

A TIMOR-LESTE EXPERIENCE

On June 18, fourteen year eleven students and four staff members from Damascus College Ballarat headed off to Timor-Leste for an unforgettable and wonderful experience. Before leaving the Damascus College Immersion Team raised around AUD\$20,000, doing many different things to fundraise for their sister school Santa Maria College in Ainaro and a number of other organisations around Timor-Leste.



For the students and staff their first experience with Timor-Leste was driving through the challenging mountain roads dodging the edges where part of the road had collapsed, however everybody was admiring the wonderful views and had a fun journey where we safely arrived at Remixio with Fr Johnny. The Immersion team's first time with the students in Remixio was full of joy and games as we all joined together and played soccer and volleyball and taught the little ones many games that we play in Australia such as Duck, Duck, Goose. Remixio is also where we experienced our first taste of Timorese food, our first non-flushing toilets and brushing our teeth with bottled water.



The next day the Immersion Team headed off to Ainaro where we stayed for majority of the time. In Ainaro we taught English at our sister school Santa Maria College and made many new friends. We also went to many places such as Jakarta 2 and experienced and learnt about the history and culture of Timor-Leste. Something that really shocked us was how happy, welcoming and kind everybody was in Ainaro even though they had so little. We spent time walking and exploring the country side and seeing how the people lived in this amazing country.



Children followed us everywhere, they were entranced with us and wanted to learn more about the English language and our games. The whole experience was different, we had cold showers, we ate rice every day, we had to drink bottled water, we couldn't flush toilets. All things we take for granted every day. We realised how lucky we are. We were all very sad to be leaving Ainaro as we had made many connections with the wonderful people at the school and even the people in the village.

We then started our journey back home and drove six hours through the mountains and ended at the capital of Timor-Leste where we started, Dili. In Dili, we visited many organisations and made many donations. We donated to the Alma sisters, the Carmelite sisters, the Aloia foundation, the Edmund Rice Foundation and the Klibur Domin hospital.



We also visited places such as the Tais Market, Sebastiano Gomez's grave (the youth leader in 1991) and Cristo Rei which is a 27m statue of Jesus. We visited our friend Aje's workplace, the Ba Futuru foundation, and the CAVR Prison Museum where we learnt so much about the horrific history of Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste was an amazing experience for us, one that we won't forget and everybody had an extraordinary time.

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