP & SURFING

Our final day in Lisbon taught us all the benefits of reciprocity. Working with a local NGO, we participated in a beach clean up as a part of the group’s initiative to keep the beaches clean and safe.

We were rewarded for our efforts with surfing lessons on a beautiful, sunny October day.

The group leader reminded us that no efforts are too small, reinforcing how when each person plays an active role, the cumulative effects are far-reaching.



Embracing individual responsibility is key to principled character development.

DAY 7: DEPARTURE DAY



This picture was captured before our 20-hour journey home. We bid farewell to two fantastic guides, Rita and Joke, and set off with not just our luggage, but also a lifetime of memories.

The experiences afforded to these students over the course of the seven days in Lisbon will remain with them for a lifetime, shaping future decisions and paths taken in life.

