

# THE TATTOO

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## The Capital: museums and more

By KAISHI LEE  
The Tattoo

The nation's capital may be the summit of a superpower but the city is not as imposing as it sounds. Ordinary people live, work and play in tree-lined neighborhoods.

Visiting the beautiful Greco-Roman temples in honor of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln near the White House, I read the words of political oratory that inspired America, now carved into stone.

Jefferson's quote – "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ... that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" – echoed in my ears.

Next, I headed to "The Wall," which has been sliced like a scar into nature.

I remembered the Americans who died in the Vietnam War. As I read the names of the heroes carved in stone, I felt sympathy and anger. Why did these innocent men go to a fatally misguided war?

I stood at the point where Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famous "I have a Dream" speech, sat on the grassy mall where Maya Angelou read her famous poem a few years ago to America and thought among the cherry blossoms.

Rosa Parks, Frederick Douglass, Angelou and King, Jr. believed, as President Theodore Roosevelt said, "Actions speak louder than words."

The Smithsonian Institution located on the Mall was the star attraction – and admission was

free to all 14 of its museums.

I visited the National Postal Museum first because collecting stamps has always been my hobby. I was truly amazed at the sheer collection that dated back centuries.

At the National Air and Space Museum, I wanted to watch *To Fly!* at the Langley Theater, but the line was so long.

Freeze-dried ice-cream sandwiches and fruit on sale at the museum tasted awful. I would go for fresh food anytime.

The National Gallery of Art was better than the Met in New York. I watched artists paint commissioned smaller-sized replica of artworks.

At the museum shop, I bought prints of Monet, Da Vinci and Warhol's works and Norman Rockwell postcards.

The National Museum of American History was delightful. I loved viewing the First Ladies' gowns, jewelry and campaign mementos.

My trip could not be complete without a visit to the Folger Shakespeare Library, to honor the man who best crafted and expanded the English language. We played dress-up in Victorian wear and posed for pictures.

As Shakespeare wrote, "All the world's a stage. And all men and women merely players."

At dinner, I finally had a chance to order Chinese food. After days in America, I dreadfully missed rice, *mien* (noodles) and roti prata (Indian fried pastry) from home. I ordered my favorite fried rice and tucked in.

The fortune cookie that came with my meal made me laugh. In Asia, Chinese meals never come with fortune cookies!

**I read the words of political oratory that inspired America, now carved into stone.**



Kaishi Lee in Washington, D.C. The U.S. Capitol is in the background.

Tattoo photo

## Exploring the best of Gotham City

By KAISHI LEE  
The Tattoo

The Strand, pretzels, the subway, Macy's, Blooming's....

That's New York City, the Big Apple or Gotham – whatever you call it, it's bustling, chaotic and cosmopolitan – the city that never sleeps.

There's so much here and I truly love it!

New York is one fascinating place. Everyone is always in a hurry, the parks are tranquil, the people greet you with "Howyadoin'?"

The food is great and the traffic is crazy.

Just stop, look around you and take it all in: eight million people hustling.

I strolled down Wall Street and glanced at corporate bigwigs rushing with the Wall Street Journal tucked under the crooks of their arms, saw mothers with angelic children playing at Central Park, and was overwhelmed by the perfumes when I entered Saks Fifth Avenue.

Street carts are everywhere, selling just about everything.

Hot dogs, bagels and pretzels are staple food on the go, nasty taxi-drivers are the norm and there's no better way of getting around than your own two feet.

New York City is also the most



A New York City street.

Kaishi Lee / The Tattoo

diverse place on earth, with people from almost any ethnic group you can think of having a sizeable community presence.

Enter Chinatown, then cross over to Little Italy and later Harlem and you

find salesmen hawking 3 for \$10 shirts with "New York City – Wild Child," "Times Square" or anything distinctly New York.

Some of you have heard that New York is a dangerous city. But as long as

you are alert, it is as safe as any country in the world. Trust me.

New York City is also synonymous with culture, whether it's literature, painting, opera, film, jazz or pop music.

The Met was fabulous. I enjoyed viewing Jackie Kennedy's gowns and standing in front of an original Van Gogh painting!

Watching "Proof" on Broadway was great. It told the story of a confused young woman, her brilliant father and manipulative sister, joined by an unexpected suitor in a search for the truth behind a mysterious mathematical proof.

Staring at the flashing billboards on Times Square, I was awestruck.

Norman Rockwell, Bob Dylan, Mark Twain and Henry James lived in Greenwich Village.

Louisa May Alcott wrote *Little Women* when she lived on Macdougall Street.

Playwright Edward Albee saw the words "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" written in soap on a bathroom mirror on 10<sup>th</sup> Street and went on to write the classic play with that title.

Yes, rats scurry around the subway, beggars sleep on the streets, petty theft occurs and some people are rude.

If that happens, just roll your eyes, shake your head and say "whatever!"

### VISA PROFILE

Name: Kaishi Lee

Age: 15

Country of origin: Singapore  
Countries visited prior to trip: Australia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia

Pop quiz: What was I doing for 12 days on the U.S. East Coast?

I took a literary tour of the U.S., co-organized by my school, Nanyang Girls' High School and Global Seminars. My first trip to the U.S., I found it unlike Singapore in many ways: four seasons, Little Italy next to Chinatown in NYC, breathtaking skyscrapers – and it had GAP.

The literary tour exposed me to great American authors like Henry D. Thoreau and Harper Lee. I traveled to rural towns like Montgomery, Ala. where I caught Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and later took a bus down to Monroeville where I watched the tension and suspense of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the courthouse there.

I tried Southern food and hot bagels bought on the streets of NYC. Meeting people and taking pictures of Walden Pond, Harvard University and the Washington Monument as evening fell was especially memorable.

The only sore point? The trip could've been longer.

## Boston, Salem and John Harvard's lucky foot

By KAISHI LEE  
The Tattoo

Clear skies greeted me as the plane landed about 10 p.m. at Boston's Logan International Airport.

I had traveled with schoolmates from Singapore through Hong Kong and Los Angeles and, finally, I was on the ground in Boston, the culmination of a 28-hour flight.

My tour guide, Bob, a big and friendly guy, greeted us and led us to a yellow school bus.

Next stop: the Motel 6 in Tewksbury, Mass.

Sitting on the bumpy bus, I glanced out my window and took in Boston at night. The night was tranquil, Boston was quiet and everyone was home.

My morning breakfast: two thick pancakes with fresh strawberries, strips of bacon, two scrambled eggs and a glass of OJ.

Then it was off to the small seaport of Salem, the Witch City.

"Salem 1630 Pioneer Village" was like a scene from *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*.

It had thatched roof cottages, Native American wigs and period gardens and farm animals.

Three hundred years ago, Salem's new puritanical pioneers (under the influence of teenage girls!) struggled with witches in a misguided attempt to build a new and "more pure" culture on their continent – a culture where "good" actively fights "evil."

Visiting the Witch Museum and reliving the events that shook the city was surreal.

As one witness said then: "At first the girls would not answer. They simply screamed and writhed or did blasphemous things,

such as dashing a Bible against the wall. Gradually they began to give names."

The testimony of the hysterical girls, the suffering of blameless victims and the decisions of fanatical judges was heart-wrenching. Being a tourist, the museum shop selling Tarot cards and witch memorabilia was fascinating.

Next, we walked to "The House of the Seven Gables," New England's oldest mansion.

I felt jet-lagged because at 3 p.m. in Salem, it was 3 a.m. Singapore time!

Taking the "road less traveled," we journeyed to poet Robert Frost's farm at Derry, New Hampshire.

Strolling Hyla Brook Trail and reading Frost's poems, I discovered the beauty of nature and the beautiful, bountiful land – a major contrast to small and urban Singapore.

Then it was on to Concord, Mass.

Sitting in Louisa May Alcott's room at the "Orchard House" and having all my questions answered by the tour guide was exciting.

It was a small cozy house, and the furniture was quaint.

The chilly weather that greeted me as I walked along Walden Pond made me wonder how Henry D. Thoreau (he hated his middle name David) could have had inspiration to write as he sat by himself on

A quick walking tour conducted by graduating students introduced me to the "intellectual" environment where freshmen have food fights in Annenberg Hall (the food never gets on the ceiling though as the ceiling is high above), relax at Harvard Square and where tourists rub John Harvard's gold-coated foot for good luck.

One must visit the JFK Presidential Library while in Boston. John F. Kennedy was arguably the most famous Bostonian who recaptured power when he called his presidency "The New Frontier" – and sought new boundaries to push forward.

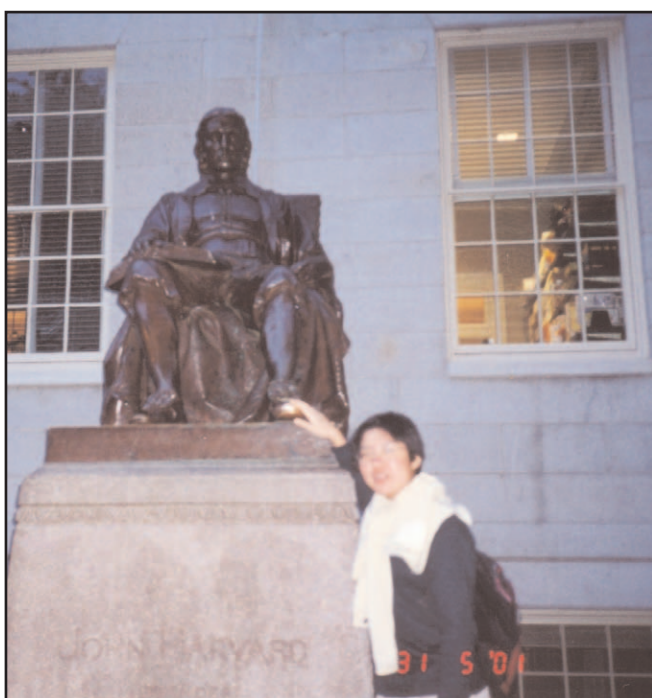
As I wandered around the exhibits, I was in awe of JFK, who charmed and captivated the world with his life and dared Americans to meet the challenges they face every day.

One person can make a difference, and every person should try.

As Robert Frost wrote in "The Road Not Taken,"  
*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

Boston was indeed a city established by ancestors who dared to live fully and risk their lives for the good of America.

A demonstration of early Puritan life in Salem, Mass.



Kaishi Lee rubs John Harvard's foot on a Cambridge statue for good luck.

Tattoo photo

the edge of the water.

Well, this was Concord, the epicenter of a more thoughtful America.

The Harvard campus at Cambridge was aglow in the evening.



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